



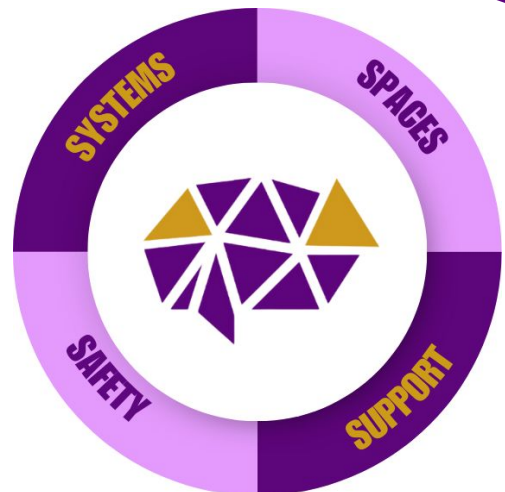
NDIM

Neurodiversity in Media

THE **4S** MANIFESTO

A user guide to help your media
company's Neurodiverse talent thrive!

1st Edition, 2024



INTRODUCING NDIM AND **THE 4S MANIFESTO** FOR NEURODIVERSE TALENT IN YOUR MEDIA COMPANY

Neurodiversity in Media (NDIM) was created as an initiative to celebrate the 15% (minimum) of talent in your media organisation whose brains are wired differently to most.

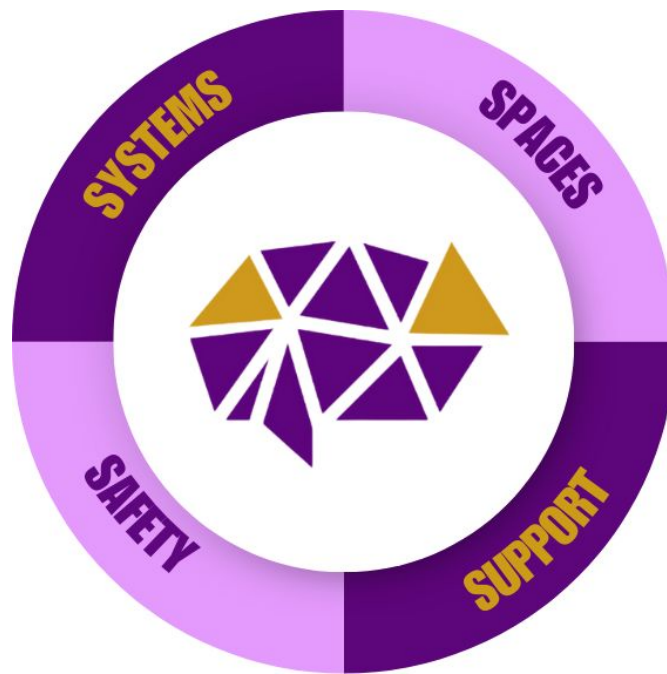
Those who are neurodivergent have conditions including Autism/ASD, ADD, ADHD, Dyslexia, Dyspraxia, Tourette's Syndrome and more. By the term neurodiverse, we mean the collective of all brain types, and we hope this user guide will help include all, neurodivergent or not. What's good for the hive is good for all the bees!

The 4S manifesto was delivered to senior UK media industry leaders in 2023 as a consideration framework to enable ND talent to thrive.

Here, we will share the manifesto, and offer ideas and inspiration on how you can engage with your neurodivergent talent, perhaps even implement some changes into your organisation...



THE 4S MANIFESTO



First delivered to Media Leaders, April 2023



4S Manifesto as delivered by Simon Akers, now NDIM Co-Founder (above), at Media Leader Awards, 2023



Neurodiversity in Media (NDIM) was born to identify a growing and often not addressed issue in an industry which is predicated on reaching engaging different eyeballs, hearts and minds through its advertising.

Let's focus on those minds who deliver the work for a moment.

As fantastic as so many DE&I initiatives are, including mental health related ones, they do not always cover the neurodivergent. This isn't a moving target, this is an entrenched human style to consider, hence a call to arms, a manifesto to transform the way you engage with your talent.

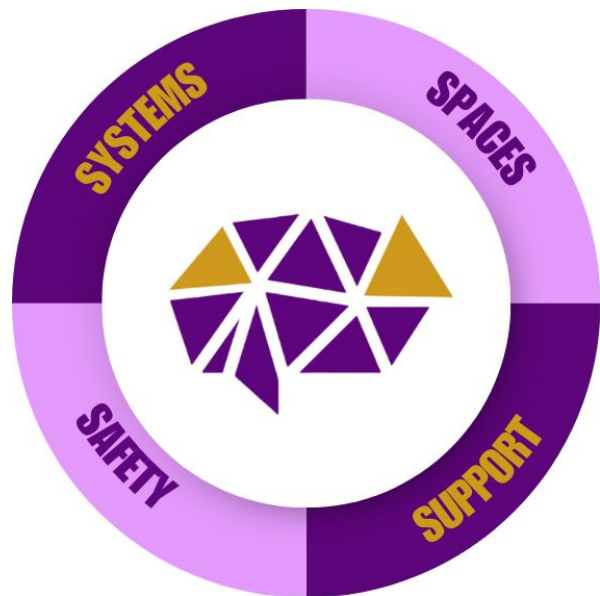
*The starting point, and to bring this important recognition and then conversation and action to life, **thes 4Ss delivered to a room of media industry leaders from agencies, publishers and vendors in April 2023***

Introducing the 4S Manifesto

This is from which the whole NDIM thing sprung. A simple checklist, easy mnemonic or mental framework to consider when you are building things out of your neuro-inclusive workplace. By thinking about the areas where our varied selves can truly thrive, here is a framework which can be delivered, your 4 S'. *Systems, Safety, Spaces & Support*. I had a think, along with another neurodiverse talent about what we need, and it broadly falls into 4 areas. Better Systems, friendly, supportive Spaces, a feeling of unmasked or environment thriving Safety and ongoing Support...

The 4S' :

“Systems, Spaces, Safety & Support”



“1. **Systems** created to enable acceptance of the ways of working, the sense check and acceptance of the brilliant work from the dyslexic strategist who shouldn't be reprimanded at because of seemingly incorrect work, or the autistic colleague who does not deliver the work as you expected, or perhaps leaves the camera off as social cues can be difficult. Or perhaps it's the ADHD colleague off script in the pitch, as with their brain wired differently, they may have intuitively sensed what was right for that point. *Think about how you set up a world for them to thrive..*

2. **Spaces**, this is the cool bit! Spaces for them to work. From noise cancelling headphones and call booths to sensory experiences, or something as simple as having a helpline or backup support slot. Space to let people be themselves. Remember a lot of mental health problems come from undiagnosed or unrevealed/suppressed conditions. For example, I thought I had anxiety and depression since 2018 but it turns out that just maybe, it was ADHD after all. 1 in 7 remember, and that is likely a minimum

3. **Safety**. Safety to feel like it is ok to own their difference and not have to mask, which causes further stress. A safe space to be themselves, to not be shamed for being who they are. There are many who do not share their condition and continually mask. What if you could create safety, and proactively encourage communication of their condition, which in turn makes for better understanding of each other, and work all round?

4. **And most of all, Support** so people feel they get the help they need and can open up. It is 2 way. The person suffering needs to share their issue for them to be helped but needs to be comfortable to do so. A supportive environment, which sometimes is reactive, could look like a weekly check in clinic, a helpline, or just a tea or coffee.



So I implore you all, one year from now, to get started on those Support, Systems, Safety and Spaces into your workplace. ...

Don't typecast, don't assume, just start an open dialogue, afford people these opportunities to speak of their patterns, and their preferred way of working. As a result, it's a win for everyone, for the unlocked potential of 15% of your staff, and a pool of talent with potentially unique, exceptional analytical or creative skills, which of course leads to better business results, in a time where being human matters even more.. And supporting each other, neurodivergent or not. We all need each other for great work. “

**Simon Akers,
Co-Founder - NDIM
& Author of first 4S Manifesto
The Media Leader Awards, 2023**

SO WHAT?

How to bring the 4S' to life



Suggestions from neurodivergent talent on what kind of workplace systems, spaces, safety and support we wish we'd always had.

As a reminder, this is guidance, a checklist, a starting point of inspiration and not meant to be regulatory or exhaustive.

SYSTEMS



Systems are created to enable acceptance of the ways of working, to create ways and processes for all types to thrive, for example, the sense check and acceptance of the brilliant work from various neurotypes.

Here, we want you think about how you set up processes, ways of working and general cultural rules which enable your team to thrive.

SYSTEM - CONSIDERATIONS

AREA

Real questions

Technology & Software

- ▷ Are you using multiple portals and logins?
- ▷ Is there a central space for staff to access information about company processes/find information?
- ▷ Communication/platforms - what do you use and why?
- ▷ Meeting notes/AI assistants/recording software - are they available?
- ▷ Note taking software/mind mapping and planning tools - are they available?
- ▷ Planning tools/organisation - is there a company wide one? Are all trained?
- ▷ Retention policies -clear to all types of staff who treat data/things differently?

Ways of Working Protocols

- ▷ Conflict management - how is this managed?
- ▷ Feedback management - how is this delivered?
- ▷ Do you offer time management support (ie, time sheets!)?
- ▷ Understand time needs/information assimilation e.g. allow more time for some?
- ▷ Understand individual communication styles?

Training/HR

- ▷ Presentation skills - how do you help those that need it?
- ▷ Presentation styles - do you openly embrace different types?
- ▷ Are your L&D platforms inclusive? (e.g. ie is it all video based learning, cater to individuals/hands on training?)
- ▷ Have managers and senior leaders received inclusivity training?
- ▷ Communication of key information for different means e.g. transcript to support training video? Export to print etc?

SPACES



Spaces is both a physical and mental term. Property, office space, or even their immediate working vicinity. From noise cancelling headphones and call booths to sensory room, or something as simple as having a helpline. Spaces to let people be themselves.

To enable your staff to all thrive, it must first be understood that they do not all work effectively in the same way.

Photo source : [Unsplash](#)

SPACES - CONSIDERATIONS

AREA	Real questions
Office Design	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▷ Noise cancelling booths?▷ Standing desks?▷ Quiet spaces?▷ Collaboration areas?▷ Colour/sensory?▷ Desk equipment?▷ Whiteboards/brainstorming?▷ Dedicated rooms/floors/breakout spaces?▷ Outdoor area with plants/air?▷ Sofas for comfortable meeting/working?
Personal Aides	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▷ Noise cancelling headphones?▷ Fidgets?▷ Screens for privacy/extension of work?
Company culture	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▷ Education and understanding of neurodiversity?▷ Location - Work from Home adjustments?▷ Work from desk? Work from anywhere?▷ On site - Work from anywhere in office?▷ On call/meeting etiquette is wide reaching?

SAFETY



Safety means colleagues being able to be themselves, not necessarily 'masking'. Neurodiversity can be both unknown or concealed, and usually invisible. Your staff want to feel like it is ok to own their difference and not have to mask, which causes further stress and reduces productivity. Or perhaps a safe space to be themselves, to not be shamed for being who they are

What if you could create safety, and proactively encourage communication of their condition, which in turn makes for better understanding of each other, and work all round?

Photo source : [Unsplash](#)

SAFETY - CONSIDERATIONS

AREA

Real questions

Organisation-wide

- ▽ Are HR teams trained on neurodiversity and how to build inclusive policies?
- ▽ Have all managers received formal training on managing neurodiverse individuals?
- ▽ Are there communities/support groups within the organisation?
- ▽ Is there employee training and awareness initiatives about neurodiversity and associated inclusivity?
- ▽ Is there a confidential disclosure process for anyone looking to make their employer aware of their neurodiversity?
- ▽ Is there really visibility? I.e. Senior leadership actively promoting the conversation in company meetings and initiatives.
- ▽ Celebration: is there positive communication & reinforcement of what employing neurodiverse team members means for your organisation?
- ▽ Is there ND inclusive planning & corporate comms as part of DEI/Mental Health initiatives?

Working Scenarios

- ▽ Do you provide psychological safety for neurodivergent talent to be themselves and not mask?
Do you apply this to the recruitment and the day to day process?
- ▽ Do you enable the neurodivergent staff to not mask?
- ▽ Do you enable client understanding in pitch/service day-to-day processes?
- ▽ Are you tolerant with the neurodiverse acting differently e.g. time of day work, cameras off etc.?

SUPPORT



...and most of all, Support

...very much the protective layer, the default setting. One of the safety nets in your organisation if other measures fail. This is so important so people feel they get both the help they need, e.g. Grants or training, or can open up e.g a chat with a peer, a boss, or a buddy system.

On a wider cultural basis, it is about creating a supportive environment.

Photo source : [Unsplash](#)

SUPPORT - CONSIDERATIONS

AREA

Real questions

General organisational support

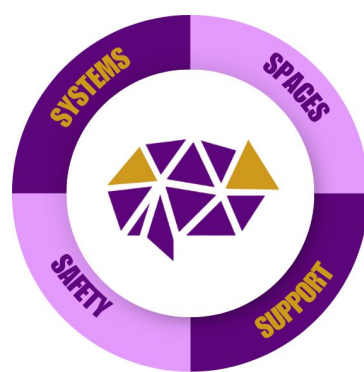
- ▽ Are there dedicated Neurodiversity Champions (similar to first aid/mental health first aiders)? Do current MHFAs understand the challenges of ND colleagues?
- ▽ Are managers trained in management techniques that benefit managing neurodiverse individuals, as well as the ability to act as a confidential escalation point for anyone in their team to be able to refer colleagues for support they may need to perform their role?
- ▽ Are there Confidentiality protocols for anyone who wishes to share their condition with their employer?
- ▽ Do you have inclusive hiring practices from application through to onboarding?
- ▽ Does the company perks/benefits and policies provide support for ND individuals/carers, including flexibility, support with applications such as Access To Work, workplace accommodations and mental health access/support? In particular for women, aligning on return from maternity policies, menopause etc where ND women may be disproportionately affected?
- ▽ Are there support networks/groups for anyone who wants to reach out? Is there a dedicated safe space e.g. employee assistance program/phone line?
- ▽ Are People/HR teams educated on neurodiversity and on how to provide support for individuals in need (ie support with handling access to work claims, or managed leave/access to accommodations)?
- ▽ Are there more company wide informal awarenesses of support and mental wellbeing and encouragement e.g. take 10 initiatives.

The 4S - SUMMARY

If you can end up honestly saying 100% YES these 4 questions, your company is a great ally for neurodiversity

AREA	Headline Question.
SYSTEMS	Do you enable differences in ways of working, with adjustments, for your team to thrive?
SPACES	Is there an environment for ND talent to do their best work, from noise cancelling booths, to collaboration zones and breakout spaces?
SAFETY	Can all neurodivergent colleagues be themselves at work without bias or reprimand; to unmask and be confident in their day to day?
SUPPORT	Are you supportive? From tools and processes to human, pastoral care, and being there when things get tough?

FOR REAL ONGOING CHANGE? It's over to you...



This aims to serve as a source of inspiration, a user guide, a collection of crowdsourced considerations and questions from the neurodiverse FOR the neurodiverse. We are not laying down the law, nor looking to provide business transformation consultancy, but we just know that we are the best and most unique industry to embrace so many types of people, and we have a chance, starting with your business, to join us on this journey.

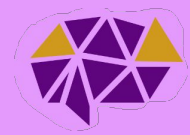
On that note, if you feel we have missed out any considerations (we are not breaking it down to condition specific, but if you have a perspective, we want to hear it), then please let us know. But this is s starting point that we know many can do more on.

By thinking a little more about these 4 separate areas of Systems, Spaces, Safety & Support, it can only at worst, serve to make your workplace a little better, a little more inclusive, regardless of the neurological makeup of your talent pool.

We truly believe what is good for the hive is good for all the bees.

Your journey starts now, and we hope this helps. Good luck!





Wider Guidance/Signposting



By no means exhaustive as we are learning about new initiatives all the time, but here are some initial pointers to learn about conditions, industry initiatives and funding, as well as our friends/partners.

Resources & Charities

Access To Work Funding



[more](#)

Buckland Review of Autism Employment



[more](#)

AUTISM charity / resources



[more](#)

ADHD charity / resources



[more](#)

DYSLEXIA charity / resources



[more](#)

TOURETTES charity / resources



[more](#)

Industry Support

IAB - Supporting Neurodiversity



[more](#)

Mental Wellness in media and advertising



[more](#)

Peer to Peer mental health support in industry



[more](#)

Wider industry initiatives

Charity supporting ND in wider business sectors



[more](#)

ND network and events for Creative/Tech Industries



[more](#)

Supporting wellbeing and ND in women



[more](#)

With thanks to our launch 4S champions and advocates





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