

SAP's Autism at Work Program

SAP

Talent Acquisition Best Candidate Experience

September 2016



Company Background



Company At-a-Glance	
Headquarters	Waldorf, Germany
Year Founded	1972
Revenue	Annual revenue (IFRS) of € 17.56 billion
Employees	75,000
Global Scale (Regions that you operate in or provide services to)	Regional offices in over 130 countries
Customers/Output, etc. (Key customers and services offered)	Mercedes-AMG, adidas Group, Swarovski, eBay, Siemens, German Football Association, McLaren, NBA, NFL, Lenovo, Molson Coors Brewing Company, Tumi, Unilever, Vodafone, Procter & Gamble, Dow Chemicals, Roche, Shell
Industry	Information Technology
Stock Symbol	SAP
Website	http://go.sap.com/index.html

Budget and Timeframe

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Overall budget	N/A
Number of (HR, Learning, Talent) employees involved with the implementation?	25
Number of Operations or Subject Matter Expert employees involved with the implementation?	3
Number of contractors involved with implementation	0
Timeframe to implement	9 months
Start date of the program	Programs demonstrates wins over the judging time period

Business Conditions & Business Needs

In 2015, SAP hired 100 people with autism and has committed to hiring 1% of its global workforce from the autism spectrum by 2020. The company's revolutionary new Autism at Work program is a significant part of its mission to help the world run better. A dedicated office has been established, running operations in seven countries and plans for growth in many more locations in 2016, an enormous success for this program and worth recognition.

Overview

SAP sees a competitive advantage in leveraging the unique talents of individuals with autism, while also helping them to secure meaningful employment. By concentrating on the abilities that every talent brings to the table, SAP aims to redefine the way it manages diverse talents. Only by employing people that think differently and spark innovation will SAP be prepared to handle the challenges of the 21st century.

To achieve this goal, a dedicated office has been established, running operations in seven countries (Brazil, Canada, Czech Republic, Ireland, India, Germany, and the United States), with plans for growth in many more locations in 2016 (including Australia, China, Bulgaria,

and France). The skill sets hired are wide ranging, proving that hiring people with autism can impact all areas of business: software developer, information developer, software testing, business analyst, IT technical support, system administrator, marketing operations associate, networking specialist, IT project management, customer support, graphic designer, media/communications specialist, data analyst, associate consultant, product management, procure-to-pay service associate, and HR service associate.

Building the business case to fund not only the new team, but the massive amounts of ongoing training that was required for both the new hires and existing team members was quite the endeavor, achieved after months of research and business case development with both internal and external partners.

Surprisingly, the biggest obstacle to overcome was not selling its executives on the importance of hiring differently-abled people. SAP has had a formal diversity office led by a senior executive for many years, and also were lucky enough to ask Ernie Els, a leader in raising awareness about autism, to be its global ambassador. Rather, SAP had to challenge its leaders to do more, to make the conscious choice to hire a very specific number of individuals from a very specific subset of the differently-abled individuals on the autism spectrum that often have a talent for the type of work that SAP thrives on; skills like programming and coding.

Design

The Autism at Work team operates this program solely and specifically, and also partners with dozens of more general diversity and inclusion leads in each region and country globally. The global co-leads of the program are Stefanie Nennstiel and Jose Velasco. The local leads are as follows:

- **Brazil.** Debora Alves, Mariana Tomiyoshi, Fabio Serrano
- **Canada.** Malinee Narang
- **Czech Republic.** Lenka Kaderova
- **Germany.** Stefanie Lawitzke
- **India.** Archana GS and Kiran Venkataramanappa
- **Ireland.** Kristen Doran
- **U.S.** Jose Velasco

From a recruiting perspective, SAP also partnered globally with the firm Specialisterne to employ individuals with autism across its wide range of careers. Specialisterne is an



internationally recognized leader in harnessing the talents of people with autism to work in technology-oriented jobs, such as software testing, programming and data management. Originally founded in Denmark, Specialisterne has operations around the world, including offices in the U.S., UK, Ireland, Austria, Switzerland, Germany, Norway, Iceland, and Poland. As part of the partnership, Specialisterne is extending its operations to support SAP's global expansion of the program over the next several years.

Deployment

Recruiting candidates with autism requires a more nurtured process that is anything but "standard." Specialisterne identifies talented individuals with autism, and together they have tailored the application and hiring process to their more individualized needs.

First, Specialisterne works with various autism organizations globally to source and identify these talented individuals, organizations dedicated to employing working-age individuals who are differently-abled, to help find purpose for them after they have completed their schooling.

Next, SAP uses a very individualized assessment and interview process versus the standard application and interview process. A candidate baseline assessment is conducted with a Specialisterne specialist and the employee, in order to gain an understanding of their learning profile and learning style. Simultaneously, a team dynamics assessment is conducted within the SAP department.

Next, Specialisterne uses proprietary software and analytics to determine if the individual is a good match for SAP, and also if SAP is a good match for the individual. If the individual with autism does decide to join SAP, the final step in this very hands-on candidate experience is training for the individual to ensure the successful transition to an SAP employee.

The dedicated SAP autism team realized very early on that, to hire individuals with autism, they had to personalize the candidate experience beyond SAP's normal process. At a high level, this involved administering candidate baseline and team dynamics assessments, working with individual employees to develop individual learning profiles, competence assessment profiles, and developing long-term success business plans.

Measureable Benefits

By 2020, 1% of SAP's global workforce will come from the autism spectrum. This is a bold and aggressive move for a company of SAP's size. With more than 100 hires in 2015, SAP



is on track to achieve this goal. Below, a document that highlights three of its current employees that were previously unemployed or underemployed, how they have been matched with the right role at SAP, and their current accomplishments at SAP.

SAP's success is more than its number of hires, it's also in their experiences and accomplishments as SAP employees.

One of SAP's [videos](#), developed specifically for the Autism at Work program in 2015, was made to gain a glimpse into the program and its employees. These employees are just a small portion of its many success stories in SAP's Autism at Work program.

In June 2015, SAP received the EMEA Disability Matters Award in the category "workforce" from Springboard Consulting LLC, in Den Haag, The Netherlands. Springboard Consulting LLC is a global organization that works with companies throughout Europe and around the world (35+ countries) to mainstream disabled individuals into the workforce, workplace, and marketplace. SAP received this award because its Autism at Work program is a market leading initiative, one that is being applauded and followed by other companies.

At SAP, its Diversity and Inclusion Strategy means that it believes in hiring differently-abled people, not just as a "general philosophy" that has no real actionable items, but rather as part of very strategically organized programs. It is known as an innovator in the software space, but wants to be known as an innovative employer as well.

SAP's Autism at Work program accomplishes that, by attracting and hiring differently-abled individuals who enhance its local teams and help its world run better. Several new hires with Autism said that before they came to SAP, they worried about being overlooked in the workspace, being ignored, being a lone voice in the wilderness, having their obvious talents overlooked.

SAP is busy fighting the war for talent against "sexy" consumer brands like Apple, Google, and Microsoft. Having a relatively untapped talent pool was exciting for SAP to nurture and hire its talent.

Individuals with autism bring new ideas, new perceptions, new values, and new passions to SAP and make a real difference in making it the number one cloud company. SAP hopes other companies take its lead and seek to hire differently-abled candidates as it does.

Finally, Specialisterne conducted a survey with all candidates that at least interviewed with the hiring manager, and/or were actually hired. In 2015, approximately 345



candidates were surveyed, with more than 88% rating that interview and/or hiring processed as “above average.”

Overall

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Individuals with autism have often felt ignored in the workplace. They are left often without a voice and more importantly without a career roadmap. Approximately 50% of individuals with autism do not have any cognitive impairment, and yet more than 85% of individuals of working age are unemployed. That’s why SAP’s Autism at Work Program is so significant.

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SAP is busy fighting in the war for talent against “sexy” consumer brands like Apple, Google, and Microsoft. It was exciting for SAP to have a relatively-untapped talent pool from which it could develop and hire. Individuals with autism bring new ideas, new perceptions, new values, and new passions to SAP and are the real difference in making SAP the number one Cloud company. The company hopes other companies take its lead and also hire and develop differently-abled candidates.



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