

## [INTRODUCTION]

**[0:00:04] DC:** It takes the right skills and the right innovation to design and manage meaningful print marketing solutions. Welcome to Podcasts From the Printerverse, where we explore all facets of print and marketing that create stellar communications and sales opportunities for business success. I'm your host, Deborah Corn, the Intergalactic Ambassador to the Printerverse. Thanks for tuning in. Listen long and prosper.

Hey everybody, welcome to Podcasts From the Printerverse. This is Deborah Corn, your Intergalactic Ambassador. And today we are talking about something a little different, but I think it is really important. Neurodivergence is not a niche. It is not rare, and it is not going away. Current research shows that 15% to 20% of the global population is neurodivergent, with estimates reaching 1 in 4 employees in today's workforce, according to Gallup and 2025 global workforce studies.

It is growing not because it's new, but because people are now more aware, more diagnosed, and also more willing to identify how they work best. At the same time, employers are also paying attention. Data from Indeed's Hiring Lab in 2025 shows that job postings referencing neurodiversity have nearly tripled since 2018.

Now, this is where it becomes a business conversation. Deloitte and recent studies show neurodiverse teams can be up to 30% more productive with fewer errors. At JPMorgan Chase, employees in the Autism at Work program have demonstrated 90% to 140% higher productivity in specific roles. And when organizations get this right, the impact goes beyond productivity.

According to the Neurodiversity Index updated in 2025, nearly 9 out of 10 companies report improved morale and engagement when they implement neuroinclusive practices. But most workplaces are not designed for this yet. That same 2025 Neurodiversity Index research shows that only about a third of neurodivergent employees feel well supported, and more than 40% experience daily friction at work, often due to communication, structure, and environment, not ability, not their ability.

The gap is where the opportunity is because it is not – this isn't about accommodation. It is about performance. And today's guests are Jeff Gibbard and Sarah Ohanesian. They are business partners, speakers, and co-founders of Super Productive, a company focused on building neuroinclusive workplaces that actually work. Jeff is a content creator, author, and strategist. Sarah is a former CMO turned productivity expert who helps individuals and teams rethink how work gets done together. And everybody knows Sarah from Girls Who Print and from being the co-host of the Time Management Tips in 20 podcast with me.

And together, Jeff and Sarah bring a practical, real-world perspective on how different brains operate at work and what happens when organizations stop forcing people into one way of thinking and start designing an environment for how people actually perform. They also co-present a keynote called Brains @ Work focused on the invisible power of neurodiversity in the workplace.

Welcome, both of you.

**[0:04:17] JG:** That was the best intro ever, I think. I'm going to have to give that best intro ever. Thank you for having us.

**[0:04:23] SO:** Yeah, thank you, Deborah.

**[0:04:25] DC:** Honestly, thank you so much for joining, because this is something that I think is really important, especially because of what the research says. This isn't new. It's just that it's being recognized and people feel more comfortable explaining that they have – is it a diagnosis? What do you say, Jeff? Is it a diagnosis?

**[0:04:50] JG:** So I think it depends on how you look at it because there's definitely the clinical diagnosis. Are you getting formal accommodations and medication? Then, yeah, it's a diagnosis. But on the other hand, I think the way we talk about it at least is that it's often just more helpful to think about it as these are just the ways that we're different, right? You could give it a label, you could give it a name, you can give it a diagnosis code. Or you can just say, "Well, I process time a little bit differently. And here's how. And here's how I think bottom up, and here's how I think sequentially." Right? We talk instead about what it actually looks like in

practice, but you could give it a diagnosis, but it's ultimately just how do we think differently?  
How do different brains work?

**[0:05:27] DC:** It's interesting because there is a stigma around it. If I was just thinking now when I was in school and you had those desks that you sat in, great if you're a righty, but if you were lefty, you were in a lot of trouble unless somebody made an accommodation for you to actually be able to write instead of – all the lefties always had ink all over their hand because they had to write over themselves almost.

Let's define neurodiversity. What it is? And more important, what it is not. And Jeff, we'll start with you.

**[0:06:00] JG:** Yeah. Neurodiversity just – and it's funny, because in our keynote, Sarah typically does this part of the keynote, but I'll do my best to see if I can remember her part.

**[0:06:09] DC:** Well, we can skip you, Jeff, and go right to Sarah.

**[0:06:12] JG:** I mean, we can, but I want to see if I remember because later I want you to test her on one of my parts of the keynote. Neurodiversity just really refers to the different ways that brains work. It was a term coined by – was it Judith Butler?

**[0:06:23] SO:** Judy Singer. Yeah.

**[0:06:24] JG:** Judy Singer.

**[0:06:24] SO:** Yep. 1990s.

**[0:06:26] JG:** Okay. So, I forgot the name. There we go. It refers to the different ways that brains work. Fundamentally, it's just different brains work in different ways. And the way it typically is set up is that we tend to hear two words associated with it, neurodivergent and neurotypical. And what that does for people naturally is set up this idea of sort of a linear binary. But it's not actually a linear binary. It's really more like a circle. We all kind of exist in this soup of different ways that we process time, the different way that we put together tasks in our head or

projects, the different ways that we think, how we react to sensory stimuli around us, things like that. That's basically what neurodiversity is. And the way that most things are structured is around one particular sort of cluster of the way that people think, and those who think in a way that's divergent from that are typically kind of left out.

**[0:07:11] DC:** Sarah?

**[0:07:13] SO:** Well, I will just double down on the fact that I think it's really important for people to remember this one part of it is that different brains work differently. And when I think of the definition, that's the main takeaway is just every single brain on your team, in your family, in your marriage, in your partnership, you got all different brains there. And I think to Jeff's point, thinking about them all existing on this circular spectrum, and we actually have a slide that we use to show this, it's just that every brain is different. And so that to me is the best definition that we've come across.

**[0:07:45] JG:** One thing I just want to add about that, because you made me think of this, Sarah, and we often say this, there's no such thing as a "normal brain". Because I think that's one of the downfalls of the idea of neurotypicality is that like, "Oh, there's this normal brain. They're all like this, this one thing." And the neurodivergent, they're all different from this one thing.

When Sarah says different brains think differently, we're literally saying every single brain is different from every other brain in some way or another. Our experiences are one big component of it that shape what we think about, how we perceive the world, but then also how we're wired. Everybody's brain is in fact different. There is no one real standard. There's just kind of a cluster of things that people more easily adapt to.

**[0:08:25] SO:** I feel like we are very passionate about making sure that it's not this right way, wrong way. It's just all the brains are different, and there's really normal, abnormal. It's just different. And so that's what to me means the most coming out of that definition.

**[0:08:41] DC:** Sarah and I often talk about how I'm a Gen-Xer. Excuse me. Just do the work or get out of here. And obviously, we don't live in that world anymore. And with all due respect, and

I'm not trying to be offensive if I say the wrong words, but when you hear neurodivergence or diversity, I think that most people go to some sort of learning disorder a lot of times. And I'm not saying these are learning disorders. I'm just saying that you hear it associated with ADHD. You hear it associated with autism. We'll get into the how in the hell is any of this disclosed legally in any way. You could put that to the side right now.

I want to talk about that as the stigma. Again, I'm not trying to be offensive. If that's offensive to anybody, my apologies. I don't know a better word for that. But it's associated with, let's say, a detriment instead of it's a righty and a lefty. What can you do? That's the way you're born. Sarah, we'll start with you first.

**[0:09:46] SO:** Yeah. Yeah, I love the example you gave of the desk, and that's actually a similar example we give a lot of times is the scissors. And so, people aren't even thinking about there's right-handed scissors, and there's left-handed scissors. Now, some of the people listening right now go, "Oh, there are."

**[0:10:00] DC:** Can I just interject because my arm wasn't attached to my body for a little time there, and I had to use my left hand, and scissors was one of the things I couldn't do. And I couldn't figure out why. And then I was like, "Oh, they're for right hands."

**[0:10:14] SO:** Yes. Yes. Yes. Exactly. And so for us, it's an example very similar to the desk that we're just saying be aware of this. Be aware that this is a difference, and it does exist. I'll let Jeff speak to the learning disability part of it. But yeah, what we're trying to really do is raise awareness of it is just a different style essentially. There's no right or wrong. It's as equal as being right-handed or left-handed. But Jeff, I'll turn it over to you for the kind of learning difference concept of this.

**[0:10:45] JG:** Yeah, totally. And so, I'm in between a Gen-X and a Millennial. I'm the Xennials, I think they're called. I was born in 80. I hear you on that. And I also have spent a lot of time working with people who grew up in an era where ADHD or autism or any of these different things, they had a completely different association. And not only that, but even the criteria of diagnosing autism back in, say, the 80s or before, there were only really extreme cases of

autism. And only as the diagnostic criteria has expanded, we now see that there are different levels on that spectrum, which is why it's now ASD, Autism Spectrum Disorder.

And kind of to your point of people associate with a learning disability, I think that's partly because the way that it's been presented over so many years is when you say autism, there's a whole group of people out there that go "*Rain Man*. I've seen *Rain Man*. That's autism, right?" Or you say ADHD, and you're like, "I've seen South Park. I know that character." Right? And so we have all of these ideas in our heads of what these disorders are. Or we use them as punchlines in a joke. We'll say like, "Oh, I'm so OCD about my email." Or, "Oh god, I'm being so ADHD right now. I can't pay attention to anything." All of these are just ways that we've come to understand what these things are without a full, broad awareness.

And so Sarah used the word awareness. I think that's actually the most critical piece here, because the more that people become aware of it, the more that they see that it's not just a learning disability. Sometimes it's a learning difference, but sometimes it is a learning disability. There are severe cases of autism where people have a really hard time learning all manner of different things.

There's also types of autism where people develop something known as hyperlexia, which is where I believe I'm using the term right here, but that's learning to read at an extremely young age. We're talking about 18-month-old who can read at a second-grade level. I'm not sure if those are the exact levels, but the point is there's really advanced learning, and there's really behind learning. And the kids that who have that sort of ability to read, they might struggle in all these other ways.

What we really come to learn the more we look into this and understand it, and give each other the space, is that we learn we all have different strengths and weaknesses. And I think where a lot of what we try to do in the work that we do when we talk about these differences is we try to get people who would think of themselves as neurotypical to see the places where maybe they would struggle with something that comes really easily to someone who might have ADHD or autism or things like that. And it's to show not like, "Hey, you're disabled and broken," but it's like context matters here.

If you're a lefty at a righty desk, you're disabled. If we gave everybody lefty desks, the righties, all of a sudden, are struggling. Context really matters. And it's not so much a learning disability in all cases, but sometimes it's at the context, and the structure and the system is what needs to change for someone to have the ability to take part.

**[0:13:28] SO:** Yeah. And we actually do an exercise, Deborah, in one of our workshops where we make it hard for everyone to prove that exact point. We set up these obstacles essentially, and make it very challenging for people. And the purpose of that is discomfort. We're trying to get people to be uncomfortable so that they can see there's no right or wrong here. It's just in these different contexts, in these different moments, we all have different struggles that we deal with. That's what I really adore about working with Jeff is now we basically have a shortcut keyboard. I'm like, "Jeff, this is a you thing." And he knows what's a me thing. And that's really been the backbone of our partnership, which is really how we got into this work in the first place was I was saying, "I'm not very good at this. Can you help me with this?" And he would say, "I don't really want to check my email or manage my calendar." I'm like, "I could help you with that. That's an organization thing. I can do that."

And so we really worked out what are the strengths and weaknesses here. And together, oh my gosh, we have this brilliant partnership that's been so successful. But it was really about talking about it, thinking about the context. And each one of us have strengths and weaknesses.

And now, one of my favorite things that happens after we speak is people will come up afterwards to us and say, "I want a Jeff." "I want a Sarah." And I'm like, "Yes, exactly." Because it's really proving our point and making people realize, "Hey, I have weaknesses, too." No matter what my brain is doing, we all have weaknesses. And I think that's a really important piece to bring out of this.

[BREAK]

**[0:14:58] DC:** Print Media Centr provides printspiration and resources to our vast network of global print and marketing professionals. Whether you are an industry supplier, print service provider, print customer, or consultant, we have you covered by providing resources and strategies that enable business marketing and creative success, reporting from global events,

these podcasts, Project Peacock TV, and an array of community-lifting initiatives. We also work with OEMs, suppliers, industry organizations, and event producers, helping you connect and engage with our vast audience and achieve success with your sales, marketing, and conference endeavors. Visit Print Media Centr and connect with the Printerverse. Links in the show notes. Print long and prosper.

[EPISODE CONTINUED]

**[0:15:51] DC:** I read something a long time ago, but it stays with me because it was about how questions are formulated on standard tests and how your brain operates linear. And then, as soon as they put the “none of the above” or “only A, B, and D,” whatever that last one is, it messes everybody up. And those are the questions most people miss because they have to stop their brain from being in the positive and shift it to the negative. So that's a very simple example of how your brain could think differently. Now Jeff is very excited about that example. Why is that, Jeff?

**[0:16:32] JG:** I talk about that exact thing all of the time. I don't think I've revealed my diagnosis yet, but I'm ADHD and autistic. I'm the combination that's typically known as AuDHD. It's occasionally very autistic, it's occasionally very ADHD. And most of the time, it's a little bit of both. And what I've noticed, I do a lot of different tests and assessments and things like that. And even if you take any of the autism assessments, it's almost too obvious that a lot of them were written by non-autistic people. Because the way that the question is framed for someone who thinks and interprets things very literally a lot of the time is that it's really impossible to answer some questions.

It might ask a question like, "Would you prefer to be at a party or at the library?" And as an autistic person, I go, "Well, who's at the party? Where is the party? When is the party? What's the library like? Is it a nice library? What's the environment like? What day is it? What time is it?" There's a bajillion questions, and it's tried to reduce it into this simple, "Do you like it to be quiet or do you like it to be lively?" And that's not exactly helpful to answer and assess what they're trying to get at there. You need to give us a lot more information.

It's interesting that you chose that example because it's something I pick on all the time and we talk a lot about. Sarah and I are obsessed with a particular topic right now, more probably than anything else, of clarity. And clarity is such a function of who is speaking to who. And what words are they using? What tone are they using? How are you getting that information across? And a lot of that is going to be steeped in how does the other person's brain receive and interpret information. And do we have the safety when speaking to one another where we can speak openly and candidly. Or are we trying to interpret things that aren't said? So much of what happens that makes clarity work or fail happens because of the way people's brains operate in those moments.

**[0:18:21] DC:** So, it can get a little tricky. Now I know you're not HR professionals, or lawyers, or providing HR advice, or legal advice. I did mention in my opening that there are more job descriptions that include neurodiversity, as I assume something that, for lack of a better term, is welcome. I would assume that people who feel that they fall under that umbrella would feel comfortable applying for those jobs and comfortable having discussions about their situations.

Then we have the people who are not putting that in. Perhaps somebody with ADHD is going for an interview. What happens? How are they supposed to know that there's a system there for them, or there's a process that they feel safe to say, "You know what, I really do my best work at night. If I can just come in at 12:00 and I'll stay till 9:00 every night, you will get the most out of me."

I mean, most people, especially if they're Gen-Xers, like I said, who are in charge now, are just going to say, "Really? That what you'd like to do? You'd like to work your own hours and do all these other things." Not potentially considering that that person will be 90% to 130% more productive if they can just do that.

A lot of times, though – I just want to say one last thing. You can also apply it to Gen Z'ers in a way, because they have their own way of working. And there was an example that the vice president of Girls Who Print, Kelly Mallozzi, speaks about all the time, where there was a woman who had just graduated school. And she was starting to work at a printing company. And there was a picnic table outside, and she wanted to take her laptop to the picnic table and do her work. And it was like, "What are you talking about? That's ridiculous." And all she wanted to

do was sit outside and do her work. I'm sorry that I was very verbose there, but how do you tackle that? And without offering any sort of advice legally or doctorally, how do you handle such things? Whoever wants to take it and be brave, go right ahead.

**[0:20:48] SO:** I'll say two things. And then, Jeff, I'll certainly turn it over to you. I think the thing you said, Deborah, that's most critical is it has to be safe. It has to be safe. I think one of the things that is a core mission of what Jeff and I are trying to accomplish is one raise awareness. And two, if you do nothing else, please make your work environment safe and let people be who they are.

The byproduct of that is you're going to get the most productive people. You're going to get the best out of them, but it has to be safe is at the core. So, I appreciate that you said that. And the concept of the work still has to get done. It's probably a phrase within our work and our keynote that we say more than anything else. It's like, "Well, that's all great, but the work still has to get done." And that's where it's really about this concept of this give and take. What as a leader? What is a business owner am I able to do? What accommodations can I make? But the backbone of this is that we're running a business here. The work still has to get done.

And so I'll let Jeff speak to that a little bit more, but I think that's something we're always thinking about because that's the push back that we hear as well. That's fine, but the work still has to get done. So I think that's important to be aware of and recognize, but the fact that you already called out the safety piece, it's tremendous. That's just really everything.

**[0:22:04] DC:** Well, I run a woman's organization.

**[0:22:06] SO:** Yes Exactly. Right. Right.

**[0:22:07] DC:** Jeff?

**[0:22:08] JG:** Oh my god, this is such a juicy topic. I'm so excited for this. Okay, so there's a lot to address here. The first thing is in terms of the example you gave about I do my best work at night. And it's like, "Oh. Do you now?" I think that what's happening there is that there is a leftover sense that people have to pay their dues or that there's a way that things are to be

done, right? And I think that the thing that can break that potentially is to ask people whether they care more about honoring a set of rules and structures or whether they want outcomes.

Because at the end of the day, if you want outcomes, then the best thing you can do is ask people what it takes for them to thrive and give you their best. And if you're willing to allow that to happen, you can just get more out of each part of your team. You just have to figure out the ways to make sure that people can overlap and collaborate well. But if you're willing to just say, "Well, why do we have to do it that way?" Because there are things that obviously you're going to have to do, right? Let's say you work at a retail shop and the retail shop is open 9 to 5. The person's like, "Hey, I do my best work at midnight." It's like, "Buddy, we're close." Sometimes it doesn't work.

But when it's the sort of thing where it actually kind of doesn't matter. Maybe you work asynchronously, and things get done on different timelines that stretch over multiple days. Why does it matter if somebody does work at midnight? Why does it matter if somebody works outside? None of that should really matter. That's the first thing.

The second thing, and we talk a lot about this in the work that we do, and in our keynote, even, we talk about there's an invisible set of assumptions that we like to call out because it's really useful to understand here. When somebody comes into the environment, and they want to do something differently – and I'm going to get to the disclosure and the how do you make it safe and all that in just a moment. But this is a really important piece here. Because the companies that are hiring people and trying to say, "Oh, it's safe for neurodiversity here," they have to do a lot more work than just say it's safe for neurodiversity here. They actually have to do things to make it safe.

And I think one of the first things tied back to this outcome versus rules thing is that they have to examine and interrogate a certain set of invisible assumptions. And the first assumption is this, is that everybody's brain works just like my brain. We have this invisible assumption that everybody else's brain works just like ours because we have no way of knowing otherwise. We only know how our brain perceives things.

And so if that's how our brains perceive things, then we naturally think to ourselves, "Well, if I can do it, you can do it." Right? We make this assumption that because our brain works that way, and we assume theirs does, that if I can do it, they can do it. Now, when they're not doing it, then we think, "Well, they're broken, and I have to fix them. There's something wrong with them."

And this is where you can't just keep that same mindset in place and then post a job posting that's like "neurodiversity welcome", because all you're really doing is setting someone up who's going to potentially put themselves out there and say, "Hi, I have ADHD, and I work a little differently," and have them come in and have someone just tell them, "Well, you just need to try harder and focus more. Have you tried keeping a to-do list? Here's this paper journal that really works for me." And if that's the case, you're just making the same mistakes over and over. Those same assumptions of everybody's brain works just like mine, so I should fix them. We say stop trying to fix people. Instead, work on troubleshooting. Make it me and you versus the problem, not me versus you. That's a lot of what has to happen.

[BREAK]

**[0:25:15] DC:** Girls Who Print provides women in print and graphic communications with information resources, events, and mentorship to help them navigate their careers and the industry. As the largest independent network of women in print and a nonprofit organization, our global mission to provide resources, skill-building, education, and support for women to lead, inspire, and empower has never been stronger or more accessible. Through our member platform and program, as well as regional groups forming around the world, your access to Girls Who Print is just a click away. Gentlemen, you are most welcome to join us as allies. Get involved and get empowered today. Link in the show notes.

[EPISODE CONTINUED]

**[0:25:59] DC:** There's so much to unpack there because there's still disclosures that have to be made that aren't necessarily appropriate for a workplace or to be asked. You can't ask a woman if she's pregnant or planning to have a child on an interview. I mean, you can if you want that person's name on the building instead of yours.

I want to actually advocate now for people who might be in this situation. If they're not answering a job listing that says "neurodiversity welcome", how do they navigate this? And also, when they say neurodiversity is welcome, what are they saying? Because, to your point, is it apologies? Again, I don't know how the spectrum works, so please just go with my example. We accept 1 to 4. But 5 to 10, no. That's a no-fly zone. Because you literally don't like to speak with people." And there's a lot of phone work on something like that. Again, not trying to be offensive. That's just the best way I can explain what I'm thinking.

**[0:27:12] JG:** Yeah. So I'll run with that to start with. I think the first thing to just get out of the way is that when it comes to somebody interviewing for a job and somebody posting a job posting, one of those two parties has the power in that imbalance, right? You're applying for a job. Everything that you divulge willingly is a risk potentially.

And so, the way I would love to say the answer is, is if you're autistic or ADHD, you come in and say, "Here's who I am. Take it or leave it." And that's that. But that's just not how it works because you're trying to get the job, which is what lends a lot of people to hiding things about themselves, saying, "Oh, yeah, I can do that thing." Coming in and finding out that thing's actually really hard for them, consistently showing up on time, or checking their email or whatever. Things are difficult if you have time blindness.

So, the real work that needs to be done is at the company level of making sure that they're explaining what that means. Hey, we're open to neurodivergent candidates. We provide a sensory-friendly environment. We don't mind if people wear noise-cancelling headphones or like to work in isolated environments. This role is really good for people with pattern-seeking abilities or who like to work on things for long, uninterrupted stretches of time, but find difficulty with lots of meetings. They have to explain what exactly it means.

And this comes back to the work that Sarah and I do. We talk so much, and I mentioned this at the beginning, that you can talk about a diagnosis, or you can talk about what that functionally means. What things are we talking about here, right? If you struggle with time, or you have sensory issues for the environment, or there are certain types of roles that you excel in, those are all really good things to say without having to say "ADHD candidates welcome".

Instead, say, "Hey, listen. We have a flexible start time. We have a flexible end time." ADHD people are going to be like, "Oh. Oh, well, that's nice." Right? You don't have to say "ADHD people welcome". We already get it. So I think it's more important to focus on what it means. And I think this is where companies have to do more in the way of educating themselves and understanding it. And looking at what's actually really critical in a job posting and what's really critical in a role. And how have they structured their environment to actually be neuroinclusive. Instead of just thinking that writing it in the job description is enough, you actually have to understand what that means and what sort of flexibility and accommodations are going to be available without even someone needing to ask for it. Instead, just that the right candidates for that will show up and be able to take advantage of that.

**[0:29:34] SO:** Yeah, I'll just add that we think a lot about job descriptions, and roles, and expectations. And we talked about clarity earlier, which is our main theme for 2026. But it really comes back to, "In order to make this work for both parties, we have to be really clear on what we want." And so much of this is about expectations. Because when do we get frustrated? When do we get upset with each other? Pretty much when our expectations are not aligned. I thought this thing, Jeff thought something different, we showed up to the meeting, and we were not in alignment. That's because we missed on expectations.

And so what we try to help people do is to think really clearly on what actually matters for this role. Don't put it in the job description because you saw it and you thought, "Well, that was kind of cute. Maybe I'll throw that one in." Each bullet point of a job description should actually really matter. Because to Jeff's point, the right job description is going to attract the right kind of candidate. The right project is going to attract the right kind of team to succeed on that particular project. And so I think the we all have to do a little bit more heavy lifting on the front end to get clear on what we're actually wanting to achieve here. And that makes what gets disclosed, what gets shared, a lot easier, actually.

**[0:30:42] JG:** And I'll also just add that in addition to hiring, there's also the onboarding, right? And there's this kind of smooth transition from one into the other. But imagine you're showing off your project management tool that somebody is going to be using when they come onto your team. It would be helpful to show that to them during the interview process and say, "Hey, here's this thing that we use." And by the way, you can actually display your tasks in a bunch of

different ways. You can look at a list if that's how you prefer, but you could also look at it in a board.

We have a lot of team members who prefer to look at things in a board view and get overwhelmed with too many tasks. If you said that to someone who was neurodivergent as a candidate, they would read you loud and clear. They would go, "Oh, so I don't have to be forced to look at a spreadsheet and figure out how you like to work. I can do work in the way that I like to work."

That extends into things like SOPs and how the job is actually done. Asking a candidate before they even come on or as they're coming in, "Hey, how do you like to learn? Do you like to experientially go through it? Do you like to watch videos? What's your method?" Because being able to have more than one way of any of these things, more than one way of looking at a project list, or onboarding, or SOPs, or any of those things, that says we're in an environment that is open to a multitude of different ways of doing the same thing.

**[0:31:53] DC:** I want to say one more, let's say, negative skewed thing before we get to the positive things. And when I worked in advertising agencies, I was the director of production, the traffic department reported to me. And the traffic department is like the oil in the engine. It keeps everything moving. And you have a million jobs going on, and you pretty much have to be able to follow all of that at the same time. It's a giant Tetris of projects.

And I had hired somebody. And when I used to hire the traffic people, I would go through the resumes, obviously. But then, when they came for the interview, I would play the card game Concentration. I would have them play it. So I put out nine cards, and I'd have them flip them over and see how fast it took where they remembered where the other card was. Because you that was just the job.

And I hired a woman who did pretty great in concentration. And then a couple months later, it was just like I started to get a lot of complaints. She doesn't know where anything is. Nobody knows what's going on. I mean it went on. I did the, "Hey, we got to work on this better thing." But it got to the point where I couldn't have the art directors and everybody in my office every day. And I went through HR. I went through the proper procedure, and I had to let her go.

And her mother called me because her daughter was in the car, crying on the side of the road. And her mother explained to me that she had a form of autism. And I literally said to her, "I always wanted to be an astronaut, but I couldn't do math, so I could not be an astronaut." I'm like, "This is not the job for your daughter." Right? But the only reason I was able to let her go is because it was not disclosed that she had a form of autism.

I just want to make that point because I think that there is fear. There's a lot of fear. What do I do? Okay, we want to make our business as inclusive because different perspectives on life, different points of view, different upbringings, coming from different places, all matters in contributing to bigger pictures in a positive way. But there is that little, "What do I do now? We wanted to have this person. We really tried our best to accommodate and to work how they need to work because we find them valuable, but it's not working out." What happens then?

**[0:34:35] JG:** Sarah, do you want to jump in on this, or do you want me to?

**[0:34:38] SO:** Go for it. Your face is glowing.

**[0:34:40] DC:** Again, you're not offering legal or HR advice. We're just having a conversation.

**[0:34:45] JG:** Yeah. And so we were invited to present a poster at the Stanford Neurodiversity Conference. And in that, what we presented was a non-legal and regulation method of dealing with neurodiversity in the workplace. And so, legal protections are there, disclosure, and all of that. That is there to protect the company and is there to protect the candidate, the employee. Mostly, it's there to protect the employee, right? And so that's to make sure that people aren't being unfairly taken advantage of.

When a company goes to hire an employee, and they want to make their workforce more neuroinclusive, let's say, the first question I would ask is why? Not because I don't think it's a good idea. I do. But why are you doing it? Is it because you want the good press of it? because you want to feel good about yourself? Or is it because you actually genuinely want to bring in different perspectives? And if you do, it's important that you do the work on the back end to make sure you are creating a neuroinclusive environment in the first place.

That comes back to when you hire someone into a role, don't set them up for failure by hiring them into the wrong role. Hire people that are designed for the right role. There's a lot of neurodivergent people who are phenomenal strategists, and they're going to be great at delivering creative brainstorm after brainstorm after brainstorm, but they're not going to be the person to necessarily take the ball and carry it down the field with you step by step, but they'll build out an amazing plan in the beginning, right?

What you want to understand is when you say you want to bring on a neurodivergent employee, you want to bring on different ways of thinking. What are the roles that you're looking to have them fill, and what are the things you're willing to give up in order to do that? Because the thing is, is that what companies often don't think about is that with every employee, you're giving up something off of your perfect wish list candidate, right?

You get a neurotypical candidate, they're going to be phenomenal at such a large number of tasks that are on the standard roster of things you want an employee to do. But some of the things that neurodivergent employees will excel at, a lot of neurotypical employees may struggle with to do at the same level or to do consistently, but they're often not held to the same standard, where that's a strike against them.

I think the same thing has to be true when you're dealing with a neurodivergent employee that you have to be able to take their strengths and be willing to let go of the things that they struggle with. We have a saying that we often in different contexts, will say is that if you want me at my hyper-focus, you have to take me at my executive dysfunction. Right? You're going to get me doing 40 hours of productivity in a six-hour period. I'm going to put out absolute – you might not get anything else that week. Are you ready for that? Are you okay with getting one amazing project each week but potentially having me look like I'm doing nothing at all the rest of the time? That's a real possibility. And you have to be ready for that before you say we're going to build a neuroinclusive work environment, because that is just how some people are going to operate. And some people are going to freak out when they have their noise-cancelling headphones on, and you interrupt them. You could interrupt their entire flow. They might be done for the day. That's just part of what has to happen.

Just to recap that, you have to do the work beforehand and to build the right environment to create a neuroinclusive environment first before you start hiring to try and create a neuroinclusive environment. It's not you can't hire your way into a neuroinclusive environment. You have to build a neuroinclusive environment and then hire people into it.

And I would advise bringing neurodivergent people in to advise on how to do that because we actually have, strangely enough, lived experience of what it's like to be in non-inclusive environments where we feel left out or we feel harmed. That's probably the right way to approach it.

[BREAK]

**[0:38:18] DC:** Get ready to turn up the volume on print. PrintFM is a global internet radio station dedicated exclusively to print and graphic communications, accessible around the clock in every time zone. No more searching across channels and apps. PrintFM brings relevant topical programming from Print Media Centr, Girls Who Print, and an array of industry contributors who bring their own perspectives, guests, and conversations to the mix. PrintFM also broadcasts from industry events, with live shows being scheduled throughout the year. Visit [printfm.com](http://printfm.com) to explore our daily programming, event schedules, and opportunities to share your content or sponsor our shows. Expert discussions, real-world insight, and industry voices are just a click away. Listen long and prosper.

[EPISODE CONTINUED]

**[0:39:18] DC:** I just want to say that I think that that is the best answer I've ever heard. And I completely agree with that. Motivation matters. And I say that all the time. Sometimes companies come to me, and they're like, "We need to hire more women." And I say, "Okay, why?" And they don't have an answer. They literally do not have an answer for that. And I'm like, "Once you figure that out, come back, and we can have a conversation." Sarah?

**[0:39:41] SO:** I was going to add that one of – I don't want to speak for you, Jeff. But one of the most favorite sessions that we offer clients is basically ask us anything, because we create this

safe place, and we're like, "This is not recorded. Just literally ask us anything." And Jeff just gives his raw, honest answers about how this works and how it shows up.

And I think it's been so powerful for the clients because it's safe, and they're like, "Oh, that's a question I've been really burning to ask, but I didn't know how to do it." We let people submit questions ahead of time. They can email questions just to me. We do not disclose. It's completely anonymous. But for people to get to ask these real questions of someone who can really give them an honest answer, to me, that's one of the most impactful offerings that we have. Because to that point of let's do that work ahead of time, let's get all this awkwardness out of the way, let's really figure out what we're trying to actually accomplish here and why. Then we can make the job descriptions, and the onboarding, and the SOPs all more inclusive. But we got to do that heavy lifting first. And I think a lot of companies are saying, "Oh, well, maybe we should hire someone with ADHD. It'll look good." It's like that's not the reason to do this.

**[0:40:49] DC:** Right.

**[0:40:50] JG:** Yeah. And I'll just say just the last point to what Sarah was just saying, we also don't require people to have to ask the question the right way. Right? A lot of the questions today we've been talking about, you're like, "I don't know if this is the right way to say it." One of the benefits is being able to have that conversation where someone says it just how it occurs to them, or wherever they are, and it's not wrong. It's like you're here because you're trying to actually learn more and to do a better job and to better understand it.

If you come in and you don't understand that a way of saying thing in a particular way is offensive, that's actually fine in the way we do this because we want to help you understand why one thing is versus another. So, I think that's actually really important. And I think that's where a lot of companies get stopped, is they're scared of doing it the wrong way out of the gate. And so, we're like, "Just show up and be ignorant. Show up and be ignorant and don't know. We'll help you get a better sense of it because then you can do that work." And to the same point you said before is you got to know why you're doing it. What's your motivation for it?

**[0:41:47] SO:** Yeah, it's been incredible, that work.

**[0:41:48] DC:** We had a bunch of questions that we were going to discuss. We did not discuss any of them specifically because it just became a very organic conversation that I really appreciate. But I'd like to spend these last few moments in sharing how you guys can help anybody out there with the motivation of expanding their teams, putting, "My god. Put somebody on new business development. Let them hunt things down." Honestly, there's there's so many things. When people hyper-focus, I'm like, "I love those people." Just give them that find this, link to this, and this, and how does this all work together. And I think there are a lot of pluses if JPMorgan has the right people doing the right tasks. Why don't you share how you can help people out there individually through companies, through your speaking?

**[0:42:46] SO:** Great. I can get us started. One of the best things is the thing I just mentioned. It's a very low-hanging fruit, a very cost-effective session. Just ask us anything. I think that is a fantastic place to start.

**[0:42:57] DC:** That's for companies to come and ask you anything? Is it a one-on-one thing?

**[0:43:01] SO:** It's typically been done with companies. And so many times, they just want to send us those questions anonymously ahead of time. It's like, "All right, the questions are all due by Thursday. Ask anything. Fire them off." And so that's been really, really helpful. And then what we do is we show up live on Zoom, and we just answer all the questions as they pop up in no particular order. And I think that that's been just a really raw and real way to rip the band-aid off. There's no right or wrong way to do this. We're just doing it.

And I think as Jeff and I are on this mission to raise awareness, it's such an easy way to do it. And they leave that session going, "Oh my god, I had no idea. I had no idea." Or I've been saying something kind of "incorrectly" and now I've kind of seen that light, and I feel just more empowered to have these conversations. So that's one way.

The other two that I think are most powerful in this space is obviously our keynote is fantastic. Because, again, on the raising awareness front, when we finish that session, after 60 minutes, people are coming up, "I had no idea. I've heard that phrase, neurodiversity, before, but I didn't really know what it meant. And I didn't know that 20% of my team is neurodivergent." So, I think that's really powerful.

And then the other favorite thing that we do of mine is we call it a user guide session. And you think about a manual. When you get a new refrigerator, what comes with it? An operating manual. If this breaks, try this. Here's how to troubleshoot this machine. And we think about that the same way with people. And so, it doesn't matter the diagnosis. It's just everyone fills out their own user guide. And it asks questions about how do you like to communicate? What's your relationship with time? Do you like to work late or early? And it asks all these things. And the powerful thing is everyone, individually, leaves the session with a user guide, with an operating manual for themselves.

Now, what is so powerful is I can give that to my co-workers. And I think the key part is this doesn't mean I'm going to get my way. I'm going to always get emails with bullet points because that's how I like them every single time I get an email. But it's more about I am aware of the fact that Jeff needs a bullet point in the morning of here are the meetings that we have today. Here's what's going on. Here's what you need to know. Does he need that 2 weeks ago? No. No. He needs it this morning. I know that about him. And so that's what we do.

And it's really about not accommodating people all day, every day, but it's really about raising awareness. So when I can deliver information the way that serves you best, I'm going to try to do that because I'm a good leader. And so those three offerings to me are the best, the most low-hanging fruit, easy, easy to implement that we have.

**[0:45:34] DC:** I actually have a friend who I also work with, and he says he has ADHD. And he does, believe me. And he says to me all the time, "I know you've told me a thousand times, but you have to remind me. You have to keep reminding me." And I'm like, "All right, that's easy enough." If I need him to show up when I need him to show up, I'll just remind him. Of course, now I text his wife. It's a much better system. I don't want to say I accommodated. I want to say that he communicated what he needs. If I want to work with him, then it's easy enough for me just to say, "Just reminding you again. This is coming up tomorrow." And then on the day, "Hey, see you at 3:00." You know, whatever it might be.

**[0:46:13] SO:** Yeah. And I want to be clear that I give an example of what I do for Jeff. Jeff equally does that much for me. So, I need as much accommodation, probably even more so than Jeff. We're doing a lot with AI right now. And there's times I'm like, "Jeff, I just don't get it."

Sometimes Jeff has to explain things to me six times before I really get it. He gets something in the first sitting. And so there's moments he's accommodating me and vice versa. So, I think that's an important note as well, is like this completely goes both ways.

**[0:46:44] JG:** Sarah and I actually have a name for what you just described with your ADHD friend, what Sarah and I called is consensual nagging. Sarah would be hesitant in the beginning to remind me about things because she didn't want to bother me. And I one day was like, "Listen, you have my full unapologetic endorsement to harass me if you need to because I am not going to remember. And you are my accountability, and I trust you. And you never have to feel badly about this."

And so it's consensual. She can nag me as much as she feels she needs to to feel comfortable because I also don't want her to feel uncomfortable about whether or not something's getting done. And chances are if it's not getting done and she's waiting on me, I forgot. It's consensual nagging.

I wanted to add on real quick to the things that Sarah was talking about, getting in touch with us, how we work, whatever. I agree. I think the sort of lunch and learn, ask us anything format that we do is really low-hanging fruit. It's easy. We also have a diagnostic that we do. It's a 30-minute diagnostic that's part of our pressure points program. Like I said, it's a free diagnostic. We put out a report for it. It's part of our pressure points program, which includes the user guide session. It addresses all six of the pains that organizations face regarding productivity. And we have these solutions that are the four pressure points. It's a really cool program. We just put it up on our website. Really excited about it.

And just to double back onto the user guide, because I think it is such a cool thing. The quick story of that is when I was running my agency, I realized I was very challenging to work with, potentially. And I had just put together a tiny piece of IKEA furniture, and I saw the manual, and I was like, "Eureka. Idea." I was like, "What better thing to do than to create an instruction manual for how to work with me?"

And so I listed out how I work when it relates to time. What is my ideal role? What is the environment I need to thrive? All of the different things that are really, really important to me.

And so we built this into an entire program. And the coolest part about it, we've been saying this over the course of this entire conversation, but there's the legal protections of things and then there's functionally what matters, which is what do you need? And the user guide allows each person to avoid a diagnosis entirely and instead just becomes about how does each person relates to these different things at work.

And what we've done recently is we've actually built an AI layer on top of it. So once your team is done with the user guide, you feed all of the user guides into the AI. And now if I'm having a meeting with you, I can go to my AI and say, "Hey, I have a meeting coming up with Deborah. I have to give her some bad news. How should I do this?" And it'll look through your user guide, and it'll tell me exactly how to handle it. Really cool stuff that we're building into it. It gets us away from the, "Do you need to disclose? Do you not?" Instead, it gets you into the place where you can be more proactive about it and look for ways of having everybody support each other for better collaboration.

**[0:49:20] DC:** Everything that Jeff and Sarah mentioned, I will include links in the show notes. I want to thank you both for your time. I also want to thank everyone listening for their time. I know we went a little long, but I'm learning on this podcast. I love the fact that I use my podcast to learn things. So, I learned so much during this conversation. I just want to thank you both for not just being upfront with everything, but for tackling this work and, for lack of a better word, normalizing people who think differently, as you said. For everybody out there, until next time, print long and prosper.

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[END]

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Super Productive: <https://getsuperproductive.com/>

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