

GAINing Ground – How to get – and keep – the talent you need

As part of “Levelling Up the Playing Field” in his year of office, WCI Master Karl Jarvis is supporting neurodiversity in the insurance sector.

This is an important choice. With Diversity, Equity and Inclusion facing political headwinds, it’s important to signal that our industry, in our City, continues to stand for progress. With one in five people in the UK identifying as neurodivergent, it’s important to recognise that one or two colleagues in every meeting we attend are likely to be autistic, have ADHD, or dyslexia, dyspraxia or another difference in how they process information and interpret the world. And with data showing higher productivity, greater creativity and innovation and superior business results from neurodiverse teams, it’s important to understand that neuroinclusion is quantifiably good business, requiring no wider or softer justification.

The insurance industry needs creativity to develop products for tomorrow’s world. It needs to understand risks associated with new industries and technologies, and rapidly master the associated data to write the best cover. At the recent WCI Winter Lunch I met people underwriting insurance for wind-powered super tankers, lunar explorers and blockchain companies. Wherever there is innovation, insurers need experts to help the innovators manage their risks. That means insurers need to compete for the same skills and talents as the innovators themselves. Neurodiversity is prevalent among entrepreneurs and paradigm-breakers, and so insurance must attract and hang on to neurodivergent talent too.

Fortunately, the industry is already a leader in appreciating, accommodating and developing neurodivergent talent.

GAIN – Group for Autism, Insurance, Investment and Neurodiversity – was founded in 2021 by two industry leaders, Laurie Edmans CBE and Barbara Schonhofer MBE, along with Stuart Pollard, an education specialist. The founding premise is that our industry needs skills that are present in abundance among neurodivergent people, and that there is a business opportunity in attracting and retaining those skills because others tend to overlook or under-utilise them.

Leading insurers and asset managers have joined GAIN to build and share expertise. Our core value is our industry-specific expertise, and our members talk about the benefits of learning from close peers. We now have 46 corporate members, between them employing well over 80,000 people. The approach is highly practical, focusing on key “moments that matter” in work: internal and external recruitment processes that are accessible and enable everyone to give of their best; support for managers in understanding individual needs, designing roles, allocating work and managing performance. Support for HR specialists in drafting and implementing workplace policies, and support for the wider workforce through education and learning resources.

Changes we've seen member companies make as a result of working with us and each other include:

- manager, leader and employee training through GAIN
- developing toolkits and resources for managers
- setting up adjustment passports so people can more easily and quickly access the support they need if they change role, team or location
- making some accessibility tools bookable at-will
- sensory mapping of office spaces, helping people who work best away from noise, smells and certain types of lighting
- independent studies on recruitment barriers
- creating specific neurodiversity policies, and collaborated on developing good practice guidance with GAIN

We're also building bridges from our industry to places where the talent is: universities and other education settings, career returners, the unemployed and people who have had poor experiences in other sectors and want a new setting where they can belong and thrive. Keep an eye out for our Inspiring Futures campaign, which will share stories from people.

Individuals can be members of GAIN, too. We have over 1,600 neurodivergent people, family members, colleagues and allies signed up. The aim is to build community and mutual support, a space for sharing challenges and solutions.

We're very grateful to the Master Insurer for showcasing neurodiversity and supporting GAIN. Do please join the forthcoming GAIN Master's Series event - [WCI Events - Book Now, Save Dates | Worshipful Company of Insurers](#). If you're already a GAIN member, or your business is, thank you. If you aren't, take a look at gaintogether.org and see how you might benefit.

Francis McGee is the Executive Chair of GAIN