Autism at Work (AaW): SAP's Employment model for people from the Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD)

Walldorf / St. Leon Rot, Germany
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Project Stage:
Established

Budget:
$250,000 - $500,000

- Disability
- Disability rights
- Corporate social responsibility
- Tolerance

Project Summary

Elevator Pitch

Concise Summary: Help us pitch this solution! Provide an explanation within 3-4 short sentences.

About 1% of the population is affected by autism spectrum disorders. SAP's aim is to raise the proportion of employees with ASD in its workforce. In support of its mission to help the world run better and improve people's lives, SAP employs people with ASD as SW testers, programmers and data quality specialists. SAP sees an advantage to leveraging the talents of people with ASD, while helping them to secure employment.

Problem: What problem is this project trying to address?

Individuals affected by autism fit well into the IT industry, especially in the areas software testing, programming and data quality. Still, many people with autism have difficulties finding job opportunities due to their handicap in social behavior and communication style. However, most of these weaknesses can be remedied through proper training, respective awareness sessions internally as well as externally and a stable and reliable support model for all colleagues involved. With Autism at Work SAP is make a difference by offering job opportunities to people from
the Autistic spectrum.

Solution: What is the proposed solution? Please be specific!

SAP’s major focus is to create values that go beyond cooperate business measures. People within the autistic spectrum have special skills/talents that can be an enrichment for corporates. SAP sees a clear economic value by employing people from the spectrum and help them to get into the labor market and become independent from external support systems. SAP is moving away from identifying weaknesses to unleash potential. Therefore SAP is opening the doors for those people who have extraordinary skills. The pilot projects are a great success. Software quality/productivity within the team improved significantly and also the solidarity/communication of the employees among themselves improved.

Impact: How does it Work

Example: Walk us through a specific example(s) of how this solution makes a difference; include its primary activities.

SAP is very excited by this opportunity and believe that this will enable SAP globally to access a huge untapped talent pool, By living diversity in the Autism at Work project very concretely, SAP showcases not only our thought leadership role in the IT industry, but also become a multiplier for the cause. Process flow: 1: Finding candidates through the network of ASD organisations; Have a single point of contact (emailaddress/questionnaire) for applicants. 2: Reading CVs differently; focus on special interests 3: Invite shortlist of candidates to Lego hangout (better get to know the candidates) 4: Invite candidates to 6 week onboarding program at SAP 5: Involve Business teams 6: Offer contract to new hires

Spread Strategies: Moving forward, what are the main strategies for scaling impact?

AaW is a global initiative. Currently we are running projects in Germany, India, Ireland, US, Canada and Brazil in 2014. The AaW consists out of 4 major content blocks: Incubator: SAP employs colleagues from the spectrum supported by Specialisterne Think Tank: Development with Autists ensure innovation from the edge Platform: We would like to bring key players on the topic of Autism together, such as foundations, organisations, cliniques, universities, etc. Influencer: SAP is making the difference by showcasing the value add internally as well as externally. As SAP has more than 250000 customers and 15000 partners worldwide we are in a position to tell the story and hence convince other corporates to join us. In addition SAP is willing to share lessons learnt from our pilots and offer a comprehensive set of tools, processes and guidelines to corporates who are willing to follow us.

Sustainability

Marketplace: Who else is addressing the problem outlined here? How does the proposed project differ from these approaches?

SAP is the first global company committed to employ people from the spectrum on a large scale (650 by 2020). About one% of the global population is affected by disorders belonging to the autism spectrum. SAP’s aim is to gradually raise the proportion of employees with autism in its global workforce.

Team

AaW initiative is part of SAPs Global Diversity & Inclusion team. The project is setup as follows: - 2 global leads being part of the Global D&I team - Local leads per country; local leads need to be passionate about the topic - One of our board members is acting as the business sponsor for the AaW initiative - in addition in each of the countries Specialisterne offers local support (operation centers) - Midterm (planned for end of 2014) a steering committee will be in place: Members are key players, executives from SAP, Specialisterne, universities, NGOs and ASD organisations.

About the Lead Co-Creation Partners

Organization:
SAP AG
Visit website

- LEAD SOCIAL-MISSION ORGANIZATION

Organization Name
Specialisterne

Type of organization (e.g. NGO, association, not-for-profit, foundation, social enterprise)
not-for-profit

Total Number of Full-Time Employees
Lead Contact First Name
Thorkil
Lead Contact Last Name
Sonne
Title
Founder and CEO of Specialisterne
Country
Denmark

Twitter URL
Facebook URL
Website
www.specialisterne.com

**LEAD CORPORATE PARTNER**

**Organization Name**
SAP AG

**Total Number of Full-Time Employees**
67,000

**Lead Contact First Name**
Stefanie

**Lead Contact Last Name**
Nennstiel

**Title**
HR Diversity & Inclusion Expert, CoLead AaW

**Country**
Germany

**Twitter URL**
Facebook URL
**Organization Website**
www.sap.com

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**Basic Info**

**Project Starting Year**
2013

**Primary European Country where this Project is creating social impact**
BW, Walldorf / St. Leon Rot

**Additional European countries where this Project is creating social impact**
Global approach; Currently roll out to Germany, Ireland, US, Canada, Brazil, India in 2014

**Select the category that best fits the type of your project:**

**Job Creation**: Entries in this category create new jobs for people away from the labor market.

**What awards or honors has the project received?**
Well known externally; Extrem high media coverage world wide

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**Project Summary**

**Co-Creation Model:** Tell us about your main strategic partners and how the partnership truly create value. For each Partner please include its type (business/social/public), its name, a short description, its key motivation to participate in the co-creation project, and the key contributions it is making in the co-creation project. Please follow the format displayed below:

**Partner 1: Specialisterne**

- **social**
  - Specialisterne is an internationally recognized leader in harnessing the talents of people with autism to work in technology-oriented jobs. The vision of Specialisterne is a world where people are given equal opportunities in the labor market.
  - Key motivation to participate in the co-creation project: With launching the AaW project SAP shows the commitment to employ differently abled people. As Specialisterne focus on people from the Autistic spectrum it seems to be a natural fit.
  - Key contributions in the co-creation project: Specialisterne will work with SAP on identifying candidates, recruiting, preparing and supporting people with Autism to work for SAP. Specialisterne will also support to train and coach business teams and managers who will work directly with colleagues with Autism.
Impact

Impact: What is the impact of the work to date? Also describe the projected future impact. Please specify using qualitative and quantitative data (e.g. # of indirect and direct beneficiaries); help us understand how this solution truly makes a difference.

People within the autistic spectrum have special skills that can be an enrichment for organizations. Therefore we see a clear economic value by employing people from the spectrum. We also see a chance to help people from the ASD spectrum to get into the labor market more easily. We even claim that this is a fundamental paradigm shift in recruiting, we are moving away from identifying weaknesses to unleash potential. People from the ASD spectrum usually fail in these standardized procedures. Therefore SAP is trying to open the doors for those people who have extraordinary skills. In addition to that SAP creates awareness for Autism.

The pilot projects are a great success. Not only the software quality and productivity within the team improved significantly, but also the solidarity and communication of the employees among themselves improved.

Sustainability

Funding: How is your project financially supported? [select all that apply]

Businesses, National government.

Sustainability Plan: Has your project already reached financial sustainability? If not, what is this solution’s plan to ensure financial sustainability? Do the main partners have enough stake to sustain the solution? If this project requires limited budget, how will other resources be secured to maintain or grow this work?

We would like to run AaW as a sustainable, scalable business. Midterm the employment process of Autism should be part of SAPs recruiting DNA. SAP’s learning curve on ASD is tremendously high; Huge number of internal volunteers to ensure appropriate support and success.

Team

Founding Story: Share a story about the “Aha!” moment that led the Partners to get started and/or to see the potential for this to succeed.

We are in a situation of ‘war for talents’; especially in the EU 900.000 open IT positions by end of 2015 are forecasted. So we need to think differently. Diverse teams perform better and increase the level of creativity and innovation. Innovation from the edge is one key driver for success in future.

About the Co-Creation

Barriers: What main barriers may you have encountered to co-create during the creation and implementation of the project and how did you try to overcome them?

As the employment process is new all existing processes (the way to find appropriate candidates, onbording, training, etc) needed to be adjusted. To make a long story short: You need to be very creative and solution-oriented to make this a success. But we already harvest first fruits.

Governance: What is the type of the relationship between the partners? (e.g. joint venture, contractual relationship, joint project...)

We announced a global partner model with Specialisterne. So it’s a joint project on the one site but also a contractual relationship on the other site.

Interaction model: How is the project a transformative partnership? How is the interaction transforming the partnering organizations and their employees/ leadership in terms of creating a new vision, new management practices, new skills and new organizational structures? Please provide for concrete examples

The model we defined is not SAP specific it is ASD specific. It inspires companies to think differently. By telling the story we are in a position to convince leaders, NGOs, etc do to so. As this is a sustainable, scalable model and shows the value add from the early beginning on it’s easy to explain and to understand. Important is to increase awareness about ASD from the very early beginning. The lack of knowledge about Autism and the way to include people from the spectrum into the workforce are the most challenging areas.

How did you find out about this competition?

Ashoka contacts

Source URL: https://www.changemakers.com/discussions/entries/autism-work#comment-0