

Employment Overview

Looking at employment through the eyes of dyslexic personas.



The personas suggest dyslexic experience is varied at work. Some see dyslexia as nothing more than a difference in how they work, whilst others feel they are seriously challenged, with their later career trajectory affected.

Looking at employment through the eyes of the personas, and the results of other interviews we have conducted with adults in work, we can make the following observations:

(As part of this section, we have also highlighted a collection of typical comments from our interviews with dyslexic individuals³⁰.)

- **Standardised hiring processes can inhibit dyslexic individuals.** Standardised job descriptions and application processes can stop dyslexic individuals from applying for roles and play against dyslexic abilities.

"I'm applying for jobs, and when I tick 'dyslexic' in the application, I so far have received a negative response."

"The job description has in the past stopped me from applying for a position."

- **Awareness of dyslexic abilities in the workplace is often limited.** Dyslexia is most commonly associated with its challenges, and therefore can be confined to those challenges.

"Knowledge is generally not widely available and stereotypes are applied, this affects my confidence."

"There is a stigma associated with being dyslexic, some will think that I am not as capable as my peers, whilst others just don't understand it and become uncomfortable discussing it with me."

³⁰Dyslexia Survey, EY 2018

- ▶ **Inclusive working environments can enable better conversations about dyslexia.** When dyslexic individuals feel comfortable speaking to colleagues about dyslexia, it enables a greater understanding of abilities and more confidence when working.

"I'm comfortable with being dyslexic, and feel I can use my strengths and mitigate any challenges by telling my colleagues."

"It's important to explain how I think and work, which can be beneficial when working with others."

- ▶ **Adjusting management styles to focus on strengths can have a positive impact on dyslexic ability.** By being flexible and proactively working on challenges and focusing on strengths, better outcomes can be achieved for both employers and dyslexic individuals.

"I tailored the role to focus on strengths — this really opened my eyes to managing dyslexic abilities."

"I employ four people, who are all dyslexic, we all do what we are best at and this really works."

- ▶ **Support groups, networks, mentoring and coaching at work play a vital role for dyslexic individuals.** Speaking and being supported by like-minded individuals allows dyslexic individuals to 'bring themselves to work' and helps with managing ways of working.

"I'm working with a dyslexia coach who helps me manage my workload. The required pace of work is sometimes a lot and this really helps."

"Having a mentor made me very comfortable and accepting of who I am at work."

- ▶ **The availability of supportive tools is important for dyslexic confidence at work.** Assistive tools give dyslexic individuals confidence in their ability with work that requires significant reading or writing.

"I use an audio recorder for meetings and read and write software helps me when working through long documents, this is really useful at work."

"Software that assists me with my spelling and grammar helps build my confidence."

Conclusion

- ▶ The experience from employment can facilitate a negative perception of dyslexia. A focus on challenges, a limited awareness of dyslexia and generalised hiring processes can accentuate this perception, and influence the confidence of dyslexic individuals at work.
- ▶ When awareness of the challenges and strengths of dyslexia, inclusive working environments and flexible approaches to work are present, it creates better and open conversations about dyslexia with work colleagues.
- ▶ Tailored interventions at work including mentoring, coaching and use of assistive technologies, provide an essential gateway for dyslexic individuals to manage their work and build confidence in their own abilities.

From the education and employment observations, we can determine that:

- ▶ When dyslexia is solely associated with challenges, it can inhibit dyslexic individuals from reaching their full potential.
- ▶ When dyslexia is focused on strengths with challenges supported, it can create positive outcomes through a better understanding of ability.

"Diverse thoughts and perspectives help our clients, and our own business, to be innovative. Having a greater understanding of dyslexia, and the strengths of dyslexic individuals, presents an opportunity for businesses to recruit and retain people with some of the in-demand skills of the future."

Steve Varley, UK Chairman, EY

"Work is a place where I have been able to open up about my dyslexia with my team, this takes away anxiety about being judged — we're open as individuals and accepting as a company."

Steve Hatch, VP Northern Europe, Facebook

"The ability to be flexible when working enables you to have a team of diverse and capable individuals. You can focus their abilities decisively and effectively, enabling you to achieve greater success."

Roland Rudd, Founder and Chairman, Finsbury

"There needs to be a focus on helping individuals understand what they're good at and what they're not so good at — it's important that organisations really understand the value of dyslexic strengths."

Lord Davies of Abersoch CBE

"I've always been quite grateful for being dyslexic. You can do things slightly differently. I really believe that recognising people's dyslexic strengths can lead to doing better business, as well as helping individuals."

Nick Jones MBE, Founder and CEO, Soho House & Co.

Reference:

The Value of Dyslexia-Dyslexic Strengths and the Changing World of Work
 In association with *Made by Dyslexia* and Ernst and Young
 Adapted for a global Audience by Get into Neurodiversity