<Location> Dandelion Program 3 Year Report
<Name>

Overview

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<Location> Dandelion Program – 3 year report

3 year program overview

The Dandelion Program is an initiative to build Information Technology, life, and executive functioning skills to help establish IT careers for people on the autism spectrum. It is a three-year structured roadmap of transformation initiatives to improve the abilities of Dandelion team members in a number of key areas.

- **Year one** focuses on **job awareness**: on-boarding, introduction to the role, internal training modules, and establishing a pipeline of work with stakeholders, as well as the development of technical and social skills.
- **Year two** focuses on **self-advocacy** to cultivate independence and confidence. Trainees are encouraged to learn their strengths, weaknesses, preferences, learning styles, and needs.
- **Year three** focuses on **transition**, with team members developing to be career ready. This final year is about setting the trainee up to be capable of holding a career outside of the Dandelion team support structure

The 3 year <Client> <location> Dandelion Traineeship finishes on <date>.

Over the past 3 years some Dandelion trainees have attained the skills to work independently without supervision by the DXC Dandelion support team and have transitioned to other teams, working under the supervision of <Client> management. Some trainees have not yet attained this level of independence performing the type of testing work that the client requires.
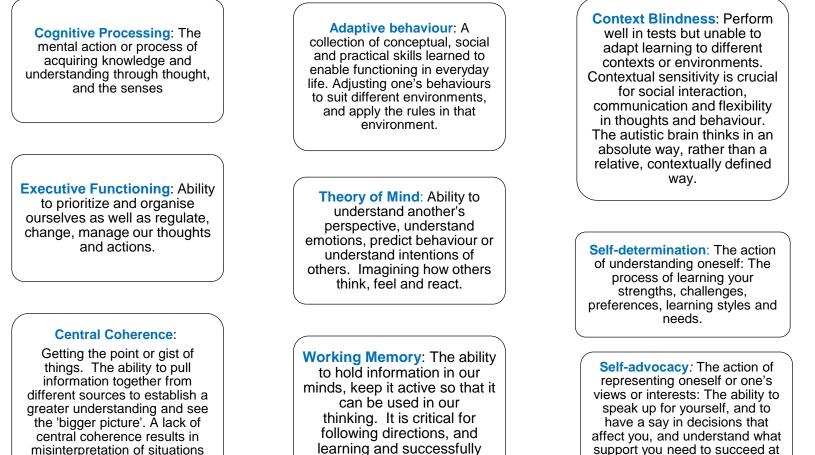
On <date> the DXC support team have completed their engagement with <Client> on this program and are required to return to DXC for re-assignment. There will no longer be Dandelion technical team support resources available at <Client> to provide ongoing daily support. Those team members that have not yet become independent within <Client> will also return to DXC. As with all DXC employees returning from customer assignment to DXC the Dandelion trainees and their support team will undergo a search and re-assignment process to determine their next role based upon their technical skills and available roles within DXC and its customers.

Key Elements to Autism and Work

Autism has a number of elements that create challenges at work:

Cognitive Processing: The mental action or process of acquiring knowledge and understanding through thought, and the senses

Adaptive behaviour: A collection of conceptual, social and practical skills learned to enable functioning in everyday life. Adjusting one's behaviours to suit different environments, and apply the rules in that environment.

Context Blindness: Perform well in tests but unable to adapt learning to different contexts or environments. Contextual sensitivity is crucial for social interaction, communication and flexibility in thoughts and behaviour. The autistic brain thinks in an absolute way, rather than a relative, contextually defined way.

Executive Functioning: Ability to prioritize and organise ourselves as well as regulate, change, manage our thoughts and actions.

Theory of Mind: Ability to understand another's perspective, understand emotions, predict behaviour or understand intentions of others. Imagining how others think, feel and react.

Self-determination: The action of understanding oneself: The process of learning your strengths, challenges, preferences, learning styles and needs.

Central Coherence:
Getting the point or gist of things. The ability to pull information together from different sources to establish a greater understanding and see the 'bigger picture'. A lack of central coherence results in misinterpretation of situations and communication.

Working Memory: The ability to hold information in our minds, keep it active so that it can be used in our thinking. It is critical for following directions, and learning and successfully completing complex tasks.

Self-advocacy: The action of representing oneself or one's views or interests: The ability to speak up for yourself, and to have a say in decisions that affect you, and understand what support you need to succeed at work.

<Location> Dandelion Program – 3 year Technical & Autism Overview

The objective of the 3 year program was to become self sufficient Test Analysts to transition and work independently in an office managed by client support staff.

• **Year 1** – Focused on introducing Dandelion staff into a work office environment and culture. We commenced training by introducing Dandelion traineeship with the building blocks of a Software Testing lifecycle such as Methodologies, Terminology, and Techniques. <Client> provided the team with simple work packages to utilise their learnings from the ongoing training. Work packages involved DXC Support staff guiding the Dandelion team to analyse specifications, planning, writing and execution of test cases.

• **Year 2** – Focused on greater responsibility and challenging work packages. <Client> provided more complex work packages for Dandelion staff to develop their analytical and technical professionalism. The team learned about competing priorities and scheduling across these work packages. In parallel, DXC Support staff encouraged the team to self advocate by upskilling via external test qualifications and certifications, updating CVs, conducting mock interviews, and joining networking sites and groups.

• **Year 3** – Focused on working with <Client> to transition Dandelion staff that were ready to work independently in client teams. We commenced exposing Dandelion team members to automated test tools, which enabled them to either create and run automated scripts. The DXC Support team continued to encourage Dandelion staff to learn about accountability, identifying blockers and always delivering quality test outcomes. The final program goal was for Dandelion staff to be a professional Test Analyst creating opportunities in technology & communications.

Over the past 3 years extensive training and self development has occurred in life and adaptive skills:

Cognitive processing: Executive Functioning, Working Memory, Theory of Mind and Central Coherence

Social skills: attending events, team lunches, movies, Christmas parties, birthday morning teas etc

Self Determination and Self Advocacy: understanding self and setting goals for the future

Life skills: NDIS, Nutrition and Finance awareness

Communication: Appropriate communication to team members and other stakeholders; building confidence in writing emails, public speaking and media representation (where appropriate)

1-1 support and intervention. Managing frustrations and developing coping strategies

Translating the unwritten rules of the workplace

Referrals to outside supports and professionals and development of mental health strategies

Autism Awareness training to approximately 250 DXC and DHS staff in Brisbane

<Location> Dandelion Program 3 year report

<Name>

Personal Development

- **<Name>** has demonstrated growth within the social aspects of the role such as;
    - ➤ Coping in a work environment
    - ➤ Integrating with the team and other staff
- He is professional, polite, reliable and punctual
- **<Name>** is always respectful to Managers.
- **<Name>** likes to share his progressive work status with his Managers with regular updates via skype.
- Sick leave taken has been negligible

Major highlight from the autism consultant:
"I have seen enormous growth in **<Name>** *self confidence and social skills. He actively attends social events and willingly takes on advice and strives for self development"*

Major highlight from technical lead:
"<Name>* is endearing and is extremely likable. He is very outcome oriented in his endeavour to race though his work as quickly as possible and always asks for more. He is "one man band" when it comes to getting through large volumes of simple tasks."*

~Example~

Technical Development & Processing

- **<Name>** needs daily technical support to understand work requirements, scope of work, and to meet deadlines outlined by the Client and or Support Staff. A daily priority email is sent each morning for **<Name>** to understand what work requirements are required for the day.
- **<Name>** is unable to plan his day **without** clear direction from technical staff.
- Challenges with Cognitive processing: Theory of Mind, Context blindness and Central Coherence. Support staff have implemented many **strategies** during the past 3 years to assist **<Name>** in these areas.
- Without **consistent** technical support **<Name>** could become anxious, frustrated & overwhelmed.
- **<Name>** is a linear worker, preferring A to B processing. When outcomes are not predictable or logical he can struggle with the task.
- Prefers straight forward execution
- Technical ratings specific to the role of a Test Analyst have **not improved** over the past 3 years. This relates to core role **competencies** such as:
    - ▪ analysing specification documents in order to identify appropriate test requirements and
    - ▪ Inability to determine what test cases need to be written from documentation. Finds it much easier to be told what it is about and what to do and then does it.
    - ▪ write test cases without 100% oversight.
    - ~Example~

<Location> Dandelion Program – *<Name>*

Our Recommendation

<Name> last day at <Client> is <date>.and will return to DXC commencing <date>.

Independence: <Name> has not yet attained the level of independence or self determination required to perform as a Test Analyst independently.

Self Determination & Self Advocacy: <Name> has some challenges with self determination and self-advocacy due to impaired Theory of Mind, Context Blindness and Central Coherence. He is able to set employment goals such as gaining ISTQB accreditation but finds it hard to adapt these learnings to different scenarios and environments. He is able to articulate when tasks/systems are frustrating him and knows that he performs best when there is a lot of straight forward test execution. Changing priorities and unclear work expectations can cause some stress and anxiety for **<Name>** .

Suitable Future Role: <Name> will need a role that has consistency, structure and repetitive work with little deviation or analysis required. He prefers linear tasks such as straight forward execution. **<Name>** is able to manage large volumes of repetitive work.

Employment Type: Part time hours would be most suitable.

What ongoing support is needed for success

Ongoing Technical Support: <Name> requires a high level of technical support such as daily priorities being clearly outlined to him regularly. **<Name>** also needs support staff to oversee his work and to help with any questions throughout the day.

Ongoing Autism Support Consultant (ASC) : To train Support Staff in autism Cognitive Processes: Theory of Mind, Context Blindness and Central Coherence. This enables Support Staff to be aware of **<Name>** learning and working needs and the best strategies to apply. The ASC would also need to occasionally help **<Name>** manage frustrations caused by misunderstandings or being overwhelmed by conflicting priorities.

Ongoing support strategies required: Theory of Mind and Central Coherence impact on **<Name>** ability to work independently. Frequent and clear communication is a strategy used to minimize the impact of not being able to see the bigger picture or understand the perspectives of others. This is a strategy that needs to be continued as once **<Name>** understands different viewpoints and reasoning he is able to move forward. When overwhelmed or drowsy from reading tasks or meetings **<Name>** knows to take a short walk to recompose himself.

<Location> Dandelion Program – *<Name>*

Key Dates & Plan Going Forward

- **Graduation Ceremony** will be held to celebrate the successful completion of the Dandelion 3 year traineeship (date tbc)

- **<Date>** – final day of Dandelion traineeship at **<Client>**

- **<Date>** – commence at DXC office, <Location>

- **Over the next 6 months:**
  - ➢ We will be looking for opportunities with DXC and other clients
  - ➢ We will be looking at more suitable APS and Qld Government roles
  - ➢ We will be investigating other roles that are more suitable for working style and capabilities
  - ➢ Ongoing skills training using DXC University
  - ➢ Contacting DES providers (Life Without Barriers & Work health Group) and connecting staff to other agencies
  - ➢ Career Coach, mock interviews, job application processes
  - ➢ Upskilling activities
  - ➢ NDIS planning

- **Reporting Progress**
  - ➢ There will be review point every month to monitor progress against KPIs.