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Module 2

Interaction With and Among all Staff

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Module Title	Module 2: Interaction with and among all staff
<p>Learning Objectives</p>	<p>Module 2 aims to:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Educate learners on communication behaviour and skills aimed at motivating others and giving feedback to staff with autism. 2. Describe and communicate job profiles, work and tasks, as well as responsibilities towards staff with autism. 3. Learn how to set, agree and communicate goals with staff with autism 4. Explain how to communicate change and responsibilities regarding social inclusion towards other staff or external stakeholders 5. Provide information on how to promote impact and benefit (internal and external awareness raising)
<p>Learning Outcomes</p>	<p>Through Module 2, learners will be able to perform the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Support autistic staff at work ● Create job profiles for autistic staff ● Set goals and monitor them ● Know about social inclusion at work ● Communicate with autistic staff, ● Give feedback to autistic staff

1. Introduction

Many individuals on the autism spectrum have the capabilities businesses need, and with an under- or unemployment rate nearing 80%, they can become a key part of the solution.

Working with someone on the autism spectrum (including those with Asperger syndrome), can be an enriching experience for managers and colleagues alike, but it may also present some challenges. But there are ways to identify the right kind of work for them, overcome obstacles, and set themselves up for job success.

In today's diverse workplace, effective communication with all team members is essential to be fostered for a harmonious and productive environment. For managers, understanding how to communicate with autistic employees can unlock their full potential and contribute to a more inclusive workplace.

In this manual, we'll explore actionable tips to enhance effective communication with autistic employees, accompanied by real life workplace practices that demonstrate the positive impact of these strategies.

Effectively communicating with autistic employees is a journey of understanding, empathy, and active learning. By embracing openness, providing clear instructions, using visual aids, and supporting routines, an inclusive workplace can be created where all employees, regardless of their neurodiversity, thrive and contribute their best.

Setting goals, agreeing, and communicating job goals with people with autism at work can be challenging but achievable. Each neurodivergent employee is an individual with their own unique set of skills and challenges. A SMART method is introduced to attain this competency.

Autistic employees may have difficulty processing feedback or interpreting social cues, making it crucial to approach feedback in a way that is supportive and effective. In this manual, tips will be presented for giving feedback to autistic employees that managers can use to create a positive feedback experience that fosters growth and development.

Each autistic individual is unique, so continuous feedback and adaptation is necessary. Through these actionable tips, managers can build bridges that lead to stronger, more cohesive teams and ultimately drive the success of the entire organisation.

Unit 1. Understanding communication, behaviour and skills for motivating others and giving feedback to autistic staff

Understanding communication behaviour and skills for motivating others and giving feedback to autistic staff is an important aspect of managing a diverse workplace. Autistic individuals may have unique communication challenges, and it is important to understand these challenges to effectively communicate with them.

Here are some tips and strategies to help managers communicate more effectively with autistic staff:

- **Getting and keeping their attention**

Their name should be used at the beginning of the conversation to get their attention.

Make sure they are paying attention before you ask a question or give an instruction.

Their hobbies and interests, or the activity they are currently doing, should be used to engage them.

- **Processing information**

Say less and say it slowly. Use specific key words, repeating and stressing them.

Irony, sarcasm, figurative language, rhetorical questions, idioms, or exaggeration must be avoided as autistic people can take these literally.

- **Using communication boards, sign language, SGDs, and PECS to help them communicate.**

Remember: concise and simpler instruction = more successful.

- **Avoiding open-ended questions;** Questions must be kept short when asking an autistic employee. Also questions must be structured, e.g. offer options or choices.

Being specific is also vital: For example, ask “Did you enjoy your lunch?” and “Did you enjoy maths?” rather than “How was your day?”.

1. a. Ideas & Best Practices

- Boards, sign language, SGDs, and PECS must be used to help them communicate.
- Visuals and simple language to convey instructions.
- Communication must be direct and specific to foster a stronger connection and support the unique communication needs of autistic individuals.
- Small victories in communication must be celebrated to create a positive environment that encourages improved communication with autistic staff.
- POWR strategy (Prepare, Offer, Wait, and Respond) can be used to support the communication of autistic individuals.
- A supportive network of friends, family, and educators must be built who understand the unique needs of autistic individuals.

- Be patient and recognize progress, no matter how small, to encourage communication.
- With patience, understanding, and effective communication, autistic staff can be motivated and supported in the workplace.

1. b. How to Give Feedback to Staff with Autism

When delivering constructive feedback to an autistic employee, an optimal environment must be ensured by choosing a quiet and private setting. Conversation must be initiated with positive reinforcement to create a supportive atmosphere. Clear and specific language to be utilised , considering visual aids or written feedback to enhance comprehension. Adequate processing time to be alloed, taking into account sensory sensitivities.

Guidelines for additional considerations when giving feedback:

- Ambiguity to be avoided: Be specific, avoiding metaphors and sarcasm.
- Visual aids and supplements to be used to enhance understanding.
- Consistency in Feedback: Regular check-ins to be set, delivering feedback consistently.
- Clarity and Directness is needed about workplace etiquette and rules.
- Ongoing autism awareness training and monitoring to be provided.
- Honest, consistent and constructive feedback to be provided.
- Feedback to be delivered in the least triggering way possible.
- Potential miscommunications to be acknowledged,emphasizing the importance of clear instructions.

Implementing these strategies fosters a supportive feedback environment for autistic employees.

Unit 2: Job Planning: job profiles, work, tasks, and responsibilities towards staff with autism.

2. a. How to describe a job

Job descriptions should be free from requirements that are not essential for the job to be carried out effectively. Qualities such as ‘excellent communication skills’ or ‘good team player’ are often included as default skills, even if they are not necessary – and many autistic people will not apply for jobs demanding these attributes.

It is important to provide what information the applicant needs to provide on the application form and to ensure that the form includes a space for applicants to highlight any support or adjustments they may need at an interview.

2. b. How to organise and prioritise

The ability to organise and prioritise helps to plan daily activities and manage time effectively. Autistic people can find organising, planning and prioritising difficult but there are many tools to help. An autistic person may have difficulties with:

- processing information
- predicting the consequences of an action (if I do this, what will happen next?)
- understanding the concept of time
- 'executive function' (coping with daily tasks like tidying up or cooking).

One or all of these can affect a person's ability to organise, prioritise and sequence.

3. c. Strategies to help organise and prioritise

Individuals on the autism spectrum can effectively organise and prioritise daily activities using various strategies:

- Visual aids or charts provide them a clear representation of routines.
- Routine and consistency offer them predictability and stability.
- Task Breakdown into smaller steps makes them more manageable.
- Time Management such as timers, alarms, or countdowns are very helpful.
- Colour-coded systems simplify categorization and prioritisation.
- Clear, written instructions serve as concrete references for tasks.
- Task management apps with visual schedules and reminders can be beneficial.
- Tailoring organisational strategies help individual learning styles enhance effectiveness.
- Workspace organisation maintain a tidy, clutter-free workspace that reduces sensory distractions.
- Explaining tasks through social stories help in understanding expectations.
- Flexibility to be allowed within routines accommodates unexpected changes.

Unit 3: Goal Setting: Set, Agree, and Communicate Job Goals

The purpose of this unit is to learn how to set goals for staff with autism, enhancing know-how about their particularities. Also how to get their commitment towards goals and how to effectively communicate (and monitor) their job performance.

What kind of goals are referred to: job-related, task-related, and career-related goals.

Setting goals, agreeing, and communicating job goals with people with autism at work can be challenging, but achievable. Each neurodivergent employee is an individual with own unique set of skills and challenges. Some have trouble retaining information, and others have trouble focusing, and so on.

3. a. Setting Goals a S.M.A.R.T. way

Individuals on the spectrum can be taught goal-setting using the S.M.A.R.T. method. S.M.A.R.T. is an acronym for effective goal setting.

- “S” for Specific: The goal must be clearly stated, without words such as “more,” “longer,” or “better,” because they are too vague.
- “M” for Measurable: The goal must be measurable so that success is clear.
- “A” for “Are you motivated?” Traditionally, the A stands for attainable, but “Are you motivated?” is preferred.
- “R” for Realistic: Is this something that the individual has the skills and ability to accomplish?
- “T” for Timely: Can this be accomplished in one week?

3. b. How to set goals and monitor autistic staff

Set Goals means to break down the project into smaller, easily achievable steps. For each step a mutually agreed-upon deadline must be set.

Monitor Goals: Goals must be communicated by sending a recap each week (or each agreed-upon time) to ensure everyone is on the same page. Areas to be highlighted, where each individual feels to be most successful and where needs to be focused.

3. c. Effective Communication for Working with People with Autism

Providing feedback to all employees is a crucial part of managing a team effectively. It helps in building a relationship between managers and employees, identifying areas of improvement, promoting growth and learning, as well as providing recognition.

Communication for autistic employees is different. With differences in processing information speeds, interpreting social cues, and more. This needs to be recognised when giving feedback to ensure that it is a positive experience, and one that focuses on growth, development, and support.

It is essential to be specific, concrete, and accurate when feeding back to autistic employees. Abstract concepts, vague, non-specific feedback, metaphors and sarcasm should be avoided in communicating feedback.

3. d. Some effective steps for communication

Preferred communication methods to be asked. This could be face-to-face conversations, online conversations, or as a written email – or a combination of methods.

Performance to be reviewed regularly. Brief, more frequent catch-ups may be more suitable for autistic staff. Weekly catch ups are important and it's a great opportunity to run over quick queries. At times of high stress, more frequent catch up is needed, but often for ten-fifteen minutes at a time.

Check-ins to be kept predictable and the meeting format and environment to be also considered. Communication will differ at various times. And finally, plenty of reassurance in anxious and stressful situations to be provided

Unit 4: Social Inclusion for Managers

This unit aims to increase the awareness of managers for social inclusion, incl. inclusion of neurodiverse employees, as critical to success at the workplace. Tapping into the talent pool of neurodivergent people is one of the ways to start.

By increasing diversity and inclusion, a company will not only attract valuable employees, but also expand its customer base and enhance the company's reputation. Also employing autistic people will add value to and benefit the workplace whilst improving management skills.

4. a. What are the benefits to an organisation of employing autistic staff

Social inclusion means to ensure that different cultures and social backgrounds are represented in the workplace. General benefits will be greater loyalty, motivation and dependability.

Employing autistic people will not only help companies become truly inclusive, but also have potential cost-saving benefits as well.

Organisations with autistic employees can benefit as follows:

- Improve overall company image
- Improve competitive company image which has helped expand their customer base to all who prioritise inclusive services
- Enhance company reputation and stronger patronage with brand loyal customers
- Improve safety records
- Help make sure every employee is likely to feel heard and respected for their opinions and work

In companies with well-established disability community outreach programmes in place, employee turnover is up to 30% lower than the companies without. In addition, these companies are two times more likely to outperform their peers in terms of total shareholder returns.

Although people with disabilities may require some sort of job accommodation or reasonable adjustment e.g., specialised equipment, facility modifications, adjustments to work schedules or job duties, most adjustments are either free or inexpensive to implement and will be offset by lower staff turnover and improved productivity.

5. Summary

This module is specifically crafted to equip managers with the vital communication skills and behavioural insights necessary for motivating and providing feedback to autistic staff in hospitality settings. The primary focus is on establishing an inclusive workplace where individuals with autism can excel, fostering a positive and diverse team dynamic.

Mastering Communication for Autistic Staff Motivation. This required unique communication techniques, developing strategies to capture attention, to engage in a manner that resonates effectively.

Implementation of communication tools such as boards, sign language, and visual aids is needed. And language to be kept clear and simple. A culture that celebrates and reinforces even the smallest victories in communication needs to be created.

Feedback giving for autistic staff is of vital significance. Special arrangements are needed such as to select quiet and private settings for feedback discussions, to take into account sensory sensitivities. Also to initiate conversations with positive reinforcement, to establish a supportive and encouraging tone, to utilize clear language, visual aids, and written feedback to enhance comprehension.

A strategic Job Planning and goal setting is needed. This includes clearly defined job profiles, tasks, and responsibilities for autistic staff. Tailor communication strategies to facilitate effective goal setting and agreement, as well effective feedback for improvement or recognition.

The successful inclusion of staff with autism in hospitality requires special knowledge and insights about how to meet the staff, how to include them in the job process, and together how to set appropriate goals and work objectives.

Social Inclusion Awareness for Managers:

Awareness should be enhanced among hospitality managers regarding the positive impact and multifaceted benefits of social inclusion. The establishment of a supportive work environment that genuinely values diversity must be encouraged. And understanding and appreciation for the unique strengths that individuals with autism bring to the team must be promoted.

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