

# THE DYSLEXIC DYNAMIC:

Why Dyslexia Can Help Meet Today's Talent Challenges





## Summary

ManpowerGroup Talent Solutions, a global workforce solutions provider, and Made By Dyslexia, a non-profit organization helping the world understand, value and support people with dyslexia, have joined forces to develop a better understanding of dyslexic thinking in the workplace and to encourage organizations to recognize its importance in a fast changing world.

Together they want to help employers recognize, value, and attract dyslexic talent so that they can seize the skills they need for post-pandemic recovery.

The Dyslexic Dynamic report explains why employers must harness dyslexic skills to meet today's talent challenges.

**Talent shortages are at a 15-year high** as organizations struggle to hire the staff they need to drive the post-pandemic economic recovery.<sup>1</sup> Yet many employers are overlooking and undervaluing a significant pool of talent: those with dyslexia. **New findings from the most comprehensive survey of dyslexic workers ever undertaken shows that more than half feel their employers have a poor or non-existent understanding of the dyslexic skillset.** <sup>2</sup>

Dyslexic staff are well positioned and well skilled to shine in today's workplaces, and employers need to act now to include dyslexic talent in their workforce mix. The tasks dyslexics typically find more challenging, such as spelling, reading, and memorizing facts, are increasingly being done by machines. While the soft skills that are most valued in today's workplaces are the very skills that people with dyslexia excel at.



In a move that will help employers find a solution to today's severe talent shortages, non-profit Made By Dyslexia and Talent Solutions are working in partnership to redefine dyslexia, promote a better understanding of its strengths and challenges, and transform the relationship between employers and up to a fifth of the global adult workforce. Dyslexic thinking skills, such as creativity and ingenuity, are exactly what employers say they need right now. For employers, the message and opportunity is clear. The dyslexic dynamic will enable organizations to navigate the skills needs of the post-pandemic economy.

It has been estimated that by 2025 humans and machines will split work 50-50 and the pandemic has turbo-charged the progress of digitization and automation.<sup>3</sup> That future is here today and employers who make the most of the skills of dyslexic staff now will benefit.

## What Is Dyslexia?



**Dyslexia influences as many as one in five people and is a genetic difference in an individual's ability to learn and process information.**<sup>4</sup> As a result, dyslexic individuals have differing abilities, with strengths in creative, problem-solving and communication skills and challenges with spelling, reading, and memorizing facts.

Generally, a dyslexic cognitive profile will be uneven when compared to a neurotypical cognitive profile. This means that dyslexic individuals really do think differently.

Traditional benchmarking disadvantages dyslexics, measuring them against the very things they find challenging.

**What Is Dyslexia?**

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## Misreading Dyslexic Skills

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To identify just how misunderstood dyslexia is, Made By Dyslexia and Talent Solutions have undertaken the largest survey of dyslexic employees ever conducted. **The results are shocking.**



**Fewer than one in five dyslexics feel their employer understands the strengths of dyslexic thinking.<sup>5</sup>**



**More than half feel their employers have a poor or non-existent understanding of the strengths associated with dyslexia.<sup>6</sup>**

This often begins at school. Difficulties with things like spelling, reading and memorizing facts can undermine the self-belief of dyslexic students and often means the abilities they have in other areas are overlooked by their teachers, their classmates and themselves.

This continues into the world of work. Dyslexic people who have been held back in the classroom can be less confident when starting a new career.

*“You enter the world of work a bit fearful about telling anybody that you are dyslexic in case they think that you’re not a safe pair of hands, or it’s going to hinder your career progression.”*

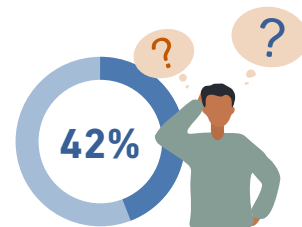
-Chris, Recruitment Director



## The Dyslexic Skillset

Currently, many employers are missing out because they aren't aware of the strengths people with dyslexia have to offer.

This demonstrates the huge opportunity dyslexic people could offer recruiters. The skills employers need are available, they just need to make sure they're looking in the right places.



**When asked what skills are associated with dyslexia, 42% said they don't know.<sup>9</sup>**

Dyslexia shouldn't be viewed narrowly as a learning difficulty, but as a different way of thinking and looking at the world. Employers tend to undervalue or ignore the strengths that dyslexic people have, too. This prevents many organizations from realizing the full value of the dyslexic workforce. And that's if they can even get in the door. Most employers are unwittingly failing to recognize dyslexic talent when looking for new staff. **Three out of four (75%) dyslexic people surveyed believe the recruitment process puts dyslexic people at a disadvantage, and 79% believe the process doesn't give them the opportunity to demonstrate their true abilities.<sup>7</sup> That's despite half (47%) of employers saying they don't consider dyslexia when recruiting and don't believe it's relevant.<sup>8</sup>**

*“As somebody who's spent 20 years trying to recruit people during a 20 year talent shortage, there's a talent pool of 700 million people out there that we're not using properly. Employers need to reassess how they think about dyslexia.”*

-Matt Higgs – Director, Global Product Management, ManpowerGroup Talent Solutions

# Dyslexic Thinking Skills

Employers who take a strengths-based approach will focus on the skills that people with dyslexia often excel at, as many of these are the soft skills vital to the workplace.

**There are 6 areas of dyslexic thinking skills and all dyslexics have a differing combination of all, or some of them<sup>10</sup>:**



## COMMUNICATING

Crafting and conveying clear and engaging messages



## IMAGINING

Creating an original piece of work, or giving ideas a new spin



## VISUALIZING

Interacting with space, sense, physical ideas, and new concepts



## EXPLORING

Being curious and exploring ideas in a constant and energetic way



## CONNECTING

Understanding yourself and others, able to empathize and influence



## REASONING

Understanding patterns, evaluating possibilities, and making decisions

*“The myth around dyslexia is it’s just about spelling and reading. My colleagues for example don’t necessarily understand that my strengths are a result of my dyslexic thinking. They value me for who I am, but they don’t recognize that the way I think is because of my dyslexia – they just think of me as a creative person.”*

-Kelly Monday – Global Client Lead, Microsoft

For employers to make the most of the crucial skills that dyslexic thinkers can offer, they need to create an environment where people are recognized for their strengths and not penalized for their difficulties.

A culture in which dyslexic thinkers feel supported to ask for the assistance they need will help employers benefit more from their dyslexic thinking skills. And it is these skills that are most valuable in today’s workplace.



## Skills for Today's Workplace

The jobs market is going through a period of radical change. Nearly every industry is being disrupted by new technologies, automation and machine learning, and the pace of change has accelerated as a result of COVID-19.

In recent years, a progression of new research has demonstrated the growing importance of dyslexic thinking to employers. Studies have shown how the skills which are becoming more important in the digitized workplaces of the 21st century correspond closely with many of the skills characteristic of dyslexic thinkers.<sup>11</sup> The integration of technology has been drastically accelerated by the pandemic. Due to COVID-19, digital-first workplaces have become commonplace much faster than expected. And so the skills of dyslexic thinkers are needed today.

*“I’d say for dyslexic parents, for dyslexic employees, for dyslexic children, for all dyslexics around the world and those who are allies in this area, just remember one thing: you’ve got a brain that’s wired for the 21st Century. That is an incredible, incredible superpower.”*

-Steve Hatch – Vice President for Northern Europe, Facebook



**The Future of Dyslexic Thinking**  
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## Dyslexic Thinking Skills are Fueling Recovery

[ManpowerGroup’s Skills Revolution Reboot](#) report highlights how the impact of Covid-19 is creating a K-shaped recovery as organizations digitize at greater speed and scale, transforming the skills employers need.<sup>12</sup> Soft skills, like communications, time management and prioritization, adaptability, analytical thinking, initiative-taking, and empathy, are more highly valued and sought after by employers than ever before. These skills are the backbone of success. They are also the skills associated with dyslexic thinking and employers need to unleash dyslexic talent – or risk being left behind.



# Unleash Dyslexic Thinking

Employers are scrambling to recruit the skills they need for post-pandemic recovery. As a result, talent shortages are at a 15-year high as organizations compete for the staff they need.



**Seven in ten employers globally report difficulty hiring, the highest than at any point since ManpowerGroup first asked about talent shortage in 2006.<sup>13</sup>**

**Top ten skills that employers are looking for correspond closely to the skills of dyslexic thinkers:<sup>14</sup>**

- 1 | Accountability, reliability & discipline**
- 2 | Resilience, stress tolerance & adaptability**
- 3 | Initiative taking**
- 4 | Reasoning & problem-solving**
- 5 | Leadership & social influence**
- 6 | Critical thinking & analysis**
- 7 | Collaboration & teamwork**
- 8 | Creativity & originality**
- 9 | Active learning & curiosity**
- 10 | Adaptability**



*“When it comes to dyslexia and I think about the work that we do at WPP for brands and clients, we need people that have got amazing creativity, we need people that have got critical thinking skills, we need people that are brilliant at problemsolving, we need people who are amazing when it comes to visualization.”*

-Karen Blackett OBE – CEO of Group M; UK Country Manager, WPP



## Dyslexia Untapped: Conclusion and Recommendations

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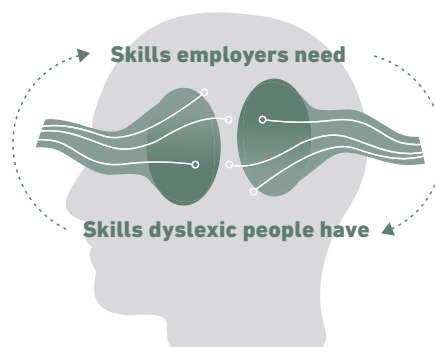
Organizations struggling with skills shortages need to seize the opportunity that dyslexic talent presents before it is snatched away from them. People with dyslexia have many of today's in-demand skills in abundance, but too often recruiters and employers are overlooking them.

*“We’re in a war for talent right now globally. But there’s a large group out there who could help fill those needs. Dyslexic talent can genuinely make a huge dent in the skills shortage, especially post-COVID, and we need to zero in on it.”*

-Kelly Cooper – Head, Global People & Culture, ManpowerGroup Talent Solutions

To unleash the skills needed for pandemic recovery, the business world must become a place where people are recognized for their strengths. This culture change will enhance performance across the board, but is especially important in the recruitment process where inadvertent bias against dyslexics can severely impact candidates.

**D Spot Disruptors**  
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*“It’s time to redefine dyslexia and redesign assessment because the workforce of today needs Dyslexic Talent. Standardized tests are an issue for dyslexic thinkers because we don’t have standardized minds. The traditional ways of benchmarking ability just don’t fit with dyslexic thinking skills. We have huge specialisms and strengths that are not things that we normally test for but new technologies and new ways of assessing skills could offer a real solution.”*

-Kate Griggs – Head, Founder & CEO, Made By Dyslexia

## **A Level Playing Field: Accurately Assessing Every Candidate’s Skills**

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Technology is helping to harness the skills of those with dyslexia, and it could also prove valuable in transforming the way candidates are assessed.

Dyslexic thinkers report that traditional assessments and psychometric tests don’t always accurately reflect their skills. If employers are to recruit the skills of tomorrow, they need help to identify dyslexic skills. New technology could offer the solution. Talent Solutions and Made By Dyslexia are working together to explore how gamification, and shorter, more engaging user experiences can be used in assessment to identify ability and remove biases.

Tools like this can help recruiters harness the skills candidates have, and the value they could add to an organization.



# Five Ways to Help Recruiters Attract Dyslexic Talent

The Made By Dyslexia and Talent Solutions community have shared their tips for recruiters who want to make sure they aren't putting up unnecessary barriers for dyslexic candidates.



## OFFER THE BASICS

extra time, quiet rooms for tests, clear questions

## FORGIVE TYPOS AND SPELLING

they are not a reflection of commitment or ability



## ENCOURAGE

applicants to tell you they're dyslexic by acknowledging that you value dyslexic thinking



## TRADITIONAL TESTS MAY NOT APPLY

understand that traditional tests may not always showcase dyslexic thinkers' full talents. Help them to show their abilities in different ways with a mix of skills-based assessment and interviews



## NO FORMAL ASSESSMENT

don't insist on a formal assessment to trigger reasonable adjustments, a self-declaration of dyslexia should be enough



To find out more about how employers and employees can empower dyslexic thinking in every workplace, Join the Dots with [Made By Dyslexia's Workplace handbook](#).

## About the Partners

### Made By Dyslexia

[Made By Dyslexia](#) is a global charity, led by successful dyslexics. The charity's purpose is to redefine dyslexia and help the world to understand, value and support it. Their mission is to train every teacher and help every workplace to spot, support and empower every dyslexic mind. This mission is aligned with the UN Sustainable Development Goals, and they aim to achieve this by 2030.

### ManpowerGroup Talent Solutions

Talent Solutions combines our leading global offerings RPO, TAPFIN-MSP and Right Management to provide end-to-end, data-driven capabilities across the talent lifecycle. Leveraging our deep industry expertise and understanding of what talent wants, we help organizations address their complex workforce needs. From talent attraction and acquisition to upskilling, development and retention, we provide seamless delivery, leveraging best in breed technology, and extensive workforce insights across multiple countries at scale. To learn more, visit [www.talentsolutions.manpowergroup.com](http://www.talentsolutions.manpowergroup.com)