Participant information sheet

Developing Cognitively Diverse Talent in the Age of AI — how the study will be conducted, and how your contribution will be handled.

Who is invited, and how participants are selected

The study will conduct 25–30 interviews with CEOs and chief human resources officers at employers with practical experience hiring and supporting neurodivergent employees. Participants are invited for the experience their organizations have accumulated — including what has proved difficult — not for model programs. There is no cost to participate.

Why this question

The question the study examines is largely unexamined. A 2024 scoping review found 33 studies relevant to autistic career progression — and none that studied it directly. (Davies, J., et al. (2024). Scoping review of research relevant to autistic career progression, *Autism*.)

The interview

One confidential conversation of approximately 45 minutes, in person or by video, scheduled at your convenience. The discussion explores development practices, career pathways, management responsibilities, and the changes leaders are seeing as AI reshapes work. No formal preparation is required; the discussion topics can be shared in advance on request.

Recording and transcription

With your permission, the interview will be recorded and transcribed so the research team can work from an accurate record. No interview will be recorded without permission, and the specific arrangements will be confirmed with you before the interview takes place.

Who sees the material

Interview recordings, transcripts, and notes are accessible only to the study director and the doctoral research team. They are not shared with funders or sponsors, with other participants, or with anyone outside the research team.

Consent and attribution

Findings will be reported in aggregate, without identifying participants or their organizations. Two permissions are kept separate: agreeing to be interviewed, and agreeing to any identifiable use of your material. Any example that could identify you or your organization will be used only with your separate written permission, which you may decline without affecting your participation.

Retention

Interview material will be retained only for as long as the research requires. The retention period and deletion arrangements will be confirmed with you in writing before your interview.

How the material will be analyzed

The study director and the doctoral research team will analyze the interviews thematically — looking for patterns in how employers develop, advance, and support neurodivergent talent, and for the points where practice diverges. An advisory panel will help test the interpretation before the report is written.

The limits of the study

The study reports the perspectives of employer leadership and the practices they describe. It does not survey employees, and it does not measure the outcomes of any individual employer's program. Its findings should be read as an account of leadership experience, not as an evaluation of specific programs.

The team

The study is directed by Jeffrey Cohn, Partner and Head of CEO Succession Practice at August Leadership — an executive advisor, co-author of *Why Are We Bad at Picking Good Leaders?*, and host of the *Imperfect Leaders* podcast. A doctoral research team and an advisory panel are being formed to support the study; full details will be provided when appointments are confirmed.

What you receive, and when

Participants receive the report before public release, a participant briefing, and an invitation to the findings convening with other participating leaders. Interviews are proposed for spring 2027, with the report and convening in fall 2027. The format and location of the briefing and convening will be confirmed as the schedule is set.

Funding and independence

The study is conducted by Bench Strength Advisors and will be funded through sponsorship of independent research. Funders have no access to interview material and no role in participant selection, analysis, or conclusions. Participation is not a consulting engagement and not a solicitation for any program.

Questions

Contact Jeffrey Cohn at jeffrey@bench-strength.com.