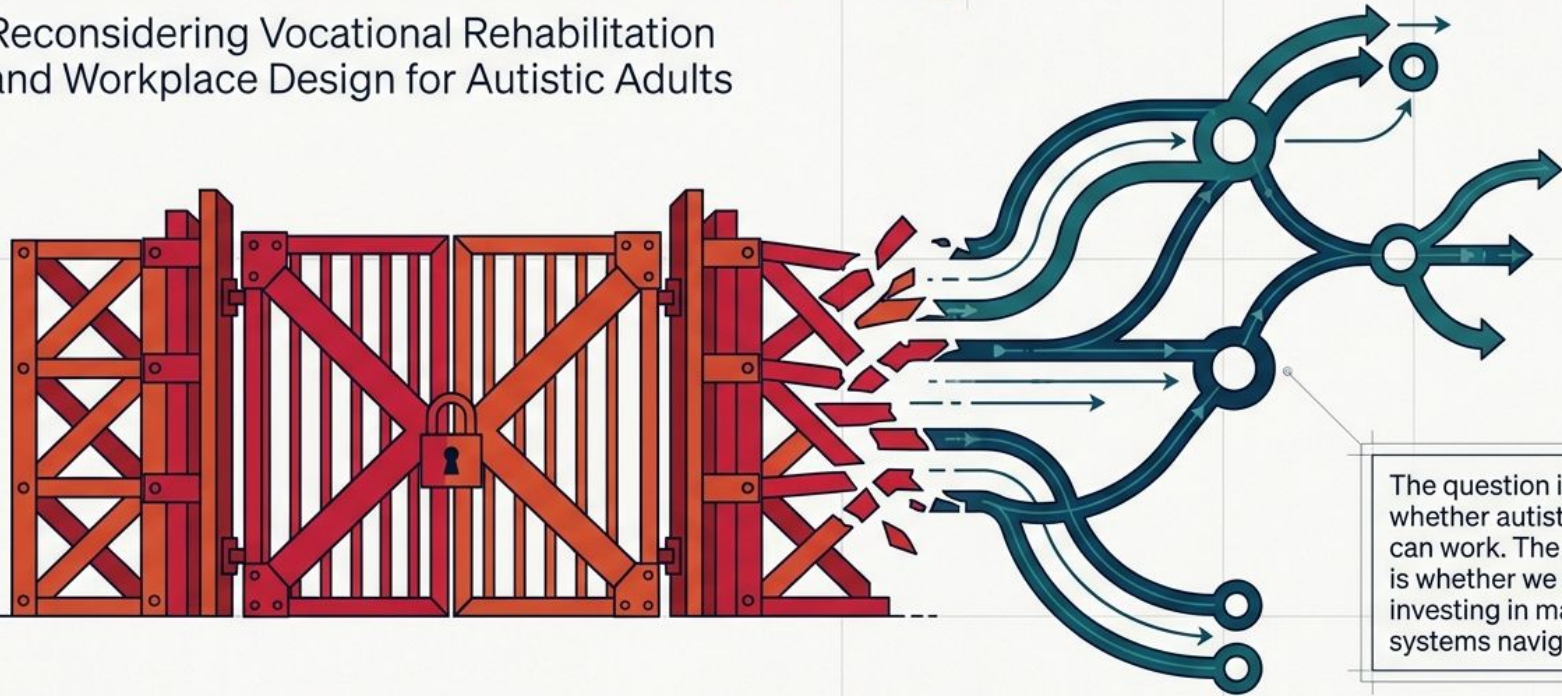


When Assessment Becomes Gatekeeping

Reconsidering Vocational Rehabilitation
and Workplace Design for Autistic Adults



The question is not whether autistic adults can work. The question is whether we are investing in making systems navigable.

The Capability Paradox

The Reality of Exclusion

50–85% unemployed or substantially underemployed globally.

weight
weight
output



85% of autistic college graduates remain unemployed/underemployed.



Only 14–16% in the US and 16% in the UK hold full-time employment.



36% live below the poverty line (vs. 15% general population).



The bottleneck is not a skill deficit.
The bottleneck is the environment.

The Reality of Capability

Equal or better job performance compared to neurotypical peers.

weight
weight
output



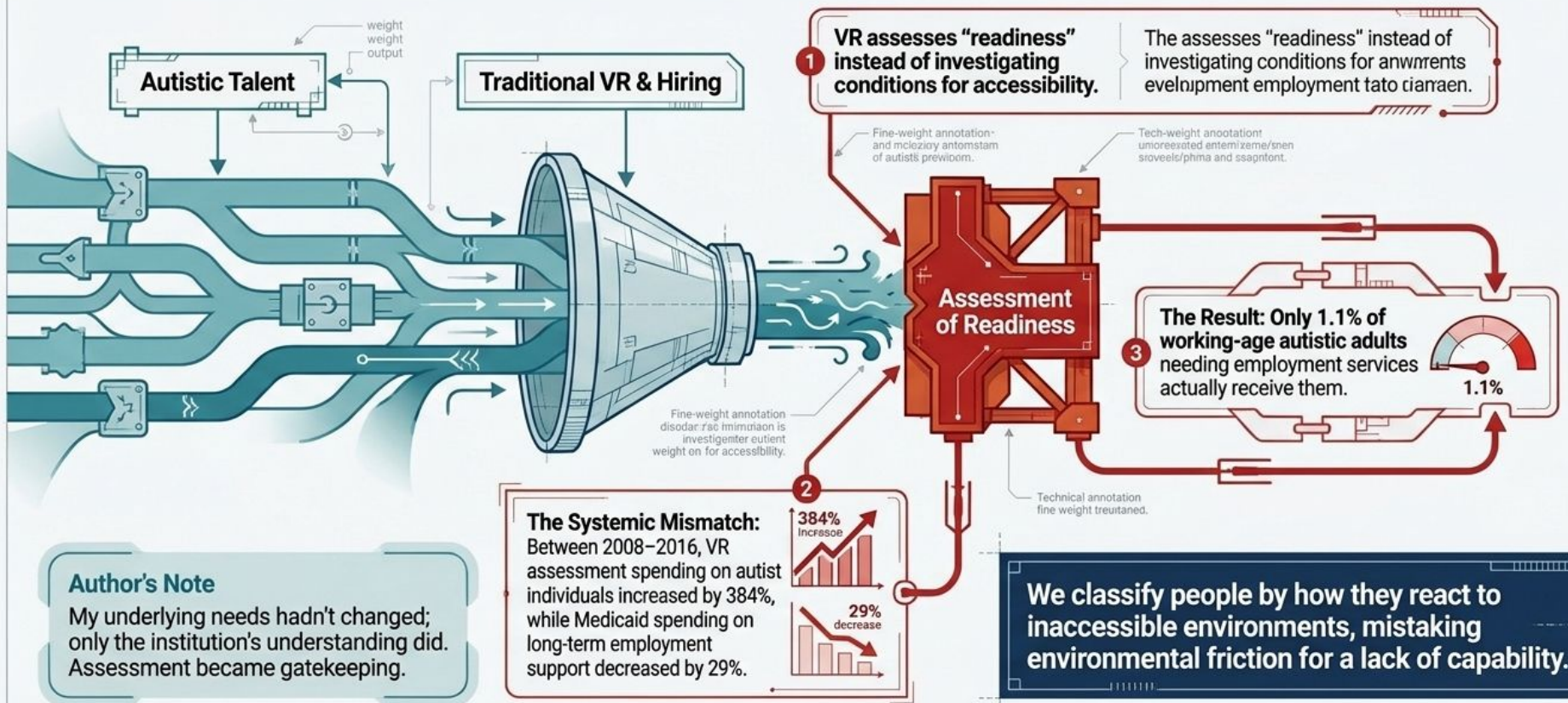
Demonstrated longer tenure and higher retention rates.



Exceptional capacity for sustained attention, detail orientation, and pattern recognition.

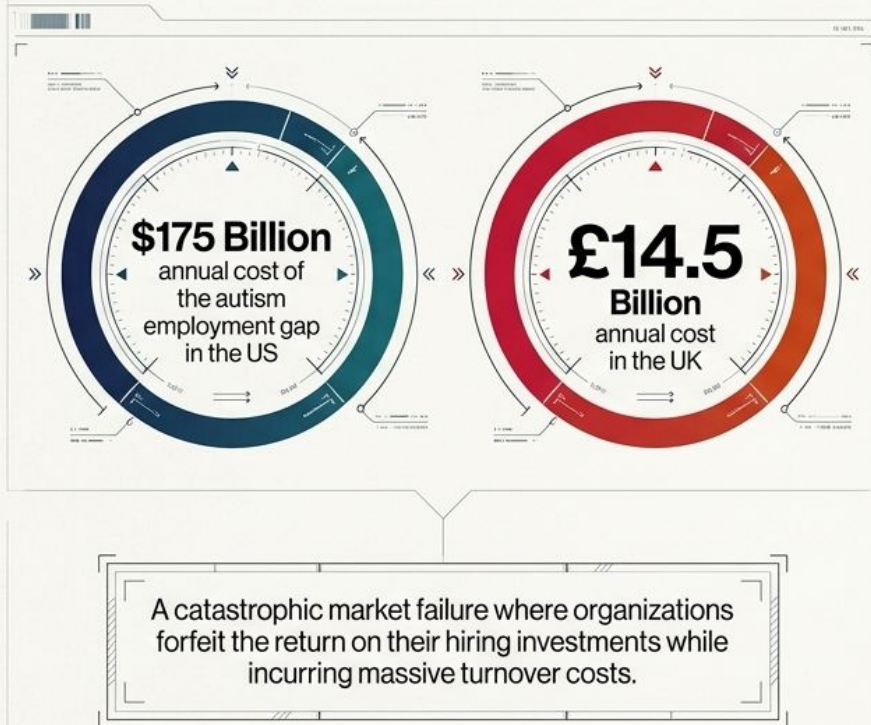


The Systemic Flaw: The Assessment Trap

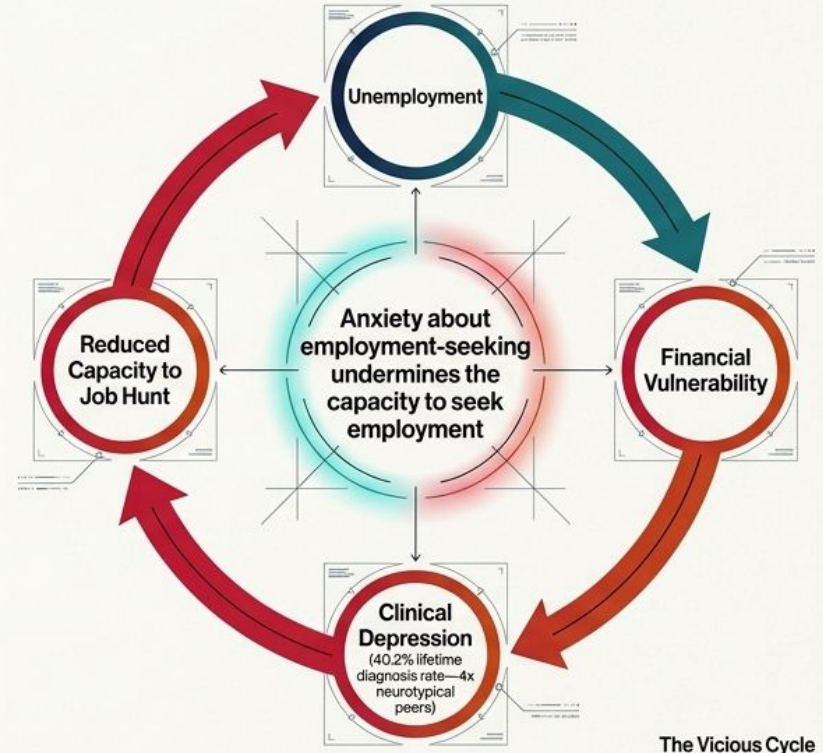


The Dual Cost of the Mismatch

Macro Dashboard (The Economy)



Micro Loop (The Human Cost)





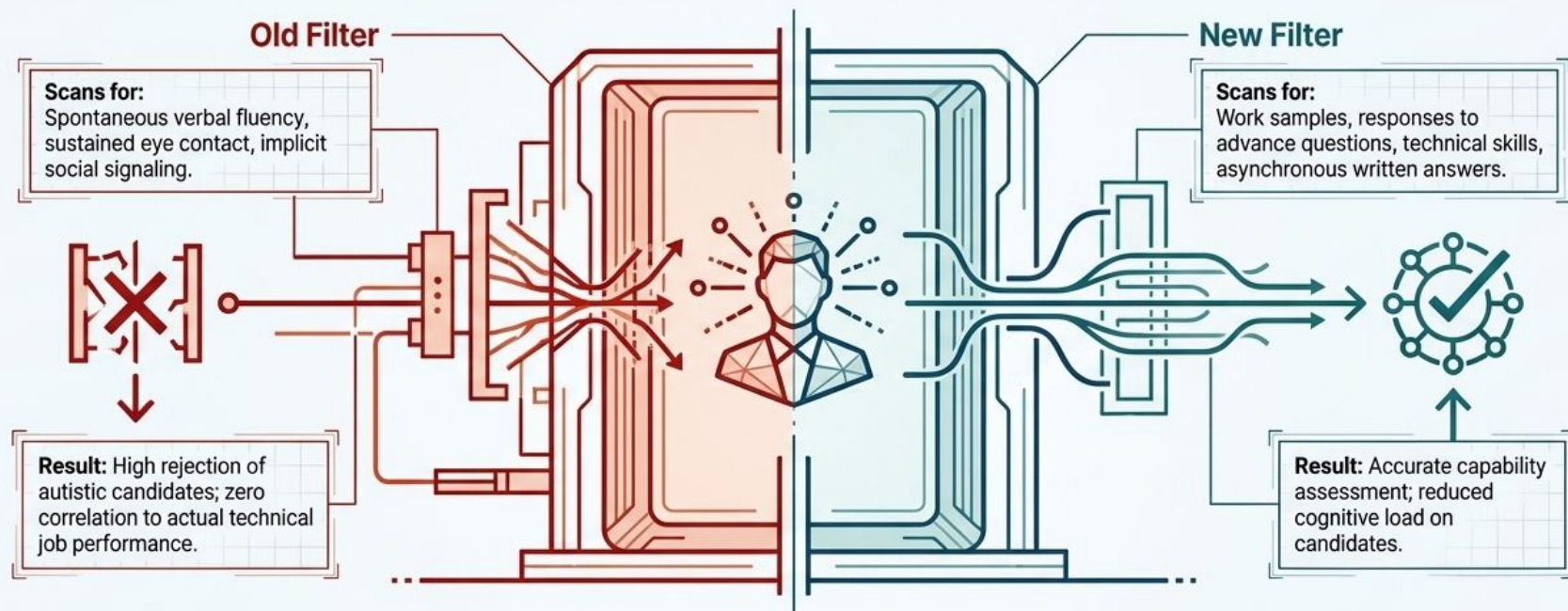
Capability is Conditional.

Autistic employees bring genuine strengths, but their expression depends entirely on environmental conditions.

Placing an individual into an inaccessible workplace without addressing those conditions shifts the problem—it does not solve it.

The ROI: Most essential workplace accommodations cost less than \$500, and many require no financial outlay at all.

System Upgrade 1: The Interview Filter



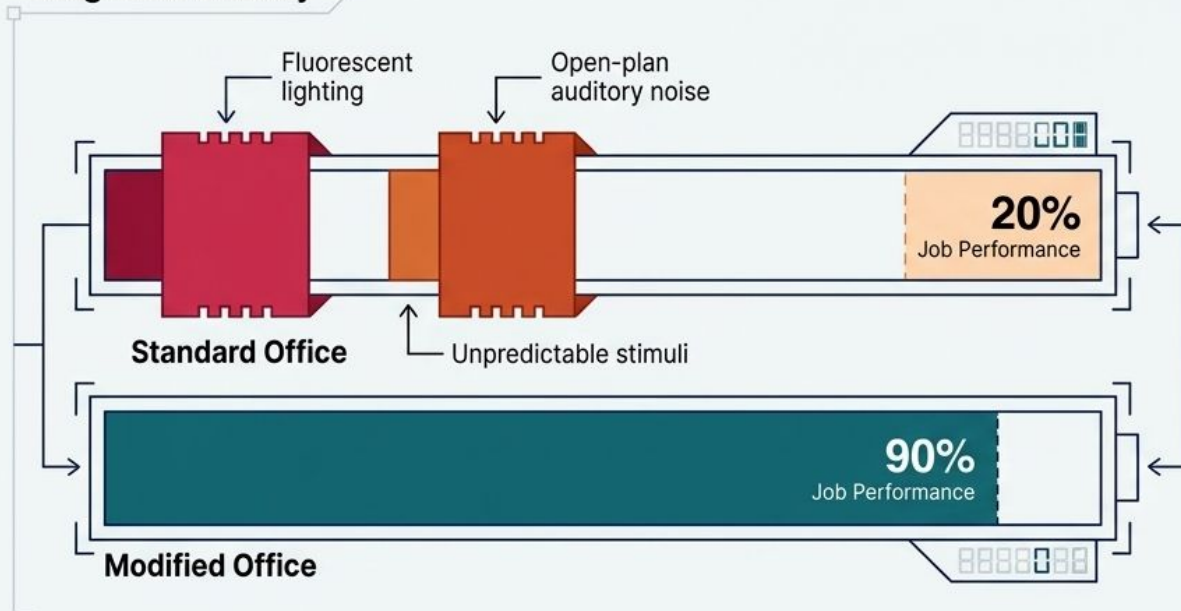
Case Study: SAP's Autism at Work Initiative

Action: Replaced traditional conversational interviews with hands-on, multi-day assessments and team-based problem-solving activities.

Outcome: Hired hundreds globally; managers report above-average performance in QA, software testing, and data analytics.

System Upgrade 2: Sensory Architecture

Cognitive Battery



Accommodation Playbook

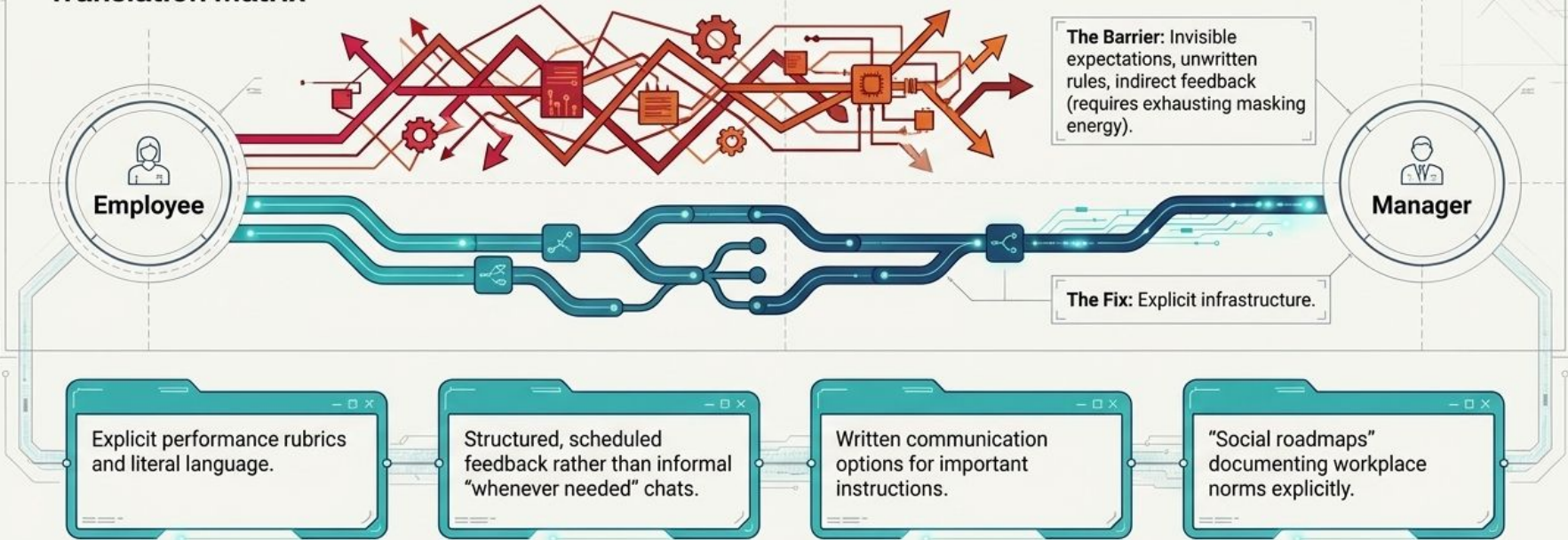


Case Study: Microsoft's Neurodiversity Hiring Program

Proactive sensory adjustments implemented during onboarding. Managers trained to offer adjustments before performance declines, resulting in retention rates equal to or exceeding departmental averages.

System Upgrade 3: Transparent Communication

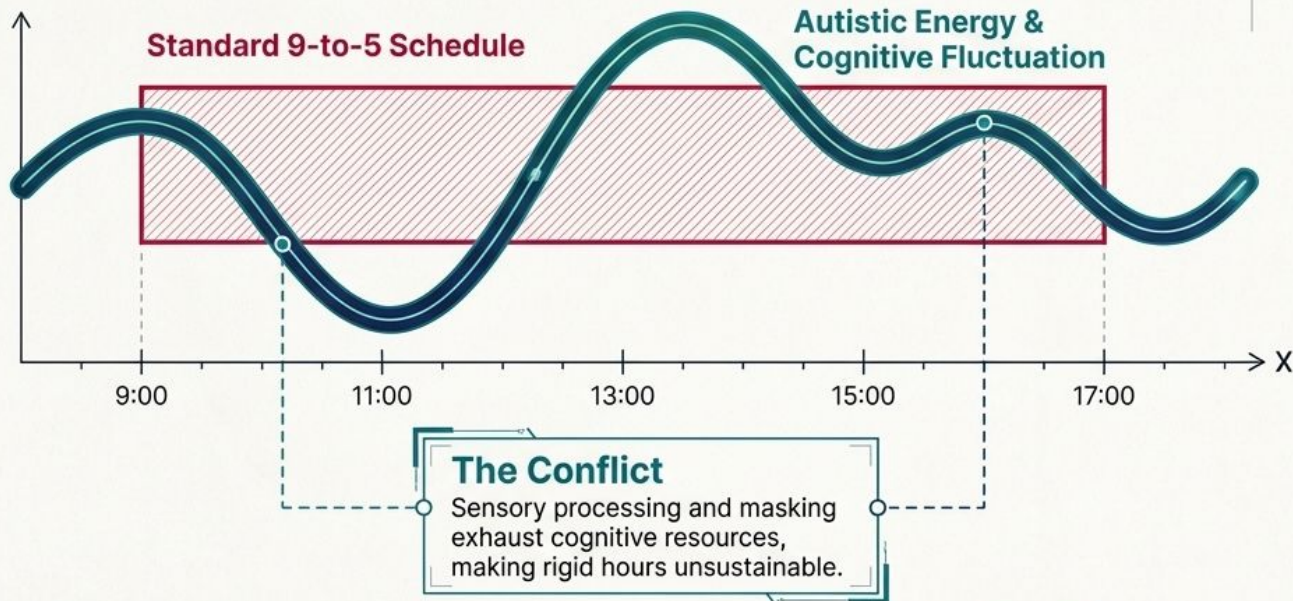
Translation Matrix



Case Study: Ernst & Young (EY) Centers of Excellence

Managers trained in direct, behaviorally-focused, written feedback. Creation of explicit "workplace norms" documentation led to improved performance ratings and highly positive feedback from non-autistic team members.

System Upgrade 4: Energy Management



Fixes

Flexible start and end times to align with circadian rhythms.



Task-based (output-focused) rather than time-based expectations.



Part-time or reduced-hour options retaining health benefits.



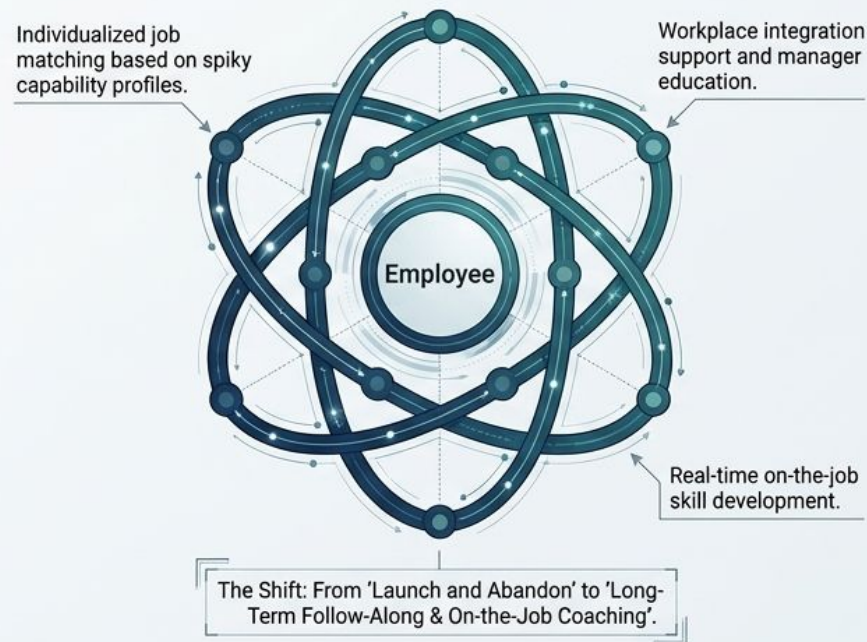
Advance notice of schedule changes to reduce cognitive load.



Case Study: JPMorgan Chase

Implemented 4x10 schedules, variable core hours, and asynchronous remote collaboration. Schedule control cited as a primary factor driving massive employee retention.

System Upgrade 5: Ecosystem Support



Case Study: Specialisterne (Supported Employment Model)

Coaches work directly with employers to modify processes, design spaces, and maintain long-term contact to intercept difficulties early. Achieves employment retention rates exceeding 75% at two years.

The Paradigm Shift

	Traditional Gatekeeping	Capability-Enabling
Focus of Assessment	Individual deficits & limitations.	Environmental analysis & accessibility.
Locus of the Problem	The Candidate (Must prove "readiness").	The Workplace (Must discover necessary conditions).
View of Capability	Inherent limitation (Fixed trait).	Conditional on access (Contextual).
Approach to Accommodation	An individualized exception, burden, or "favor".	Shared infrastructure and inclusive system design.

Reframing the Psychological Contract

The Old Contract (Unilateral)

Demands that the autistic employee exhaust their energy masking traits, tolerating inaccessible environments, and navigating unwritten rules.

Masking is unsustainable labor.



Only turns when both are fully engaged.

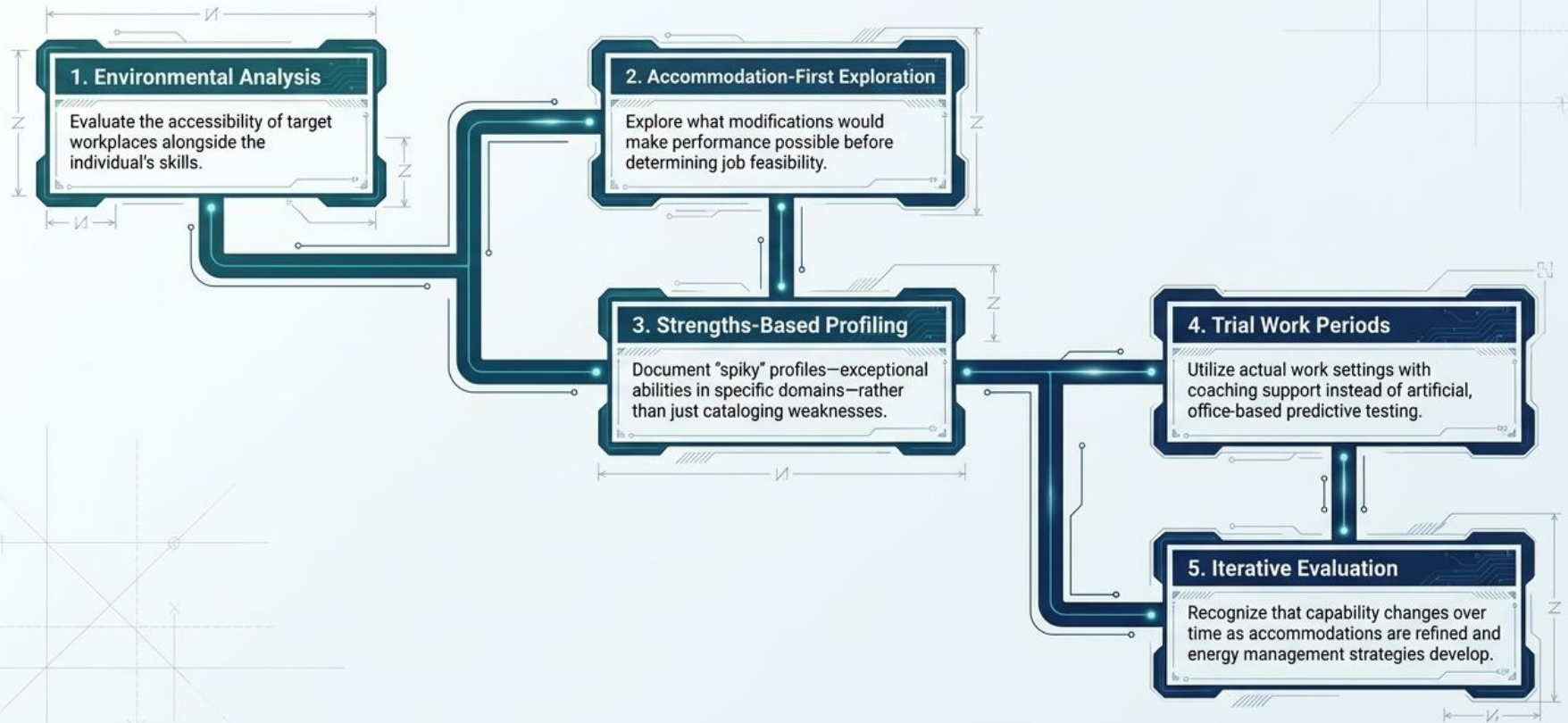
The New Contract (Reciprocal)

Accessibility is a shared responsibility, not an individual favor.

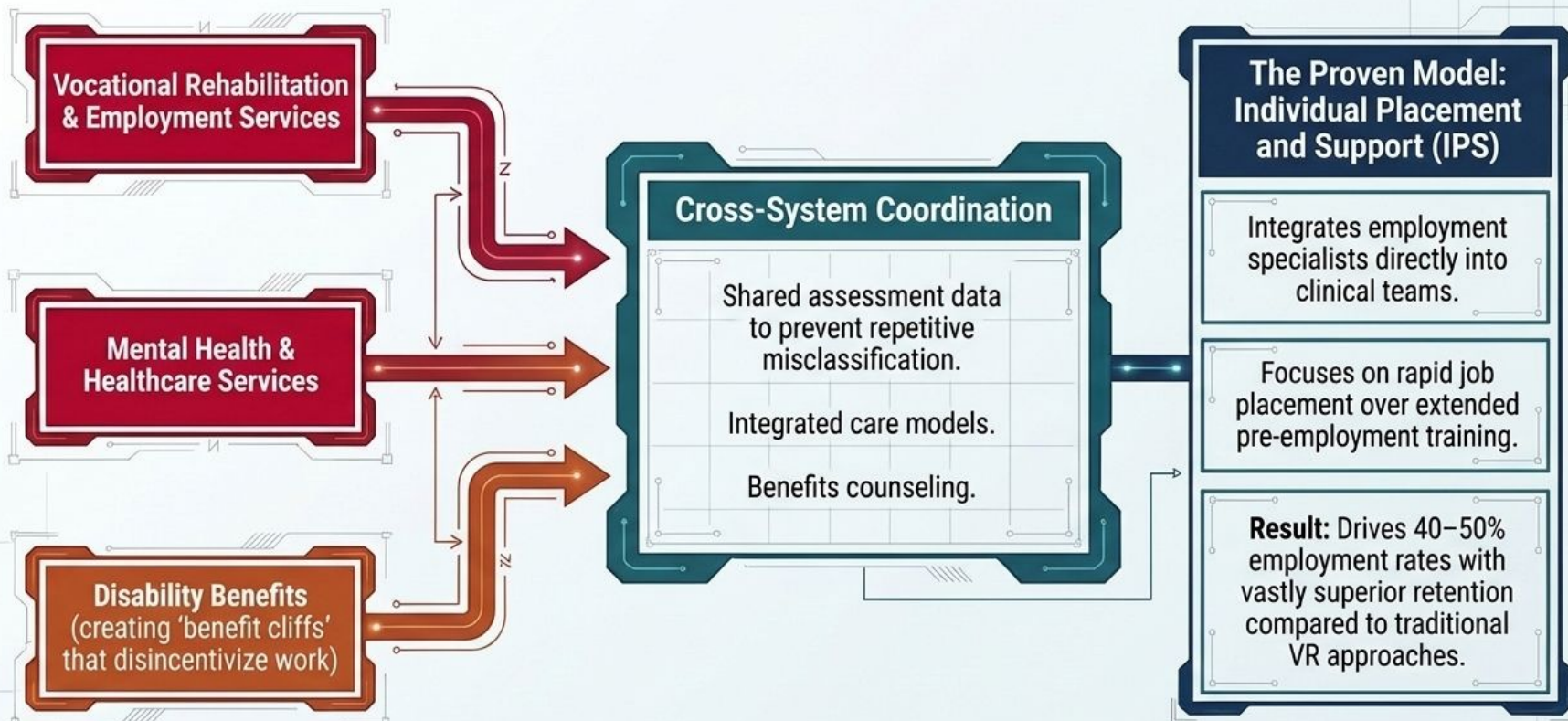
Organizations that require masking are actively choosing presentation over performance.

Retention reflects workplace quality, not employee deficiency.
High turnover among autistic employees signals that the environment is inaccessible, not that employees lack commitment.

Capability-Focused Assessment Framework



Cross-System Coordination





**When someone cannot demonstrate
their skills in your assessment environment,
the question is not, 'What is wrong with them?'
but rather, 'What is missing from the
environment we have created?'**

Invest in conditions. Build workplaces where capability can be expressed. Enable rather than gatekeep.