

Fetch Is Unlocking the Potential of Neurodiverse Talent:

The Story of AJ Wargo

Embracing neurodiversity. We've all heard about it. But can you actually do it in the workplace, and do it well?

According to the statistics, [one out of every 45 adults](#) in the United States has been diagnosed with autism. In children, that number is a staggering one out of every 31. So, what does this mean for today's workforce? The answer is actually simple. It means that employers need to identify and employ the best methods of supporting employees with autism, creating safe atmospheres where they can thrive and use their talents to the best of their abilities.

While it may sound a little challenging or overwhelming at first pass, the great news is that it's already being done, and more and more companies are starting to take notice. Through focus, dedication, and the application of various learning methods, Fetch Pet Insurance (Fetch, for short) has done just that, particularly in the case of AJ Wargo, one of their outstanding neurodiverse workers who is on the spectrum and thriving in his inclusive and uplifting environment.

What Is Autism Spectrum Disorder?

As the saying goes, if you've met one person with autism, then you've only met one person with the disorder. This statement couldn't ring truer. Autism Spectrum Disorder affects how people perceive the world and interact with others, although everyone on the spectrum is differently affected. Each has their own distinct strengths and weaknesses.

In addition, although every individual with autism is unique, many share common characteristics such as preference for routine, strong attention to detail, and intense focus on areas of interest. These traits can be invaluable in the workplace when supported appropriately. The problem lies with traditional employment expectations. Only [32% of all adults](#) on the autism spectrum are employed, illustrating the extreme need to find ways to adapt because these neurodiverse employees have skills that are being underutilized, resulting in companies missing out on valuable prospective growth.

Unfortunately, traditional work environments are set up to fail when it comes to accommodating neurodiverse employees, resulting in underemployment and missed opportunities for both individuals and employers. The key is to find ways to support those on the spectrum, so they can play a valuable role in your organization.

And with neurodiverse employee AJ Wargo, Fetch Pet Insurance has done just that.

Introducing AJ Wargo

When AJ Wargo joined Fetch Pet Insurance, a fast-growing digital pet insurance company, he brought not only a strong background in data migration from his time at Ventures ATL but also a unique perspective, deep focus, and methodical thinking style. In his short time at Fetch, these qualities have already made him an invaluable asset to the team. AJ is autistic, and thanks to Fetch's intentional and supportive approach to neurodiversity, the company has created the ideal environment for him to learn, teach, and thrive.

In many organizations, neurodivergent individuals are overlooked, not because of a lack of capability but because companies fail to establish the structures and protocols that enable them to succeed. While some people on the spectrum can adapt to a new workforce and routines quickly, they still need an adaptable framework, put into place by the organization, so they can do what they do best: get the job done. According to AJ, "... I have skills that you may not need all day, every day, but when you do, they can make a big difference."

Fetch found ways to capitalize on AJ's strengths, while at the same time, giving him the support he needed to thrive as an employee on the spectrum.

A Culture of Support—Not Surprises

From day one, Fetch prioritized providing AJ with predictability and support. The leaders in the organization spoke with him to see what type of help and structure he needed in order to not only become a valuable worker, but also to thrive within the business.










This included assigning him a dedicated daily check-in with Julie Budzik, a team leader whose steady communication helps frame AJ's workday with clarity and consistency. These daily check-ins aren't just procedural—they're relationship-building. They help AJ plan ahead, avoid surprises, and ensure expectations are clearly communicated. Julie is aware that AJ needs extra support on a daily basis and is given flexibility to ensure that he has everything that he needs to succeed.

This structure has proven instrumental to AJ's success and his valuable role at Fetch. People on the autism spectrum often excel in predictable environments with clear expectations. Sudden shifts or vague assignments, which might be routine for other teams, can be disruptive or distressing. "It's not about coddling," says Budzik. "It's about understanding how people work best—and honoring that." Setting up routines for AJ, as well as ensuring that his daily structure is followed, helps him get the job done without feeling stressed or confined into a 'neurotypical box.'

In order to fully support AJ in the workplace, Julie set up a structure for both of them to follow, her as the leader and him as the employee. While the framework will certainly look different for each neurodiverse employee, these are the protocols that Julie constructed based on an evaluation of AJ's needs and comfort levels.

Julie consciously structures AJ's work in the following ways:

AJ's Support Checklist

-  **Daily check-ins** to preview projects and confirm focus.
-  **Dedicated on-the-job coach** (all projects routed through the coach).
-  **Periodic variation** to avoid burnout (based on trial and error).
-  **Focused deadlines:** Offer clear parameters like “I think you can get this done by X,” avoiding short or vague due dates.
-  **Ongoing communication** via instant messaging to align schedules and expectations.
-  **Clear expectations** set in advance—no surprises.
-  **Task load limited** to 2–3 project steps at a time to avoid overwhelm.
-  **Behavioral awareness:** e.g., phone use doesn't mean distraction.
-  **Avoid work overload:** AJ works 20 hours per week.

The Messy Closet Example

Every company has a “messy closet,” so to speak. When Julie first hired AJ at Fetch, she had a specific project in mind: clean up the closets. The organization, which had grown quickly to 350 people, had just migrated from paper files to a digital system during the chaos of COVID, and employee files were in desperate need of organization. The digital transition had left a number of files scattered and poorly categorized.

Julie structured the project into discrete jobs to make it manageable for AJ. First, he needed to create folders for each employee, ordered by last name and then first name. Next, AJ was tasked with creating subfolders for each employee and, finally, moving all documents from the current folders into the appropriate subfolders. These tasks played right into AJ's wheelhouse. He stated, “I have great focus and dedication. When working on something, I give it my all and stick with it.”

Additionally, AJ had to open and read every single document to ensure proper categorization. This was a time-consuming and meticulous task, but one that perfectly aligned with AJ's strengths of precision, focus, and attention to detail. Through this work, AJ not only helped restore order to a disorganized filing system but also ensured that every piece of information was in its rightful place.

This project demonstrated how Fetch was able to break down complex, overwhelming tasks into manageable chunks, allowing AJ to leverage his natural strengths to bring order to a chaotic system. With that said, the process didn't always go smoothly. As with any project, mistakes were still made along the way.

But through small failures comes exciting growth.

Learning from Their Mistakes

For Fetch and AJ, one early stumbling block involved research on LinkedIn for a recruiting effort. A group was assembled on a Zoom call to meet with AJ, set him up on LinkedIn, and walk through the project. These were early days, right after hiring him, and the team wasn't quite sure how the meeting would go. Unfortunately, they overstepped AJ's boundaries and left him overwhelmed and over-stimulated, both of which left him unable to fully understand the purpose of the project.

What went wrong? It wasn't until afterwards, when the team reviewed the situation, that they discovered where they mis-stepped. There were too many people on the call, making it difficult for AJ to follow along. With all of those people speaking, it was difficult for him to focus, and he quickly got overwhelmed.

In addition, IT should have taken over the laptop in order to better control the situation, and the team needed more preparation before involving AJ in the Zoom meeting. As a result, the project was tabled, and even mentioning LinkedIn now tends to slightly derail AJ.

But in business, you live, learn, and grow. Julie is currently exploring new ways to reintroduce the idea, but the Fetch team understands it will take some time. The failure here was not taking into account that AJ can't handle a traditional, multi-party Zoom meeting like a neurotypical employee. But the good news was that this doesn't mean that he can't do the job; just that it needed to be explained to him in a more controlled setting that's better suited to his needs.

Changing the Cultural Mindset

So, where are most companies falling short when attempting to hire neurodiverse employees? To put it simply, hiring autistic individuals isn't a "plug-and-play" process, and it can't be treated as such. It's about integration—weaving the employee into the social, procedural, and operational fabric of the company. This requires intention and a long-term perspective.

Thankfully, AJ is quick to speak up when he needs support or has a question, "I am honest and communicate directly. I say what I mean. You can always count on me for clarity." This means that if Fetch has any questions about what he needs in order to thrive in their workplace, they simply need to ask, and then make the accommodations.

Fetch recognizes that this form of inclusion isn't just a one-time accommodation, it's an exciting shift in cultural mindset. Team members are educated and coached on neurodiversity, ensuring that everyone understands, respects, and collaborates effectively with AJ—and others whose brains may work differently from their own. By making the workplace inclusive instead of exclusive, everyone who works at Fetch is able to thrive, no matter their form of neurodiversity. This approach includes everyone who works at the company, even the human resources department.

Rethinking HR: A Human-Centered Approach

It's always important to remember that employees are humans, not numbers. Sam Dutro, Head of HR at Fetch, is one of the champions behind the company's inclusive hiring strategy. "We have to be willing to push HR boundaries," Dutro says. "That means modifying job descriptions, adapting hiring practices, and doing things a bit differently to get the best result—not just for the employee but for the organization." For Dutro, inclusion isn't about lowering the bar—it's about widening the path. "AJ is a real asset to the team," he adds. "Our job in HR is to create the conditions for people like him to show what they can really do."

Companies that retain this mindset will allow others on the spectrum to thrive in their workplaces, showing that neurodiverse individuals have a place in the business world and can become a positive asset to the organization. It all comes down to understanding needs, putting the right supports in place, and realizing that all people are beautifully unique assets in their own ways.

A Business Case Rooted in Humanity

AJ's performance alone makes a strong business case for hiring neurodiverse talent. But Fetch isn't stopping there. They are setting a gold standard by also building a more resilient, empathetic, and human workplace by leading with inclusion. In doing so, they're not just tapping into talent—they're setting a precedent for what inclusive employment can look like across industries.

"There's no reason a great employee should be excluded just because the workplace isn't designed for them," says Budzik. "AJ makes us better—he reminds us that success isn't about sameness. It's about finding the right fit for the right person and helping them shine."

Fit First, Then Function

It's important to note that the picture of Fetch "embracing neurodiversity" wasn't painted overnight. So, how did Fetch manage to successfully integrate AJ and other neurodiverse employees into their workforce? Rather than assigning AJ rote tasks, Fetch gave him

opportunities to contribute through meaningful work and grow as both a person and an employee.

But AJ isn't their only neurodiverse superstar. They did the same with another employee on the autism spectrum, Izzy. Izzy is currently working on a scanning project, where they digitize personnel files and manage small tasks, like cleaning up the kitchen area and making sure that everyone's favorite snacks are well stocked.

Instead of slotting AJ and Izzy into preexisting roles, Fetch invested time in understanding where their skills could shine brightest. AJ's current focus—data structuring—lets him leverage his natural precision and attention to detail while contributing to high-priority projects across the organization. Izzy, on the other hand, thrives having several differentiated tasks to do each day in order to break up the time that they spend scanning documents. Both are on the spectrum, but have different strengths, which Fetch embraces.

The result? Work that's not only accurate and efficient but also impactful. "There's a difference between assigning tasks and building a role," says one colleague. "AJ isn't just completing checklists—he's shaping how we manage and understand our data."

The Advantages of Embracing Neurodiversity

As you can see, AJ's story isn't just about one neurodiverse individual's success—it's about what becomes possible when organizations adapt to the needs of all their employees. By embracing neurodiversity with care and commitment, Fetch isn't just doing the right thing—they're doing the smart thing and blazing a path for others to follow.

Employing individuals with autism is not just a matter of equity—it's a strategic advantage. By implementing predictable schedules, designating workplace champions, and establishing support systems, organizations can unlock the potential of a talented, often-overlooked workforce. These practices, when embedded into organizational culture, help create workplaces where everyone can thrive. Can your company do something similar?

With Fetch paving the way for neurodiverse employees to thrive in the workplace, more and more companies are looking to jump on board and create an inclusive environment of their own. Today's workplace is changing, and Fetch is embracing that change. They believe every neurodiverse employee has unique strengths that can be invaluable assets to the companies who are committed enough to employ them.

So, as AJ always says, "How can I help you today?"