

May 19th 2016

## **House Committee on Small Business Hearing**

### **Help Wanted: Small Business Providing Opportunities for All**

Chairman Chabot, Ranking Member Velázquez, Members of the Committee. Thank you for your ongoing efforts to support small businesses, and for exploring the role of small businesses in creating job opportunities for people on the Autism Spectrum.

My name is Rajesh Anandan. I'm one of the founders of ULTRA Testing, a company I started three years ago with my co-founder Art Sheckman, whom I've known since we were roommates in college at MIT.

Art spent the past twenty years being a serial entrepreneur, building technology services ventures. I spent a decade in technology and corporate strategy, and another decade scaling up social ventures. Together, we started a company that we believe will revolutionize the software testing industry. More importantly, we're building a company that we hope will prove the tremendous economic potential to be unlocked by employing individuals on the Autism Spectrum.

David, whom you just saw in the video (see [www.DifferentBetter.us](http://www.DifferentBetter.us)) is one of our team members at ULTRA. He graduated in 2001 with a degree in Computer Science, and

was eager to start his career. He applied and interviewed for dozens of positions but unfortunately was not able to find a job in his field or any field. Eager to work, David started volunteering at a local computer repair shop refurbishing used computers, and helping friends and family members fix their computer problems. For over a decade, David tried to find paid work, without success. Then in late 2014, he applied for a part time software tester position at ULTRA. He successfully completed our rigorous recruitment process, and within one month after starting work, he was working on billable client projects, generating an income for himself, revenue for ULTRA, and value for our clients. Within a year, based on the consistently excellent results David produced, we offered him a full time position at ULTRA. Today, thanks to his heightened logical reasoning and pattern recognition abilities, his innate curiosity about technology, his thirst to learn and improve, his willingness to persevere through challenging tasks and projects, and his commitment to work hard and do his best every day, David is one of the best software testers we have on our team at ULTRA.

There are 3.5 million Americans on the Autism Spectrum. By some estimates, one third have graduated high school and been admitted to college. Many individuals on the Autism Spectrum, like David, are extremely capable and willing to work hard, and would make a fantastic addition to any team or organization. And yet, over 80% of this community are not employed.

When my co-founder Art and I founded ULTRA three years ago, we set out to unlock the economic potential of this tremendous talent pool, and prove that we could build a technology services company that brought excellence to our industry by employing a workforce of people with different abilities. Today, we have team members working in 13 states across the U.S., 75% of whom are on the Autism Spectrum, and 100% of whom believe our differences make us better. Thanks to our exceptional team, ULTRA has tripled revenues two years in a row, achieved profitability, repeatedly converted new clients into recurring business, and consistently outperformed the competition. Time and again, our team has been able to discover significantly more bugs in our clients' websites, mobile applications and enterprise platforms. Every bug, or mistake in the software, that we find, saves our clients time and money and helps protect their reputation. On a typical day, our team can extend a client's bug detection rate by over 20%, like when we tested the Webby Awards website. On a good day, we can extend a client's bug detection rates by over 50%, like when we won a project away from IBM and redid their work for a Fortune 100 financial services company.

In order to achieve these results, we did not use a single dollar of philanthropic or government support. Instead, we developed an entirely new operational model for running a business:

- Given high unemployment and challenges with unscripted social interactions common among individuals on the Autism Spectrum, we designed a recruiting process that doesn't rely on resumes or interviews. By utilizing tests, games, and

simulations, we are able to build an accurate model of a job applicant's cognitive abilities and character traits.

- Since unspoken social norms and office politics can cause anxiety, we developed specialized communication tools to facilitate efficient interactions among colleagues and promote transparency, including corporate Communication Rules that explicitly define the “unwritten rules” common in any workplace.
- To minimize the stress of commuting to work and being in a noisy office for our team, and to maximize the chance of employing the best talent for the company, we built a fully remote company leveraging common technologies like Google Hangouts for video interactions and Slack for real-time collaboration.
- To facilitate open communication and ensure team wellbeing among our remote workforce, we adopted open source management practices including a daily happiness meter and weekly feedback survey.

Today, thanks to widely available technologies and tools that enable data-driven hiring, digital-first communication and remote team management, any business, small or large, can leverage the talents of individuals on the Autism Spectrum. Our experience at ULTRA has proven that by doing so, companies can not only gain highly capable employees, but can also achieve consistently superior results.

The promotion of successful case studies, like that of ULTRA, can aid efforts to encourage other small businesses to employ individuals on the Autism Spectrum. Such

efforts could also benefit from government policies which clearly provide a business advantage such as facilitating new revenue opportunities or mitigating upfront costs and risks. E.g.:

- Large federal contractors are subject to Section 503 of the Rehabilitation Act which includes a goal of 7% of a contractor's workforce being individuals with disabilities. This goal does little to support small businesses who are not likely to be government contractors (but could serve as subcontractors to large companies who hold government contracts) and yet are more likely than large companies to take innovative and proactive approaches to employing individuals with disabilities. A change in policy which allows a sub-contractor's employees to count towards a contractor's 7% goal could catalyze a new ecosystem of small businesses employing individuals with disabilities and partnering with large companies that are government contractors.
- Many small businesses may be hesitant to recruit individuals with disabilities due to a candidate's lack of work experience and/or a company's lack of understanding of the benefits and risks involved. While the promotion of successful case studies can help address some of these concerns, case studies alone are unlikely to shift small businesses' perceived risk of hiring someone with a disability. Government funding to cover the cost of the first several months (e.g. 6 months) of employment for an individual with a disability could greatly reduce the perceived risk of doing so. Which in turn could greatly increase the likelihood of small businesses proactively employing individuals with disabilities.

ULTRA has proven that employing individuals on the Autism Spectrum can be a source of sustainable competitive advantage. During the past three years, we have developed an entirely new operational model for running a business, one that has allowed our diverse workforce to function effectively, provide a high quality service to clients, and consistently outperform the competition. We hope to build on our learnings and accelerate the company's growth, and over the next three years, be widely regarded as the best software testing company in the U.S. and become the largest employer of individuals on the Autism Spectrum in the world.

We hope the results we have and will achieve will inspire many more small businesses to employ individuals on the Autism Spectrum and tap into an incredibly capable and diverse talent pool right here in the U.S.

Thank you.

Rajesh Anandan

Co-founder, ULTRA Testing

**ATTACHMENT**

May 19th, 2016

The Honorable Steve Chabot  
Chairman  
Committee on Small Business  
U.S. House of Representatives  
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Nydia Velázquez  
Ranking Member  
Committee on Small Business  
U.S. House of Representatives  
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairman Chabot and Ranking Member Velázquez:

Thank you for your ongoing efforts to support small businesses, and for exploring the role of small businesses in creating job opportunities for people on the Autism Spectrum.

As clients, investors and board members of ULTRA Testing, a high quality software testing company based in New York with employees working in 13 states across the U.S., 75% of whom are on the Autism Spectrum, we have seen first hand the tremendous economic potential to be unlocked by employing individuals on the Autism Spectrum.

The rapid growth achieved by ULTRA as a result of its innovative business model and the superior results delivered for clients by ULTRA's exceptional testing teams are indicative of what is possible when individuals on the Autism Spectrum are empowered to use their talents. We hope that ULTRA's commercial success will inspire more small businesses to employ individuals on the Autism Spectrum and tap into a capable and diverse talent pool right here in the U.S.

Thank you again for your continued leadership.

Ameeth Sankaran, Partner, Camden Partners and 2M Companies  
Andrew Essex, CEO, Tribeca Enterprises  
Brad Banks, CEO Athena Capital Research  
Brian Fino, CEO, Fino Consulting  
Brian Jacobs, Co-founder and Managing Partner, Emergence Capital Partners  
Bruce Kratz, VP Product Development, Sparta Systems  
Camilo Cepeda, CMO Samsung Brazil  
David-Michel Davies, CEO, Webby Media Group

Edwin Adlerman, private investor

Gary Colen, CEO, AMP Agency

George Eid, CEO, Area17

Jayne Schrantz, private investor

Marcia Scheiner, Founder and President, ASTEP

Meena Srinivasan, Former VP and Treasurer, Fitbit

Rafi Musher, Founder and CEO, Stax Inc

Rajan Anandan, Managing Director, Google South East Asia and India

Richard Guest, President of North American Operations, Tribal Worldwide

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Russ Hagey, Senior Partner and Worldwide Chief Talent Officer, Bain & Company

Susie Nam, COO, Droga5