



# A perfect match for a need

Place of action:

**Packaging company**

Storyteller:

**Ville, Sales and Marketing  
Director of the company**

Synopsis:

**Mikko, an employee with  
Asperger's syndrome, working  
in the stockroom, collecting  
and packing**

## Me and my job coach

"I have already recruited many persons with disabilities over the years. I always make use of the same service provider for jobseekers with disabilities. They support me every time when I have a vacancy open for people with disabilities. One of their job coaches helps me with finding candidates. Once selected, he helps with the learning process of the new employee. He also supports me with filling different kind of forms and so on. Without this help I probably wouldn't have started hiring employees with a disability. Now I was searching for a new employee in my warehouse. They suggested some candidates, and after having interviews with them, I selected Mikko. He completely matches with my needs and wishes."

## Quickly learning the routine

"Together with his job coach, we decided to start with an internship. It would enable Mikko to find out whether he liked the job, and I could find out whether he was able to carry out the tasks belonging to his job and whether he matched with the culture in my company. During this internship, he was supported by his job coach. Everything went well and Mikko quickly learned the routines. When the internship ended, I offered Mikko a contract and he accepted it. And again, his job coach helped with all kinds of contract matters and other paperwork."

## A supported employment scheme

"Mikko works in the stockroom, where he collects and packs orders. He works five hours per day and four days per week. His job is 'not to be responsible' but his job is 'to do'. He works on a supported employment scheme. This means he is supported and trained by his job coach, and at the same time earns a salary and we receive a subsidy for him related to his productivity. In the beginning, his job coach was there to help him just a couple of times a week. After some time, it became clear Mikko had no longer a great need for support, and now the job coach visits only one or two times a year. Still, when needed, he is always available."

## Don't go for advice, be supportive of the conversation

"His colleagues know Mikko works on this supported employment scheme. Mikko has Asperger's syndrome, and he himself wanted to inform his colleagues about what it means to have this syndrome and what it means for his job. His colleagues appreciated this and were all re open to help him if needed. In the beginning everything went well, but after the first enthusiastic reactions, small challenges came up within the working community. It became clear Mikko's special features were not fully understood by his colleagues. Fortunately, his job coach succeeded to create an open atmosphere to discuss matters. His message was 'Don't go for advice, be supportive of the conversation'. This open discussion atmosphere has ever since benefited the entire work community in other matters as well."

### **The supportive team leader**

"Mikko is very self-sufficient and quick in his work. His colleagues are satisfied with Mikko and his work input. They also appreciate the diversity in our work community. He is one of us. When there is not much work in stock, they all work together on specific tasks nobody has ever time to do them, like for instance cleaning the stock and taking out the trash. Mikko is happy to do those tasks with his colleagues. His team leader has also been very open minded from the beginning. His role has been very important. He supports him wherever needed and takes care everything is going well."

### **It brings in extra work**

"My fellow employers may feel that it can take too much time and bring in extra work. I can imagine, I had the same. This is why that support of job coaches has been an essential part of my decision to start hiring persons with a partial workability. Their support in all matters takes away much of the 'trouble' that accompanies the recruitment and hiring of a person with a disability. Close contact with the job coaches is really valuable.

### **A good model**

"Mikko's happy and positive personality is a good model for the rest of the employees. It felt as the right thing to do, to employ him. And there was a genuine need for these stockroom tasks. His work input is important. I would do it again. For me, this is an established practice in the company."

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