

## Ground-breaking Program Integrates People with Autism into the Workforce



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– Matthew Huang

Matthew Huang works as a legal compliance analyst at SAP Labs Canada. He has a keen sense of attention to detail and is very productive, making him ideal in his role when auditing software code written by his colleagues. It just so happens that Matthew is also on the autism spectrum.

SAP’s Autism at Work program was launched in 2013 and integrates people with autism into the workforce.

In May 2017, SAP Vancouver wrapped up their fourth wave of hiring and is proud to say that their Autism at Work program is changing lives. Matthew is one of the Autism at Work program participants in Vancouver, and had this to say about his experience:

“Having a full-time job for me has been a great enabler—because of it, I’ve become more willing to leave my shell and experiment. I’ve grown more acclimatized to social events such as being at noisy restaurants. I’ve even tried dancing—which I was horrible at—but it was fun. Having a job has also warded off one of my biggest worries and concerns for the future. In general now, I just can’t stop smiling, and that’s just in stark contrast to my high school years. I’ve never felt more like myself than I do today.”



Matthew isn't the only one who has been impacted by the experience. SAP human resources business partner, Malinee Narang, spoke of how this program recognizes the strengths of individuals who are on the autism spectrum:

“This is not an altruistic pursuit for SAP, but one that is gaining value from the untapped skills and minds of people on the autism spectrum...there is a shortage of information technology talent in Canada. We want to be a model for other companies and look for talent in areas that we haven't tapped before.”

SAP is truly leading by example when it comes to inclusive hiring. Their aim is to continue to increase the diversity of their workforce to include more women, people of varied gender orientations, and people of a range of ages.

The Autism at Work program is a testament to the impact of a positive culture change. Not only does it affect an organization's bottom line, but it also sets the tone from the top-down, embracing individuals' unique strengths to create gainful employment opportunities.