



TITLE: Leading Employees with Autism Spectrum Disorders, An Organizational Leadership Perspective

Name: Amie Bowman, PhD
Affiliation: Independent Researcher
Country: United States of America
Email ID: AmieDBowman@gmail.com

ABSTRACT

Our societies, already struggling with social and cultural stresses, a financial crisis, and the aftereffects of a global pandemic, in the next decade will have to confront another challenge: how to employ and care for the wave of individuals with Autism Spectrum Disorders (ASD) entering adulthood. According to the American Centers for Disease Control's 2020 study on ASD, in the US alone 2.27% of the adult population, approximately 5,500,000 people, have the disorder. According to Autism Speaks' 2017 report on Autism and Health, 500,000 more individuals with ASD will enter the US workforce by 2027. Multiple studies have examined the experiences of individuals with ASD, coworkers, and family members to try and improve employment outcomes by identifying individual factors associated with successful transition to work. Additionally, research demonstrates that job activities that encourage and support independence reduce ASD symptoms and increase daily living skills in adults. However, organizations, leaders, and organizational cultures are ill-prepared to integrate the coming influx of individuals with ASD into the workplace. Most organizational cultures and authority figures rely on social and communication skills to manage and lead teams, skills that individuals with ASD struggle to master. Compounding this issue, most leadership training programs and academic research into successful leadership practices emphasize relationship and

communication skills as the primary competencies of leadership, perpetuating the challenge for individuals with ASD. It is becoming increasingly important for leaders in communities, companies, governments, and organizations to understand and appreciate the differences in leading individuals with ASD versus their neurotypical peers. This presentation will review the state of empirical research on leading individuals with ASD in the workplace, will discuss the challenges inherent in managing and leading individuals with ASD, and will provide ideas for training, resources, and areas of future research for successfully integrating these individuals into the workplace.



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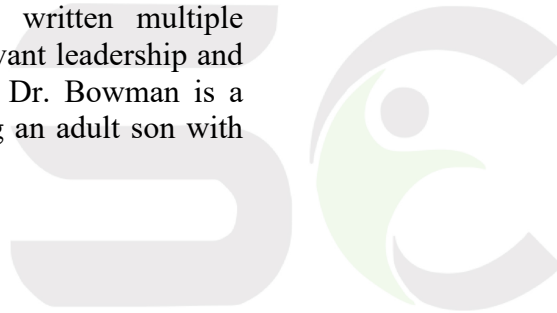
✉ neuroscience@scientexconferences.com

☎ +1-346-348-1205



BIOGRAPHY

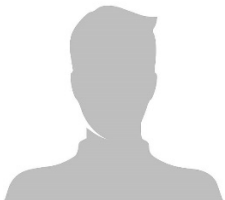
Amie Bowman completed her PhD in Organizational Leadership at Indiana Wesleyan University in 2021. Dr. Bowman's research focuses on identifying leadership behaviors that promote employee development and well-being in the workplace. She has presented at several international conferences and written multiple articles on topics including servant leadership and leading employees with ASD. Dr. Bowman is a mother of three sons, including an adult son with low-functioning ASD.



Presenter Name: Dr. Amie Bowman

Mode of Presentation: Oral

Contact number: +1 (703) 298-2566



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