

Transcript

Your Team Is Already Neurodiverse: Challenging Misconceptions

05/12/2023

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=l1YvNRAuYs8>

Are companies underestimating the neurodiversity of their teams? Join Erica and Ed as they discuss the challenges of measuring neurodiversity when many people don't disclose it or even fully understand the concept.

Speaker(s):

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Erica:

Hello and welcome back to another episode of the Let's Talk Universal podcast, where we've been speaking with experts and thought leaders in multiple fields to discover how to progress D&I initiatives and alter current behaviors towards a more inclusive workplace. And today, I'm thrilled to be joined by Ed Thompson, the founder and CEO of Uptimize, author and speaker on neuroinclusion.

Welcome to the podcast, Ed.

Ed:

Thank you. Thank you for having me.

Erica:

No worries. Let's get straight into it. So for those who aren't familiar with Uptimize, can you give a brief description of what the company is?

Ed:

Absolutely. So, we are a neuroinclusion training company. We founded in 2016, right at the beginning of this movement, I suppose, that you could call the neurodiversity at work movement. We teach organizations to embrace and leverage every type of thinker. In a practical sense, what we do is we train colleagues, we train managers, HR, recruiters and so on, teaching them about neurodiversity and how to be more what we call 'neuroinclusive' in their day to day work.

Erica:

And Ed, I'm interested to understand what that turning point was for you. What was that moment, that situation or circumstance that led you to founding Uptimize and what it does for organizations?

Ed:

Absolutely. And that's a little bit more of a story here than there is with some of my peers where, for example, they have an autistic son and that's been a decade long motivation to change the world for me, I had a traumatic brain injury four days into my career that gave me some issues around sensory sensitivity, processing speeds and so on.

But at the time I never heard of neurodiversity or even consider it. I just thought to myself, well I've been injured in this accident and hope I recover as much as possible. I was off work and then part time and

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eventually back full time a few years later. And I was working for the CEO of a tech company in London. And rather, to my surprise, that led to a real focus on people and diversity, because the biggest priorities of my boss at the time were really around people. The concern that everybody sort of look the same, probably thought the same; how do you create this diverse workforce that is at the heart of what we all know needs to be at the heart of a 21st century business?

So I got very involved in diversity initiatives from a very strategic lens. I saw the impact they had, not just on the folks that were hired, but on the organization that hired them and actually on other organizations as well as we kind of broadened those programs out to the London tech sector. And that was where I started joining the dots between my own experience, the experience of some neurodivergent family and what I'd been working on in the diversity sphere, and started realizing, gosh, this is another enormous topic that organizations don't know about. And yet, what could happen if they did? How would we do a better job of providing opportunities and growth for all these different types of thinkers who can be marginalized? So that was the birth of Uptimize.

Erica:

And with the service that it's offering organizations, is there kind of different types of training that they can implement into their organization? I know that you've mentioned that there are different levels of workers that that training can be given to, but are of a variety of different ways that can be delivered as well?

Ed:

Yeah, absolutely. I mean, it's the neurodiversity of learners, isn't it, people don't learn the same. So there's benefits, I think, to offering different types of learning experience, which we do both, for example, within our e-learning tools, but then also more broadly using different formats. I think they have different benefits in terms of what they can do.

Some format is very good for energizing people around the topic, some for being an on demand resource and so on. We're also very conscious that most people don't know much about this a lot of the time. What they think they know is wrong. So we would find 60% ish of learners pretty honest about not knowing much about this, which is a problem when 20% of people might be neurodivergent in some way and I think helps to explain why 90% of them typically don't disclose at work.

We also have a challenge with that other 40%, if you like. Now, of course, some people will be neurodivergent and will have much more familiarity. But but even that doesn't make people necessarily an expert and our survey responses confirm that, we'll see people who say, yes, I'm neurodivergent, but actually I don't know that much about neurodiversity. I know about my own experience.

And then, of course, you have this sort of zone in the middle where people will say they know about this because I don't know their nephew's dyslexic or something. But does that really prepare you to work with all the different brains in your team? So there's a lot of awareness to work on to start with before you get to that more tactical piece.

Erica:

Yeah, and when an organization first kind of looks maybe Uptimize or looks at a neurodiversity training or education solution, from your experience, what stage are they at in their own neuroinclusion journey? Do they tend to be sort of at the beginning and they're looking for those first things that they can pull into their organization or do they tend to be farther along that journey?

Ed:

Almost exclusively the former. We barely ever, if ever, worked with an organization that wasn't doing this for the first time. We see a couple of cases where organizations had experimented with micro hiring initiatives. So can we try and hire some five autistic programmers or something in this particular office?

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But then of course, that's naturally led to, well, we all need to know about neurodiversity or autism or whatever, and there's a greater need for training that starts to be appreciated.

But typically it's very much at the beginning of the journey. I think there is a process of identifying this as something that has been overlooked. Now, of course, that's something that we preach into the market, but it always has to be someone in the organization that latches onto that, believes it and starts making that case internally and approaches somebody like us. Then you have a conversation as to, okay, well, what does this overlooked area look like for you? How do we change that together?

Erica:

Yeah, sure. I imagine that there's probably a particular goal that they have in mind as well. You know, a certain thing that they're looking to achieve, whether that's the leadership improving their leadership awareness or whether it's actually improving the overall awareness of the workforce.

Ed:

I think it's quite loose sometimes, actually. I think it helps us within our partnership with the customer to have a concrete goal. But sometimes, you know, what you see is organizations doing surveys of their workers and they say, What diversity topics would you like us to cover? And people are increasingly saying neurodiversity because I think it's just so obviously so important and so related. So the goal is, you know, let's do it because our employees want to and it's not always, you know, a really clear, shared business goal. And I think, we can talk about this more, but I think that's, in a sense, the a challenge with DEI initiatives. And people talk a lot about how do we measure DEI initiatives and of course that's the challenge on the measurement side.

But I do think that the flip side of that and almost a sort of driver of that challenge is that organizational goals, when it comes to DEI can be quite fuzzy as well. So it's kind of a double edged sword.

Erica:

And for organizations who are perhaps new to the topic of neurodiversity, is there something that you think they need to understand about, you know, why neurodiversity is required in their workplace, why they need it?

Ed:

Well, of course, technically neurodiversity is already a fact of their workplace, and that's probably what they need to understand and appreciate. I think there's many misconceptions about this topic. I've written about this in my book and in other articles. I think one of them is that neurodiversity relates only to people who are neurodivergent, say autistic people, dyslexic people.

So another misconception is that's quite a small number of people and therefore the sort of collective misconception there is, well, it's not a big priority or even we don't have many people like that here, all of which is wrong. So you have to rewire that. And again, often it's allies, champions of neurodiversity in organizations who are doing part of that rewiring themselves and you have to make sure people understand, look, every organization, every team is neurodiverse in the sense that everybody has a different brain.

And within that context, there are people, many people who have a shared identity and experiences in some way neurodivergent. And again, what happens is if we don't appreciate that we get norms, those norms work for most people, which is why they're norms. But they don't work for a big chunk of people who's thinking style doesn't doesn't suit. So there is an urgent diversity and inclusion priority there, I think, where people are clearly finding themselves marginalized, whether it's unintentionally excluded in hiring processes or uncomfortable at work. And all of the research we've done with the community confirms that.

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There's also, if you like, a kind of ways of working thing here where a team, if a team is neurodiverse, but but not sort of aware of that and not capitalizing on that, I think that team is going to be less productive, less innovative and so on.

Erica:

Yeah. And I think the the point here is the organizations often say not often say, but I think there is this I suppose this desire to know what's in it for me. And I think the reality is, is that by diversifying and neurodiversifying and embracing those individual kind of ways of working and, you know, maximizing on the individual's potential, that you get high performance teams, you get you see more productivity and so overall, really your business does improve.

And I think that's something that all of the conversations that I've had is, you know, what what is coming out of these conversations is, you know, there are benefits from an organizational level. But Ed, I'm interested to know, from the training, what are those outcomes? You know, what what do people what what should organizations expect to see as a result of implementing neurodiversity training?

Ed:

Yeah, I think what they should expect to see is growth in topics, areas that they already care about. And this is a route to addressing those. And with Uptimize, we specifically look at things like wellbeing and under that I suppose heading you could link that to comfort at work and so on to people feel like they can be themselves and so on which has a link to productivity and then collaboration and the effectiveness of colleagues coming together in teams and so on.

There's no CEO out there who's going to tell you those aren't two of their top five priorities. And indeed, I think you've seen a trend over the last five, ten, 15 years where what were HR priorities have become CEO priorities. So this is why, you know, my boss I was talking about was looking at things like diversity and people, and so on. I think that's that's pretty clear. So I think a lot of the goals and these kind of topics have already been identified by organizations as being things, needles they want to move, if you like. And sometimes I don't think they necessarily know how to move those needles. So, one of the the magic things about neuroinclusion is that, yes, it's an inclusion thing. It's the right thing to do if we want to be equitable as employers. But it also offers us a chance to to move some of those needles. And that's what we see with our customers.

Erica:

Lovely. And I suppose I'd like to understand whether from your experience of implementing this kind of near diversity training with organizations, are there any key learning lessons when it comes to implementing it? Perhaps common challenges that you find organizations have with it?

Ed:

Yeah, there's a few. I'll pick one. I think where we've seen organizations be most successful is that you have a few different stakeholders engaged, and one of those that's really important is neurodivergent people themselves, neurodivergent employees themselves, in an organization. So I think the more that that neurodivergent voice is captured and respected, that's something we do at a sort of market level. I think the more the organization can do that at their own level, it becomes really powerful to get that confirmation of this is a priority, to get the nuance of what neurodivergent people in the organization have struggled with themselves, to sometimes be able to hear and share those voices internally and say, look, you know, this is a colleague of yours who cares about this.

Now, of course, you can't force people into that, but a lot of the time, you know, some people will be happy to be, you know, speakers and to participate in in this movement. And I think that's really important. A danger is that that can go too far. So there are some organizations where they have a very strong, neurodivergent advocacy dynamic, but they say right, okay, cool.

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Well, you know about this. You go into there to teach everybody about it. And of course, everybody has a day job. So that's not really fair. And I think that's, you know, that's too much of a burden. But I think including that community and empowering that community is really important. And, you know, conversely, not doing that, I think it misses a trick a little bit.

Erica:

It was interesting because we had an event last week that was focusing on neuroinclusion and the panelists were discussing some of the poll results that the attendees took part in and one of the things that came out of it was this relationship between executive buy-in and kind of those leadership buy-in like advocacy and leaders who are championing their own neurodiversity and also the awareness and educating people in the organization, as is almost being the first place to start.

It was really interesting to actually see that actually the two go hand in hand, or sometimes one come slightly before the other or vice versa. So that was, I think, incredibly interesting.

Ed:

Yeah. Sometimes it's you see people that, you know, when we talk to organizations early on, you see how much they're learning. I mean, you know, just the two or three people we're talking to, they're learning a lot as we're talking to them. And you can start seeing them think, well, gosh, this is really valuable. But my colleagues don't know this. So, you know, we should really try to change that.

Erica:

Because I think what tends to happen is, is people are introduced to a topic like neurodiversity, and their first jump is to, oh well, I need to hire more people, I need to recruit more people who are neurodivergent, but actually there is a challenge in that. Okay, so if you're hiring these people, but also, you know, embracing and acknowledging in your workplace of the workforce that already exists in your workplace, what else is there?

You know, how are they going to... what's the point of hiring neurodivergent talent if there's nothing there to help support them. And yeah.

Ed:

And that's again, that's a sort of fundamental misconception I mentioned that there are a bunch of these, but the idea that, you know, we don't have people like this here right? Now, teams are neurodiverse, 20% of people might be neurodivergent. That's complete nonsense, but that's quite a strong misconception. And you can see where it comes from because I think back to being at school myself, being at primary school, even I remember we had a kid in my class who would come in to, you know, the main class, if you like, maybe once a week, once every couple of weeks. I suspect he may have been autistic, I don't know if, you know, I was five years old. The perception that that builds is a completely false one, is the idea is that you know, well, most people are normal, but a few people aren't and kind of struggle. That's the perception that that sort of starts to build in that five year old.

I think a lot of people maintain that perception and there's the idea that neurodivergent people are somehow sort of on the fringes of society and workplaces and giving them a chance is somehow sort of corporate social responsibility. I hope a lot of the work we do challenges that. And even in my book, for example, I have a chapter about how neurodivergent people can be found at the top of every industry.

So there is no charity here in providing often very talented people who think differently in an exciting and productive way with not just opportunities, but career opportunities. But I think that's another misconception that that you need to break down. And the fundamental sort of circle of a lack of awareness and therefore a lot of people not choosing to disclose, which you totally get. But then this misperception that we don't have many neurodivergent people. So not a big priority.

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Erica:

And one of the other things that come out of the event, which I'd love to get your perspective on, was we asked attendees what factors are kind of holding back neuroinclusivity progress and the top three response responses were awareness, but also lack of measurement and also the fact that they see that other priorities are crowding out the topic. What are your thoughts on that?

Ed:

I think that's I mean, I think that's a bit of a it's a bit of a mixed bag of factors that I suspect holding back progress probably means two different things there. To some organizations it means what's holding us back from just getting started? And then for others, it might mean what's holding us back once we have some sort of initiative underway and you know, what are we fighting challenging?

Because I think, you know, I think those are probably two slightly different things. We've talked a little bit about what holds people back from from getting started. Again, most people don't know about this. Yes, I think, you know, competing priorities one of the challenges of, you mentioned my article about how neuroinclusion fits into diversity, equity and inclusion, is that, yes, this is an urgent DEI topic in the facet that a lack of neuroinclusion has led to the marginalizing of neurodivergent people.

So, in one sense it's absolutely an urgent DEI topic and I think DEI goals can't be achieved without including it. But I think people may look at this through a very DEI lens. And DEI lends itself to sort of, which minority are we trying to kind of optimize for, if you like. And I think people could look at, well, you know, genders, 50% ish right. Ethnic minority could be anything, could be, you know, 10% could be 49%. I think there's a perception, even though neurodivergence is likely 20%, I think there's a perception that it's a lot lower. And then, there's a challenge, therefore, of like, well, okay, maybe that's on our sort of DEI list, but if we're just looking at it as a DEI thing, maybe it's not at the top of the at the top of the pecking order.

So that's where we really try to lean into the fact that every team is made up of people who have different brains. I think that gives this a true and different feel, if you like, to other DEI topics where people can really see this is has an immediate link to how any team collaborates and performs.

Erica:

Sure yeah. I suppose when we look at those results from the event, the lack of measurement pieces is something that we hear a lot. You know, I think there's this saying, you know, if you can't measure it, you can't manage it. And I understand that to kind of measure performance is important to people to say, you know, are we actually seeing any progress? With Uptimize, is there some way to kind of see that progress and measure the progress that people make during neurodiversity training?

Ed:

Yeah, absolutely. As I mentioned, we have a whole measurement framework that we spend a lot of time on and we focus in on those sort of big headings of wellbeing and collaboration, have different qualitative and quantitative measures and tools that we use to develop that picture of positive change. And I think that's the right way to do it. I would mention here, I think people often want to measure the wrong thing and there is again a DEI approach of what's called diversity reporting. So, you know, how many women do we have in leadership positions, and I think that can be great, but that's very difficult when it comes to neurodiversity because neurodiversity is a very muddy picture. It's interesting to compare something like neuroinclusion to the inclusion of military veterans.

In some ways, there's some interesting parallels here, right? You know, somebody might be a veteran and not look like a veteran. And, you know, if they tell you they are, be judged negatively. And I think all of that can happen with neurodivergent people. But the fundamental difference is, I mean, look, you're either a veteran or you're not, you know. And if you are you know about it.

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And so we have a pretty clean line there. Whereas with neurodiversity, again, it's this just sort of very complex human galaxy of brains and very varying levels of understanding of one's own brain, varying senses of a neuroidentity. Some people have a very strongly held neuroidentity, others don't. Again, many people don't disclose. So I think one of the challenges here is that people want to measure that. They want to say, okay, well, we've got this many people and how many people have we got now? And we have to tell them, no, I don't think that's the thing to be measuring.

Erica:

Yeah. And I think so far with diversity equity and inclusion, as you say, the focus has been how many people have I got in my business at the moment and what do I, how many do I want next year? But then it's the same conversation. That's great. But what if they leave six months down the line because you know, there's nothing there to support them. There's nothing there that makes them feel valued and that they belong.

Ed:

Hopefully. I mean, the irony of this, of course, is that organizations are typically whatever their measurement or whether it's just a kind of perception, they're typically massively under appreciating how many neurodivergent people they have, right? Because of how many people don't choose to disclose. So in a sense, if that's your only measure of how many neurodivergent people you have, they're probably all doing far better in a way right than they think.

But the problem is that to your point, if you don't have neuroinclusive culture and ways of working, then actually you're not doing great because yes, you may find you have neurodivergent talent that's made it through your hiring process. Sure. But often in our experience, that talent can find itself marginalized, can find itself, in a more negative position than others because of a lack of appreciation of neurodiversity and because of norms that suit neurotypicals, that don't suit others.

Erica:

And moving into new roles or moving into self-employment or moving into organizations that do have some kind of neurodiverse friendly environment, processes and, you know, friendly organizations. We're interested as well, as the UWI, looking at this intersectionality of diversity. And I think what's wonderful about neurodiversity is what you've previously said about the fact that neurodiversity already exists in organizations, but it's truly about embracing perhaps just the individual.

You know how that individual works, because I think there is a challenge of generations of workers still not having been diagnosed or because, you know, when they were younger, that just wasn't available to them or, you know, the the access to diagnosis wasn't available. And now we're still seeing long diagnosis times of a couple of years. And so I think there is also this challenge of if an organization is kind of asking people to tick boxes that, as you said, the figure actually is probably smaller than what they realized.

Ed:

Yeah, exactly.

Erica:

And let's just talk about your book. So your book is titled A Hidden Force: Unlocking the Potential of Neurodiversity at Work. Could you kind of highlight who this book is aimed at and what is it trying to convince them of or to educate them?

Ed:

Absolutely. I mean, I think it has some pretty simple messages that we have covered and reflected in this conversation. Everybody works in an neurodiverse team, so I think it targets any professional. Certainly our experience has been mostly on the office based side of things, but I think these principles of neuroinclusion is just a very human thing really relates to anybody working with others. The message that

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neurodiversity is complex. Many people are neurodivergent. Many people bring great talents, but can be marginalized. And how that can happen, why we're only talking about this now. So, you know what's changed over the last ten years or so. And then, at a more practical level, how anybody can contribute to building a different type of team and how anybody can start bringing this topic as a whole to the context that they work in.

Erica:

Yeah. And I think the fact that anyone can read it and take something from it is also really valuable. You know, it's not just the responsibility of leaders to manage this. And actually there's a lot to be learned for everyone in an organization on how to work well with others. So with the book, I imagine that there is some kind of key takeaways, as you've just mentioned.

But is there something that people should really be paying attention to? I know that there's, as you say, a few practical tips, but is there something that you think is truly valuable that people should take away from it?

Ed:

Well, I hope lots of things. Having spent so, so long on it and have a discussion in the book about awareness and what that means and what any colleague needs to know and what that means for how they interact with others and then go into some of these areas around things like leadership or hiring and talk about some practical steps there.

And of course, you know, you might be a manager that works in a team that also is involved strategically with hiring and of course, leads that team. So, you know, all of those things are going to be valuable to you. And I think it's that giving you that kind of lens that everything you're doing is with people who experience the world differently from you. And what does that mean?

And one of the things we do and I do in the book and I and we do at Uptimize is, we talk to you whether you are my reader or whether you are our learner. We talk to you, recognizing that you have your own thinking style. You might be neurodivergent yourself and you're bringing that to everything that you do at work.

And that's a good thing. And no doubt that thinking style has all sorts of advantages that have got where you are. But just to remember that others are bringing their own and your ways of working, or what you think of as kind of normal ways of working aren't necessarily going to work for everybody. So I think it's really that lens and then the application, if you like, of that lens that's at the heart of the book and it's also at the heart of Uptimize as well.

Erica:

Lovely. And let's just return for a moment back to the neurodiversity training, because the book itself is kind of practical tips on sort of where to start. So for organizations who are looking to implement some kind of neurodiversity training in their workplace, what would you recommend the first steps be? Is there perhaps a place where they need to look at first before they kind of move into providing neurodiversity training in their workplace?

Ed:

That's a big question, because that really asked the same question of a lot of different organizations, at different stages, with different priorities. However, consciously held as we as we talked about before, at different stages of their broader DEI journey as well. So, you know, this is something that they've been doing DEI for 60 years and they think they've pretty much covered everything, but they've never done anything on neurodiversity. Or is this a startup where the founder has ADHD and they say, well, look, this is what we're going to start with, because if we appreciate everyone thinks differently, that's going to be the platform to all of our other diversity efforts. So, quite a lot of context here that varies. But to give

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kind of a boring answer across all, again, I mentioned this already, but we find most people don't know much about this.

And I think you just have to accept that and you have to try to change that. And that is the bedrock of everything. And so when we see organizations that say we want to get really good at hiring or we want to just focus on managers, or sometimes we'll have organizations that come to us and say, Well, we've got one manager with an autistic employee, so we want to treat that manager.

I think that's all a limited way to do it. I also think that that's not the place to start. If you're 20% of people are neurodivergent potentially, and most people don't know what neurodiversity or neurodivergent really means. We can't shy away from taking the responsibility to change that. And actually that foundation you see so much fruit from.

Erica:

Yeah, and it's interesting that you say, you know, in some situations there's this kind of particular focus on a particular team, but actually the value is the more holistic view of neurodiversity and awareness and training.

I wonder if there is sort of a progression in terms, of so when an organization first implements this kind of training from yourselves, if there is a progression of, okay, so we're going to start with this and then we're going to do more and more as time goes by and kind of create momentum in the training, But just start in a certain place.

Ed:

That's I think that's what you see because, you know, you can't do everything at once. And we see organizations where they have one champion who feels like they're battling in the wind and nobody else cares. We see other organizations where suddenly that's changed and the COO says, well, I'm dyslexic and this is the big priority and, you know, why aren't we moving faster?

And you have to say, well, hold on, let's do one thing at a time. So I think there's I think with anything there's a there's a natural way to, you know, to roll this out. We really go for a engagement that is quite bottom up and really builds that sort of bottom up buy in. It's not just kind of top down.

It's not just 'here's three things you should do'. It's really making sure people understand why and that they want to know more. So I think that's where, you know, you really see people kind of empowered to practice this on a on a on a daily basis. So, yes, I think I think there's always a natural path we would look to use that to engage and build a fundamental interest in this so that a manager say, recognizes this is a big part of their work and wants to continue to kind of flex that muscle to get better.

Erica:

And is there's something that neurodiversity training pairs with really well, in terms of, I don't know if there is a maths to this, but that pairs with really well that an organization might also consider doing at the same time or.

Ed:

Well, I mean, that's a good question, but I think that this is back to the kind of DEI piece. I think that neuroinclusion is and also to the intersectionality thing. Neuroinclusion is one piece of, if you like, an inclusive, happy, productive team, right? Inclusive leadership, bias and so on, I mean, intersectionality... These are all elements of that. And neuroinclusion is one element. So I think the neuroinclusion element is really important and has been overlooked. And hopefully I've made the case as to as to why I think it's important, but it does reference and connect with all of those other facets, if you like.

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And so I think more general DEI training has its place. I think training around things like bullying, microaggressions, bias has its place because again, I think all of this stuff And actually a lot of neuroinclusion is the practice of inclusive principles at work that I think people can know, but they can get lost in the busy reality of a work day, you know?

But I still, if I'm going to shape, you know, what's my perfect type of learner, I want somebody who gets that that stuff matters, who has a foundation in it. Because I think, then they're going to be able to see the stuff we teach them and join a lot of dots in terms of those different pieces. And hopefully as a whole, you know, become a more competent and a more inclusive colleague or leader or whatever.

Erica:

So moving forward, what do you think the future looks like for Uptimize and neurodiversity training?

Ed:

Well, I think there's still a long way to go. I think it's exciting now to have some examples of organizations doing this really well and what happens when they do and doing it at a holistic level, if you like, and not just training people around a particular neurodivergent employee or particular group of neurodivergent hires, but really looking at what does just neuroinclusion, what does just sort of injecting that into the way we do business into our workforce, what does that look like? And I think that's exciting and starting to get more of those examples and more that others can follow. But I still think that neuroinclusive organizations, much as they've been doing a great job, are still kind of the niche rather than the norm.

So there's a long way to go to continue to educate organizations as to what they can do to join this movement, if you like, and see those benefits in their own organization and honestly achieve all of the things that they've committed to achieving, which I think pretty clearly can't be achieved if we ignore neurodiversity at work. I think eventually neuroinclusion must permeate all industries, different geographies as well. Of course, you've got a patchiness now is, you know, some industries, I think talking about this more than others, some countries have a stronger conversation around neurodiversity and neuroinclusion at a societal level and then sort of workplace level.

I hope that starts to change in a positive direction. And I think, look, even as education catches up and I think as more younger people not only have a, you know, a stronger sense of maybe their own neuro identity through access to diagnosis and so on, but I hope just a more basic appreciation of neurodiversity and what it is. I still think there's going to be things we can teach people in the workplace about how to really put that into practice.

Erica:

Well, thank you for answering all of my questions today. But before we finish, I wanted to give you the opportunity to kind of raise anything that we've not perhaps yet touched on that you'd like our audience to take away with them.

Ed:

Well thank you. and yes, thank you for giving me the chance.

I always say the same thing, which I suppose probably feels more boring to me than I hope it comes across. You're not hearing me saying this every day, but I think we can all help to. I use the word surface neuro differences, neurodiversity in our day to day work.

And I think there's often a kind of a paralysis that comes with, gosh, I don't want to use the term. I can't ask anybody if they're autistic or dyslexic. And I don't really know what I am. So it's just a sort of world that I don't want to go near. And actually, if you look, if we strip this back to the basics of what neurodiverse is, to me, it means that you know, Erica, you and I experience the world differently in terms of how we receive sensory input.

Transcript

It's how we process information, how we like to communicate. So there's actually quite a lot of stuff we can talk about there that has nothing to do with the diagnosis that doesn't get us into kind of dodgy ground. So look, if you and I were working together, and we've had this conversation about neuroinclusion, what do I think we should be doing?

I think we should be talking a lot about ways of working and a lot about our different preferences and a lot of identifying, you know, where we kind of match, where are we different, how do we cater that? You can have a lot of productive conversation that is really on quite safe ground. And, you know, as a leader you can say, well, look, I normally give instructions, like this is just how I've always done it, but I recognize that doesn't work for everybody. What's going to work for you? Easy, productive, constructive.

Erica:

Well, thank you so much for sharing. And I want to thank you again for joining the podcast and sharing your insights and your perspectives, particularly on neurodiversity training, but also on the other areas of neurodiversity within a DE&I context. And if anyone would like to take a look at Uptimize or your book, a Hidden Force, we will be providing the links on our website at theuwi.com forward slash podcast.

But it's been an absolute pleasure. I'm really looking forward to seeing more of you and the work that Uptimize is doing for neuroinclusion.

Ed:

Thanks, Erica.

Erica:

Thanks, Ed, bye.