

## Did you ever ask yourself: “Could this customer have Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD)?”

You may have wondered about ADHD when you heard or observed the following information:

- ‘I have trouble paying attention’
- ‘how long will that session last?’
- the person appeared restless, rude, impatient, body in constant motion
- the person didn’t seem to understand what they needed to do
- they asked the same question repetitively
- they did not finish a degree or training program
- their work history has interruptions or multiple short- term jobs
- they have worked jobs lower than their ability
- there is an admitted history of substance abuse or loss of driving privilege
- they did not bring required documents, didn’t have a pen, couldn’t find something in their bag, etc.
- ‘I struggled with reading in elementary school’

### Here are some frequently asked questions about ADHD:

1. Isn’t that just a problem for children?  
No, adults can also have ADHD.
2. Can’t medication deal with the symptoms of ADHD?  
In adults, the best treatment approach is a combination of medication and counseling. Medications should be carefully reviewed with the physician. Some drugs last only 8 hours, others 12 hours or longer. Matching the drug to the length of a work day can be critical. Side effects can be related with most medications. Sometimes trial and error need to be employed to find the best fit for symptom control.
3. How do I know my customer is not just lazy, or unmotivated? Isn’t ADHD sometimes an excuse for not trying hard enough?  
People who live with ADHD are frequently accused of being rude, lazy, disorganized, poor time managers or inattentive. They can also develop low self-esteem. A good diagnostician can identify whether the problem really is ADHD.
4. Why do people with ADHD often choose NOT to take advantage of the medications?  
With every chemical comes the potential for side effects. Sometimes the side effects are intolerable or unwelcome (feeling sluggish, weight gain, changes in libido, depression or agitation, sleep disturbances, etc.) For some, living with the ADHD brings a feeling of productivity and creativity they wouldn’t want to lose. Others may find they feel more in control of symptoms through herbal remedies, marijuana or alcohol.
5. Is ADHD recognized under the Americans with Disabilities Act?  
Yes. The employee needs to disclose their disability and request accommodations.

*There are those who believe the ADHD diagnosis can be a gift of creativity!*

“When people with ADHD come to me for treatment, they’re often unhappy in their professional life, and have a very low self-image,” says Kathleen Nadeau, Ph.D., a Silver Springs, Maryland, psychologist and the author of [ADD In The Workplace](#). “I help them see that having ADHD is not a negative thing. A lot of entrepreneurs, entertainers, politicians, and business leaders have ADHD, including the CEO of JetBlue, David Neeleman. In fact, Neeleman invented e-tickets because he kept misplacing his airline tickets every time he flew. So, he created a system that wouldn’t require paper tickets.”

Famous people who live with ADHD: Will Smith, Michael Phelps, Jim Carrey, Justin Timberlake

### **Possible accommodations and tools to manage ADHD at work:**

- If possible, schedule work hours to match the person’s most productive part of the day
- Offer uninterrupted time and space for the most complex work tasks
- Allow white noise headphones to limit audible distractions
- Break tasks into smaller pieces, each with a deadline
- Use a timer for breaks, reminders of the next meeting
- Keep a notebook to record random thoughts for later reference
- Maintain ONE calendar
- Handle paper only once
- Establish rewards: i.e., after the report is finished I can take a walk.
- Make visual reminders such as sticky notes, a project board
- Tape record or have a note taker at meetings
- Use color coded file folders, notebooks, emails, calendar items

Two great articles about ADHD and work:

**<https://www.additudemag.com/adhd-at-work-time-wasters-and-productivity-killers/>**

**<http://www.chadd.org/understanding-adhd/for-adults/workplace-issues.aspx>**