

## **Adult ADD ... is it affecting your business?**

*By Nancy A. Haas*

Adult ADD – what is it and how can it affect your business?

Attention Deficit Disorder, or ADD, is a condition of the brain in which the person has disturbances in the areas of attention, information processing, and impulse control. It is not that people with ADD cannot pay attention but rather that they pay attention to everything! Until recently it was thought that children diagnosed with ADD would grow out of this disorder; experts now believe that up to 65% of children with ADD will continue to show signs of the condition into adulthood.

Unfortunately, adults with symptoms of ADD are often misunderstood and misdiagnosed. And stereotypes abound about people with ADD – they have been described as hyperactive, and troublemakers who are hard to work with, and much more difficult to manage. But like all stereotypes, there are many who don't fit this description. People like Henry Ford, Winston Churchill, John F. Kennedy, Cher, Tom Cruise, Walt Disney, Tracey Gold, Richard Branson, Mozart, Nelson Rockefeller, Dustin Hoffman, and Robin Williams shatter these stereotypes. They are high-profile, overachievers with one thing in common--they were diagnosed with Adult ADD. Each in their own way used their ADD aspects to become successful. They are also very much like your own employees who may have been diagnosed with Adult ADD – intelligent, creative, sensitive, and intuitive. These are among the more positive qualities of ADD that also include the ability to multitask, and an aptitude for business entrepreneurship.

Probably everyone in the world can relate to at least some of the characteristics of ADD which include disorganization, distraction, confusion, difficulty completing tasks, an unreliable sense of time, and a collection of 'clutter.' These symptoms make simple everyday tasks difficult for people with ADD and can impact their personal and professional lives. But Adult ADD can be addressed with medication, behavioral techniques or other treatments which may reduce the symptoms and increase their ability to function more effectively.

Why is this important to you? As a manager or team leader you have many issues to deal with, but among the most important is helping your employees discover their strengths, which in turn helps your organization meet its' business goals. An employee with ADD may lack focus, be disorganized, restless, or have difficulty finishing projects, but they can also become your best performer - even an overachiever like those mentioned above, with the right support. By understanding ADD, you can provide more effective guidance for an employee struggling with this disorder, even if the individual has not told you they have ADD. Talk to them about your observations which may include concerns about their punctuality, missed deadlines, or lack of attention to specific tasks. Your expectations of their work product should not be less than what is expected from their coworkers. But remember, not all performance issues are related to Adult ADD, and not all employees with Adult ADD have performance issues. If you suspect ADD, get more information about it, or talk to Human Resources on how to approach a specific situation.



Increasingly companies are realizing that employees with ADD have a lot to offer. With only a few minor adjustments such as noise reduction, help with organizing tasks, or varying assignments in order to hold one's interest, ADD employees can be a strong advantage in achieving business goals.

When you are managing a business or a department, the bottom-line is that tasks need to be completed, and deadlines must be met. The simple tasks of everyday business can be more difficult to people with Adult ADD, but not impossible. People with Adult ADD can be an asset to your business just as those without ADD. It is a matter of understanding, and flexibility. Although the approach may be different, the results can be outstanding.

*For more information about Adult ADD, visit [www.addresources.org](http://www.addresources.org). In addition, The Western CT Chapter of SHRM will be hosting a panel discussion on Adult ADD on Tuesday, January 10, 7:30 am at the Holiday Inn, Danbury. For more information, visit [www.shrmwc.org](http://www.shrmwc.org) or contact Nancy Haas at 203-426-0298.*

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