

Assessing Neurodiverse Candidates: The Questions and Answers

Our Panel

Host

Cassie Sissons

"I'm MD of Client Success at Amberjack. I've been with the business since 2012, leading our Client Delivery and Development teams over this time to ensure successful client and project delivery, and client growth and retention, with direct ownership of Assessment and Attraction as well as main Board Director duties. I'm focused on client satisfaction, growth, and innovation across all service lines."

Industry Experts

Theo Smith

"I'm a recruiter by trade, actor before then. I've recently, in last few years, written a book about neurodiversity at work, because I'm a dad of neurodivergent children. Therefore, I've explored and experienced the challenges that they've faced and didn't see enough resources and information to support me as a recruitment leader, and me as a dad, from a positive context rather than the typical negative context. So, now I do a lot of advocacy work, I do training, and I support organisations with better understanding diversity within workplace."

Eleanor Abbey

"I work at EY in the Student Talent Attraction Acquisition Team as a Senior Operations Advisor, which means from the point that individual applies to the point they get offered, I work keep moving them through the process. As part of this, I look at our recruitment systems and process ahead of each recruitment season. Within the Student Team, I'm also the Ability Champion, which means I support our teams in conversations are having with candidates with disabilities, and who might require adjustments. I also ensure that we have an inclusive process at the start of each recruiting season, and support colleagues in making adjustments if needed, helping upskill them on all things ability."

Diane Crawford

"I'm one of the Senior Assessment Consultants at Amberjack. So, I'm very much Business Psychologist, and support clients on all things related to assessment and selection; all the way from application, online tests, video interviews, to final stage, and assessment centers. I kind of live and breathe the Amberjack mantra of progressing and hiring people solely based on their future potential. If we do really kind of hone in on that neurodiversity piece, just really trying to make sure the clients we work with ensure neurodiverse candidates are able to showcase their potential at all stages of the process."

Graduates

Angela

"I'm currently a PhD student, and I'm working as well. I learned about my disability when I was in my second year of university."

Adam

"I work as a consultant. I have for few years now. I was an apprentice, which means I worked one day a week, while I went to university four days a week. I have a condition called Dyspraxia, I was born with it. Essentially, it means I have a little bit of a speech impediment and I'm quite bad at hand eye coordination. It's a spectrum."

Your Questions, Their Answers

In your experience, for organisations starting out on the journey, how would you suggest building engagement internally, and educating the key stakeholders? Are there tried and tested methods that you've experienced, or training that you could share with the group today?

Theo

"Yeah, you need to show that you care, first and foremost, and that you can do that in a number of ways.

First is providing a platform for your current employees to have a voice or to feel that they're heard, and that they're understood. You can do that by allowing people with confidence, who want to share their experiences, within organisations to explain how it affects them impacts them, what's good or bad. That really allows others then to have some level of confidence and comfort, to ask them questions, especially people who may not have any understanding at all, and therefore they need to be upskilled.

But you've got to remember, some of these employees are parents, and they will be facing challenges as well. They don't necessarily identify as being neurodivergent, or ADHD or this practical, whatever else it may be, but they may still face challenges. So, it's finding different opportunities for these individuals who are impacted in very different ways to have their voice. If you are concerned about that at the very beginning, then you can bring people in from external advisors, consultants, speakers, whatever it may be, to come in, and to facilitate and support that early conversation, because once you open Pandora's box, you might be surprised about what comes out. So, having some preparation around that often can help.

But there is also training available; I've just done my own micro learning training, you can talk to me about that introduction for managers and employees from neurodiversity. I'm filming for social talent, if anybody knows that, that's recruitment, training, or on neurodiversity, that'll be coming up live soon. Then you've got LinkedIn, I've taken some of that training as well, you'll find that book in the background and some of that training. There are now many opportunities to kind of have micro learning training for managers and employees to upskill themselves.

The other thing is, individuals won't know their own challenges. So they may go, "oh, I think I'm ADHD because my son or daughter's just been diagnosed with it, but actually, I don't understand my challenges." So, then you've got stuff like Professor Amanda Kirby's Do-It profiler, that helps you understand your strengths and your challenges as an individual. Furthermore, as a manager, you could

take it to support facilitate your understanding of your employees as well.”

When you're trying to build that engagement internally with key stakeholders, they're looking for talent to come into their teams and shifting that dial. Do you have any data or evidence about the positive impact of recruiting on your a diverse workforce? I think that's something that businesses are very much looking for that data points on.

Theo

“Yeah, so there are insights from Deloitte and Apple. Their insights reveal that high performing teams are both cognitively and demographically diverse. By cognitive diversity, they're referring to kind of educational and functional diversity, as well as diversity in their mental frameworks that people use solve problems.

We know that if we look at people who are dyslexic, I mean, we're talking about a spectrum, we understand that you don't fit into one label one box, you may identify more with one likelihood as there are a number of factors that will impact you; where you grew, work, family, and all the other things do a variety of stuff going on in the brain. But we know that people who are dyslexic, for example, often see in 3D, they are highly creative in a different way to somebody else, and that is powerful within a team when you bring these different levels of creativity in different areas, because obviously then we start to plug gaps.

We can look at that across autism, we can look at ADHD, you know, we've got entrepreneurs and people in history, solving some of the greatest technical problems of our time who are divergent. So, there's plenty of evidence here but there's also empirical evidence.

I interviewed Zoe and Laura, Springfield Specialist School and Cheshire East Council Access to Work Funding, where an individual in my home area, Holmes Chapel, who's nonverbal autistic came into a work environment, and the traditional manufacturing packaging that team were like, “how is this nonverbal autistic person going to be able to fit into the team work and do a good job?” This was on the local news, they got to the point of where they showed the evidence, not only were the team like, “wow, they're good.”, they were like, “this person's better than us, they work harder, they're more committed, they're more focused, because they have less distractions”. What they just had to find was the ability to communicate in that environment. They don't not have ability to communicate, they just don't communicate verbally. So, how do we connect those dots? Because if we do, the empirical evidence is now there, across these organisations, they've introduced individuals that are having a significant impact on a team, but the team needs to transform the way that they think.

But also, then we think of the wider impact on society, if my daughter has been bullied by another child, because they lack an understanding of my daughter being autistic and some of the way that she interacts in the environment, that is impacted by their parents lack of understanding, and then going to work or not. But if we can influence a team to think “I can work with somebody who's nonverbal autistic, they're the best person in our team”. They go home, they tell their family, they tell their children, the children go into the school, and there is a complete transformation and understanding.”

Building on your point you made a little bit earlier about third party organisations that you can also bring into the conversation internally to help educate, train, and support, I think, Eleanor you have some experiences at EY as well. Some of the businesses that you've been working with support the organisation...

Eleanor

"Yeah, definitely. So I really recommend, and it's someone that we work with a lot, My Plus Consulting, and this isn't just for neurodiversity. They offer recruitment support for all disabilities. Depending on the different membership level that you could ascribe to you get invitations to different workshops and webinars on a variety of topics, marketing materials, support training, consulting days, and also access to their CEO by email or phone to answer your queries, and also job postings.

For example, I know that their next virtual workshop is on understanding the impacts and benefits of neurodiversity, and that's targeted at people who are in recruitment, and the actual business itself.

I'd also recommend to a charity called Ambitious about Autism. They're a UK national charity, which aims to improve opportunities for young people with autism. They have really detailed free toolkits on their website to support recruitment and young people, and they also offer free webinars.

So again, for example, I know in the upcoming months, they're running a session, I believe it's called 'An Introduction to Recruiting Autistic Talent'.

Then finally, I haven't actually worked with this company before directly only learned about them quite recently, but it's company called Lexxic. They partner with organisations, schools, and universities, and members of the public to make positive differences. Creating neurodiversity smart workplaces, cultures, high impact programs, and they also deliver psychological support services to neuro diverse talent."

Just while you're still talking, one of the other questions that was submitted in which I think your perspective will be really helpful, was... what the kind of the challenges that organisations have faced when addressing the issue of recruiting and implementing?

Eleanor

"I think, honestly, in respect to my team, the biggest challenge we faced is in the attraction aspect of our work, when we're talking to candidates with kind of all disabilities. If an individual my team hasn't had a lot of experience or training, I found quite commonly they get nervous having conversations about support, what we can offer and adjustments we can make in the process, and then also support that we can offer in the workplace. This is purely because they don't want to say the wrong thing. In terms of overcoming that in my team specifically, it's ongoing, we are constantly learning. Our solution to this is training and continuous learning.

I've already mentioned this, but we work with My Plus. I work with them to produce a training session on key topics we want to upskill ourselves in. The workshops and webinars that I mentioned throughout the year; colleagues and my team will rotate going on these sessions, so everyone is upskilling themselves and becoming more confident to have these conversations.

At EY we have quite a lot of on demand, internal learning available, so we're encouraging people to do that and make themselves more competent in the topics where can kind of be more supportive, and give that support to candidates that need it.

I think another challenge we faced is candidates actually sharing the adjustments that they require in recruitment processes. In our application form at EY, we ask, "do you consider yourself to have a disability as defined under the Equality Act 2010?", then candidates can answer "yes", "no", "I prefer not to say". We then ask if they require any adjustments to the process, we don't ask them to share what their disability is, but if they want to, they can.

As well as graduates, we recruit quite a lot of school leavers, and in this population, they have less experience. They can be more hesitant to show that they have disability and that they would like adjustments. This is a challenge, because without knowing that someone needs our support, we can't help them. I think we've overcome this by being really open on our website, and saying that we'll support candidates. Throughout the process, we have open communication with them on any adjustments or support they require throughout it; at each stage in our process, we remind candidates that if they need any adjustments that they haven't yet shared with us, then please do so because we can't apply that retrospectively, we need to be aware.

So that even if a candidate hasn't fully disclosed that on the application form, we will still make the adjustments for them, because we want everyone to kind of have a fair and equal opportunity in the process."

Bringing Angela and Adam into the conversation now, what do you think employers could do more of, to appeal to more diverse candidates in that process? It would be great to understand some of your experiences.

Adam

"It's actually really interesting what has just been said, because when I actually applied to work at my firm, I said, "I have a disability", and when they said "do you need support?" I said "no", because it might count against me and it's more headache for the company I'm interested in.

But in general, I feel like we need more marketing material that shows neurodiverse people do work here. So, when I was applying to my job a few years ago, on the website, you could very clearly pull out that one of the core values was having people from all different sorts of backgrounds, and there were people with existing conditions working there. So, when I saw that I thought, you know, they clearly have neurodiverse people working here, and they're succeeding, so why don't I do the same? Right?"

Angela

"Having been diagnosed recently, I do think it's a mental thought. So, sometimes I don't take that I've got a disability, because I'm like, "that's not going to help me", it's been around for so long and no one has actually done anything with it. I would tick the box, and then in the interview I might have to then say, "excuse me, can you repeat that?" a couple of times so I can grasp it. So, what's the point of ticking it? It makes me uncomfortable with a learning difficulty... I'm nervous, I'm trying to do a job interview, and I have to remind you that I've got a disability which you have no understanding of. So it is like, it's a lot of pressure.

So, more advertising, for university, maybe have more talks, have more discussions such as panels with people. It doesn't necessarily have to be big time directors, but people who have come through the educational system, and you can say, "this is what I've learned". Have some partnerships with either universities or with people with neurodiversities, as well. So, you can see how it works in the real world."

So, you just referenced the pressure of the situation... if you haven't disclosed a disability and then in the session, trying to succeed in that environment, do you think if you were able to share that information ahead of the application process or at the outset of the application process, because you felt that it wouldn't be seen as a negative but actually it would be seen as an understanding of what they need to do in order to enable a situation for you to succeed with you... is that really what you're saying that you'd be looking for to be able to have that already done? So, you can relax into the interview environment?

Angela

"Yeah, sometimes I have ticked it, sometimes I haven't, and in either case, the same things happened during the interview. So, that's why I've become so nonchalant about ticking that box - because it makes no difference."

Theo

"There's a real problem with the ticking of the box. It's just been mentioned that most candidates are suspect of it, they don't trust it, and therefore they don't want to tick it. And it's a mechanism for measurement, candidates are not stupid, they see within organisations, what happens, we track and we trace these metrics, right? We present them if we have to, but then we'll do nothing with it."

So the problem is, we've got the evidence, we've got the information, we do nothing with it, often. And then we say also, it's a way to support individuals, but it can't be all those things. A candidate coming through the process will go "right that box there, I don't trust that, I'm not going to tick it".

To Angela's point, maybe if there's enough information and comms, you'll go, "I have a bit more confidence, therefore this time going to ticket", but you probably still end up going to the interview and they did nothing with it.

Another really big problem here, is that a disproportionate amount of people, women for example, don't come with the diagnosis. So, you have to fight for the diagnosis if you're a woman, about 4:1 four men to one woman, have an autism diagnosis, right? So, that means unless you're a white middle aged man, we're back to that point again, right, you're less likely to have the box ticking ability... "I don't have the disability because I never got the diagnosis, so therefore I'm disabled from ticking the box". So, I think we need to move away from a box ticking exercise.

To me, we need to be able to ask more questions around how we help individuals with this process that is not like, "are you disabled?", it's like, basically, "can we offer you a different type of content for you to read, or a video or audio?", because you may be dyslexic, or you may have challenges, because you've got sight problems, therefore you need to listen to it rather than watch it or, like there's a number of different factors that can impact you in a moment. If somebody came in with a broken hand to an interview, they go, "I can't write you want me to write, I can't do it, I've broken my hand". Yet, when it's something else, it's neurological, we really fear saying it because the other person can't see it, and they're not going to get it. So, I think we need to start to empower candidates by giving them alternative choices around how they can access the interview, the assessment process and everything else - and that's our responsibility. But we need to work with the candidates to understand what that looks like, and we are still in a moment where the candidate may not know that. So, this is where we need to kind of seek external support and guidance and take feedback so that we can make those adjustments."

When we want to your target candidates, neurodiverse candidates specifically, because we want to raise the bar it organisationally, how do we do it? How do we go about it? What I'm hearing today is very much about how you market yourself as opposed to going to a specific place to target, but has anyone had an experience of using a specific kind of community based websites or kind of student groups or anything like that, specifically targeting your diverse candidates?

Theo

"I mean, you gotta go where the communities are, right? You've got to understand, be warned that

they won't suffer fools gladly. So, if you really want to engage with the community, you've got to truly understand why you're engaging with them - it cannot be tokenistic.

Furthermore, where is the representation? Social media is an incredible place to be able to connect with those communities, and social media marketing is a very low cost effective way to be able to do that. However, people see ads, they know what ads are. So again, you got to be mindful of what you're doing with that ad. Now, if you're using the ads to invite people to an event where they can have a voice and some representation, they can join in the conversation that's powerful and meaningful, you can start a narrative that way, but if you're just putting a job advert on air, "we're friendly, look at us", without proof, it won't work. So, these are the things you have to consider.

If you want to grow and connect with communities, you have to really think about how you engage them. So, it's not necessarily a challenge to connect with these communities, because they're big, they're vocal, the members are across different areas, whether it's Facebook, or Instagram which is huge for individuals talking about the challenges they face. It's how you interact with them in a meaningful way that matters. So, that's where you need to start considering.

Additionally, there's other channels like the Bridge of Hope, for example, as a way to advertise jobs. They're not neurodivergent specific, but there's already charities that have been mentioned, you know, Autistic Society, as well as another one that lives lots of different channels where you can start to engage to show you care about that particular community."

Eleanor

"I completely echo that, and echoing what Adam mentioned earlier, as well, just about it not just being token, like you actually really need to mean it, who you're reaching out to and what you're saying. And I guess just kind of showcasing your, like neurodivergent talent, your employees who do work with disabilities, on your website, your marketing materials, to show that you're not just saying for the sake of saying it, you have real stories of like making trying to make a difference."

Angela

"It's about not just knowing that you're taking neurodiverse people but knowing A) the stages they went through and B) what are your solutions to my problems? So great, you say that you're helpful, but actually, how have they helped you?"

Because I've also got sickle cell. So I've got when you're talking about these groups that you're trying to hit? I used to be part of a sickle cell group. We are a hard group to sell, because we've been let down so much. But what is the physical? So for example, one thing we weren't able to do was have health benefits. It was said if you were ill, and then you'll phone them up, and they'll help you pay. But being sickle cell, if we had a crisis, and then we'd buy into it, they will turn around, say, "Oh, you got sickle cell", and never pay us out. So when someone was coming from finance, to sell us something new recently, we've already got our backup. We already know that so many people have tried it and failed. But then they came back with how it works and that someone else has used it, and it's worked for them. So you use it, and then you listen a little bit more.

So, there needs to be some demonstrable practicality to what you're selling. Not just, I've got this beautiful A+ product that we've got for you. Because there's been so much years of disappointment and learning how to maneuver."

Adam and Angela, coming back to you from your perspectives. We've already touched on a little bit briefly, but what are the most challenging parts of a recruitment process for you as individuals?

Adam

"So for me, it's really only like small things. For example, everyone knows you need to dress smartly for an interview, but I can't tie my shoelaces, and I can barely tie a tie. Then I noticed in an interview I look much less smart compared to other candidates. Timekeeping is also a bit tricky. So I might be, you know, five minutes late, but it's mainly the smart thing, because, I feel self-conscious about that. And then obviously, I feel nervous that someone might notice and look down upon me on that. I think it's important to set expectations that, this might be different, but it's fine that this is different. For me it's about the face-to-face experiences."

Angela

"I find it hard when A) you've got to do tests, B) to answer questions, because I realized, and I'm only realizing this now, I like tasks. I'm very much someone who is show me what to do, and I'll do it, if I don't know, I'll learn it. When it comes under pressure to answer these questions in a certain way, and my writing, I run a lot. So sometimes grammar could be a bit poor. Or if you've got to do these tests, I don't get it. So, I do feel like there's a whole lot because there's no one to teach me how to do it any other way than the way that I know how."

This is why sometimes I tick the boxes. I think they might look at my jobs and think, "oh, she might have enough transferable skill to do this job. Let me look into it deeply because she's got a learning difficulty." Or, because I've ticked it so many times, I still don't get an interview. Yet, when I read the jobs specification, I think I could do this job."

So, Adam, what about you? Are there any obstacles that get in your way of applying for jobs? Are there things that you think in a process "this makes me feel hesitant about applying to this organisation", and stops you?

Adam

"Well, as I said, I started my career quite early, because I was an apprentice. The main problem I had was just knowing stuff is out there. Throughout the school system, because I have a learning difficulty I was put in a box. There was never that expectation I would go to university. So where my peers would refer to that on trades fairs with employers, they hear about all these possibilities, I wouldn't normally be attending because it was assumed that I wouldn't go on to that experience. So for me a few things make sure people know, reach out to those communities that need it."

Di, I'm going to bring you in now in your capacity as a specialist in assessment processes and designing processes for people to be able to demonstrate their potential. Do you have recommendations about what organisations should be using an assessment and throughout the process?

Diane

"Yeah, definitely. I think I can probably touch on some of the bits in terms of what test I suppose we can use, as well. One of the key things is ensuring none of those assessments are really focusing on that past experience. I think we're all sitting here today, and everything we're talking about is overcoming those hurdles, in particular, in the recruitment process, which naturally has meant, actually,

some neurodivergent candidates are less likely to have past experience due to not being able to get through these hurdles and the processes to date.

So, I think removing that barrier and focusing more on that potential piece and kind of future focused work possible as well as kind of a key one. And kind of touching back on Theo's piece earlier where you were talking about kind of this 'spikier' profiles and for instance, dyslexic candidates are potentially more likely to be higher in creativity. So focusing less on different stages of a process where you can knock candidates out on a strength that might not be strong for them, such as pure numerical ability or pure verbal, but creating a blended whole person assessment, that actually means that you can see across the potentially 'spikier' areas, you're not knocking people out on an area they may not perform as well on, you're getting a whole insight into that person as well.

Non-timed tests is a big one as well. So you might find a lot of those online psychometric cognitive ability tests can be timed, moving away from that. Taking away the time pressure, can also help with some of those adjustments in terms of extending time, it's already pre-built in, candidates can go through the test in their own time, there's less time pressure, that can also help another aspects of diversity inclusion, because females are more likely to score lower on time tests. So, you can tick off quite a few things as you're going through that as well.

So, there are some examples of how you can change parts of your process. But I think, when it comes to language, and we have talked about this as we're going through, we've been talking about adjustments. I think one thing really key to call out is making sure you don't talk about 'reasonable' adjustments at any point, but just referring to adjustments. For a candidate reading that it means you haven't deemed what is reasonable for them... you can actually have the open conversation and talk through what you can actually do in the process for them, and have that preempted and thought through before you get to that point, as well.

And, again, a bit that Theo talked about before in terms of different formats. So, anywhere where you've got those lengthy stretches of text, whether that be an application forms, potentially of any marketing material, instructions for tests. One, have a look through if you've got any long winded sentences, simplify them down into smaller, more easily digestible one, but also have different formats. Can you have somebody from your recruitment team or somebody in role, actually read this out and create filmed content, making it easier for dyslexic to digest that information instead of spending a lot longer than other candidates reading through that content. So those are just some simple quick wins for you there."

So, Eleanor, listening to what they've talked about in terms of the language and the shift in the way that you're assessing all candidates, what are your top recommendations from your experience that you would recommend implementing organisationally?

Eleanor

"Yeah, definitely. It's very much gonna echo what Diane said. So firstly, I would recommend, looking at strengths, this combination of being good at something and enjoying doing it that makes somebody's strengths so special and good to recruit against. It means that candidates are being assessed on their potential rather than on their background, their experiences and the opportunities that they have happened to being given in the past.

Again, a company I mentioned briefly before, Lexxic, truly embrace neurodiversity and assure that

organisations do consider how they ensure greater accessibility across talent, assessment and development practices.

Then, secondly, I know I've said this a lot, but, don't be afraid to work with third party experts. So the likes of My Plus consulting that I've mentioned, or you could consult with different charities who are experts in their areas. They can perform audits on your process to point out where improvements can be made, or offer advice if you're struggling in a particular area and offer you training.

Then finally, I think just welcome open communication with all candidates. If adjustments need to be made to the process, listen to them, and what they need, as that going to most circumstances, they're gonna know what's best for themselves. Especially if you've recently adapted your recruitment process, you need to be open to welcoming feedback from neurodiverse candidates and individuals in your business, then, if possible, adapt your recruitment process mid-cycle, if not noted down for next season. But otherwise, make sure you're willing to make those adjustments throughout the season for candidates to support them in whatever way they need."

Di, one of the things that we've been developing and dealing with, with our clients is that identification of potential and one of the things we get asked by the clients that we work with is: what do we do if we're taking away the more traditional route, the CV and the reasoning tests? What do we replace them with?

Diane

"Removing that CV and past experience as well, focusing on that future potential piece, which does level the playing field for everybody looking towards that. So that's kind of the key one.

And with that, moving into any assessments that could look for that. So for instance, more future focused Situational Judgment Tests, and there's a bit I can talk through in terms of language as well in terms of what you can use within those tests, particularly.

When it does come to some of those cognitive ability tests, there can sometimes be that inherent bias, particularly in the false choice responses. So, where possible, ensuring if you can make an adjustment in these more automated assessments, being able to have free text and the candidates who can get to a point here, particularly neurodiverse candidates who do not agree with potentially the way a particular response is worded and just prefer to write it in their own format. That really makes the test a lot more accessible for those candidates. So, they're just a couple of examples there of how you can switch it up."

Any tips on how to change the mindsets of business stakeholders that are potentially more tied to the more traditional assessment processes that they've been through in the past and they think, potentially more appropriate?

Diane

"I think one of the things I would say here is, particularly when we're designing any assessments, we complete an insights gathering phase, where we do speak to a range of stakeholders at different levels. And with that we can really get under the skin of what is it you're actually looking for in the role? A lot of the time that doesn't come down to past experience. So, when you start to share those insights back, it can start to ring true, actually, with some of their stakeholders of what we're looking for. And how can we then build that into our process that doesn't rely on some of those previous experiences, too. So that's a really good way to do it; really engage them at the start of the process so they do buy into what you're doing as well, later on."

Eleanor

"Well, EY is a professional services firm made up of mainly accountants, so everyone's very data driven. If you ever want to do any change, it's got to be led by data and evidence of what you want to do, but we haven't accepted CVs in our student recruiting process for a few years now, so we've had buy in from senior leadership for a long time on that, but even now, you'll still get a couple of interviewers who, when you put candidates through to final interview, they're like, "where's their CV, I don't know anything about them?". You need to just take that interview for what it is, don't base it on the past performances, just on this stage, as they've been through the process, already, they've passed. I think another piece of that is at EY, we recently implemented this new training, all recruiters and all partners or people who are doing final interviews, have to go through quite lengthy unconscious bias training. So, that covers every single aspect of diversity. And so I think that is kind of helping quite a lot with that understanding. I've definitely had a lot less pushback this past year on getting someone's CV and past experiences."