

Day 2

Neurodiversity

Moving Beyond Fundamentals
with Merge Forward



Diana Todea



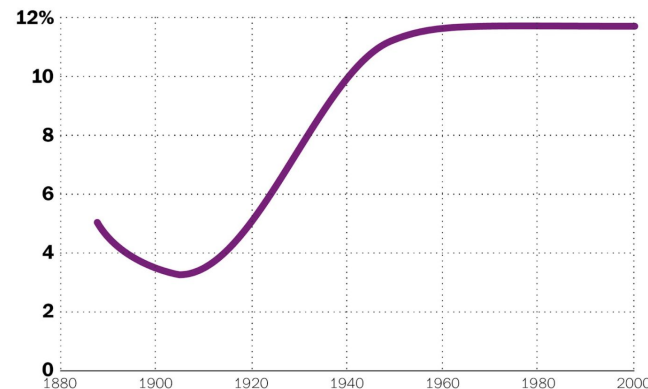
Ryan Etten



ICEBREAKER: The Left-Hand Curve

The history of left-handedness

Rate of left-handedness among Americans, by year of birth



WAP0.ST/WONKBLOG

Source: Survey data reported in "The History and Geography of Human Handedness" (2009)

Stigma ↓ = Reporting ↑

Neuroinclusivity is the removal
of the mask

We must challenge assumptions about
the ideal employee profile and move
toward strengths-based management

INTRO: Day 1 vs. Day 2

Shift from "superpowers" to lived experience (struggle, anxiety, masking)

Adopt the social model of disability (fix the environment, not the person)

GOAL: Create engineered accessibility through inclusive defaults

EXERCISE: Debugging Ambiguity

Vague Request (High Cognitive Load):

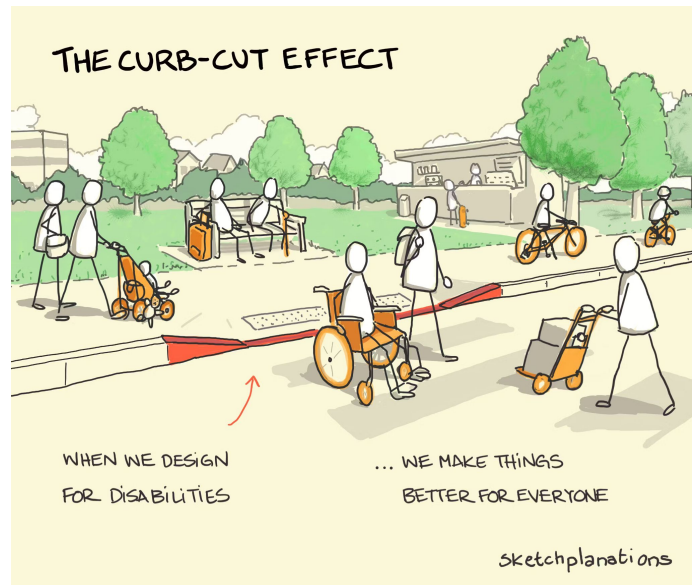
"Could you review my PR when you're free? It's basically done."

ACTIVITY: Spend 30 seconds rewriting the request to reduce cognitive load

EXERCISE: Debugging Ambiguity

Neuro-Inclusive Request (Structured):

- **What:** Review PR #300, specifically focusing on the authentication logic
- **By When:** Wed, 5/20, by end of day
- **Why:** We need to merge this before the code freeze on Friday morning to unblock the frontend team's rollout



ROUNDTABLE: Tackling Structural Gaps in OSS

ACTIVITY: Discuss Universal Design & Inclusive Defaults

Since only a small percentage of neurodivergent individuals request accommodations due to fear of stigma, how can OSS projects adopt universal design, where tools like visual architecture diagrams, structured issue templates, and async-first updates become the default for everyone, requiring zero disclosure?

ACTIVITY: Discuss Strengths-Based Delegation vs. The "Superpower" Myth

How do we shift our contribution models to align with people's natural strengths without falling into the "superpower" trap that expects neurodivergent contributors to constantly produce at genius levels, which ultimately leads to burnout?

Key Takeaways & Call to Action

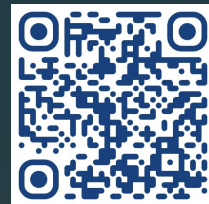
- 64% of ND employees want colleagues to have a better understanding of neurodivergent behaviors
- 46% of ND employees desire allies who can explain the "unwritten rules" of the community
- 34% look for leaders to actively champion neurodiversity at a systemic level
- **Ask, don't assume**
- **Default to explicit communication**
- **Redesign for strengths**

We must challenge assumptions about the ideal employee profile and move toward strengths-based management

Join Merge Forward

Building a **stronger**
open source future
together!

Learn more



community.cncf.io/merge-forward
#merge-forward on Slack!

THANK YOU!



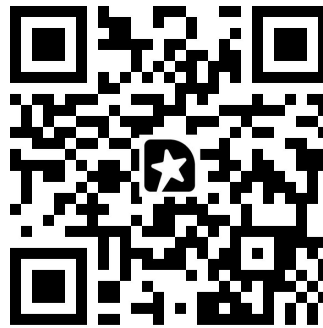


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We'd love your feedback!



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