

nDreams

# Conversation is key: enabling neurodivergent employees

## How OpenBlend is making a game-changing impact at nDreams



**Sarah Hammond,**  
Internal Communications  
Associate



**Jason Cunningham,**  
Principal UI Artist

We recently spoke to Sarah Hammond and Jason Cunningham at nDreams – the world-leading VR game developer and publisher, to ask them about their experiences of using OpenBlend. Both neurodivergent, Sarah works as an Internal Communications Associate, and Jason is a Principal UI Artist who has also managed people with neurodiverse conditions.

nDreams is a company that strives to create an inclusive and equitable culture for its entire workforce, though the specific focus for this story falls on neurodiversity – and in particular, the value that employees can gain from effective 1:1 conversations at work.

But what does it mean to be neurodivergent? The short answer is that it means something different for every individual but as an all-encompassing term, it describes a range of neurodiverse conditions, including autism, ADHD, dyslexia, dyscalculia, and dyspraxia.

Our thanks to Sarah and Jason for sharing their stories and for helping us to understand how OpenBlend is empowering both neurodivergent employees and their managers.



## The employee's view Sarah's story...

**Q** Hi Sarah, thanks so much for taking the time to chat with us. Can we start by asking you about your role at nDreams?

**A** "Of course. I've worked at nDreams for two and half years now and I'm an Internal Communications Associate. My job is to ensure that our employees understand what's going on within the company and it's a role that suits me really well because I enjoy building community and enabling people to feel good about where they work."

**Q** How long have you been using OpenBlend?

**A** "Just over a year now and it's been a very positive experience. We did have regular 1:1s before OpenBlend but we didn't have a tool to track and record those conversations so it made a lot of sense when HR announced the partnership with OpenBlend. Everyone had a couple of training sessions to get them started, and I also supported the launch from an internal communications point of view."

**Q** How does OpenBlend help you to communicate better as a neurodivergent employee?

**A** "[OpenBlend] supports broad conversations that touch on a wide range of influences and factors. For me personally, it provides a safe space to talk about my individual needs and, because my diagnosis is fairly recent, I've even used it as a tool for internal reflection. Most importantly, it helps me to articulate how I'm feeling and get the right support from my manager."

"[As someone who is neurodivergent] I struggle to explain my emotions and vocalise how I'm feeling. That's just something that is difficult for me. Since we've had OpenBlend, though – and particularly because the platform enables me to score my wellbeing and motivation – I've been able to communicate my needs more effectively and that's so important."

Sarah Hammond, Internal Communications Associate, nDreams

**Q** ...and how do you prefer to use OpenBlend?

**A** "I'm someone who likes structure so I benefit from having a set time and frequency for my 1:1s. I have an amazing manager and we catch up for 20 minutes every week to make sure we're aligned on key things. We then have a more in-depth 1:1 every six weeks using OpenBlend. That's a more structured conversation that covers goals, project status, and any roadblocks, as well as my motivation and wellbeing."

**Q** What do you like most about the platform?

**A** "It creates an opportunity for regular two-way conversation and that's so important. Alongside having a manager who is very patient and understanding, I genuinely believe this is how we solve things and make things work better. Everything gets a lot better when people understand you, and you understand them."

"The prompts and step-by-step guidance within OpenBlend are also especially useful to me as someone

who finds it hard to express how I'm feeling. The platform guides me through that process, which means that, ultimately, my manager has the insights they need to support me."

**Q** Burnout is more prevalent amongst neurodivergent employees...do you think effective 1:1 conversations are key to solving this?

**A** "Absolutely. I burned out in previous employment because I didn't feel like I had anyone I could talk to at work. I also have a tendency to keep working until someone tells me to stop so regular 1:1s are key to preventing that. My manager can see when I have too much on my plate and that opens up a conversation for us to talk about priorities and restore balance before burnout becomes an issue."

It's stories like Sarah's that drive our mission to make effective 1:1 conversations the norm, not the exception. But how do regular and effective 1:1s also help the managers of neurodivergent employees? We sat down with Jason Cunningham to find out...



**The manager's view Jason's story...**

**Q** Jason - thanks for talking to us. Can you tell us about your role at nDreams?

**A** "I'm a Principal UI Artist so I deal with all things graphic design and until some recent changes to my role, I was managing a team of 13 people, which I've always enjoyed doing."

**Q** You've also managed several neurodivergent employees...what has that taught you?

**A** "I have dyslexia so I'm neurodivergent myself which helps me to identify with, and better understand, other people who have neurodiverse conditions. The key thing is to keep talking and learning. The workplace is full of neurodivergent people, especially in tech, and that's a great thing. We have a lot to offer so it's all about breaking down the stigma and getting to know what each individual needs in order to reach their potential."

**Q** How long have you been using OpenBlend, and how did the platform help you to manage a neurodiverse team?

**A** "I started using the platform when I joined nDreams a year ago and saw it as a great tool for the people I was managing at the time. The Motivators are great because I could see how a specific person was feeling and take the right action based on that information. More often than not, that was simply offering support and talking through the issue."

"One of the things I like most about OpenBlend is that employees don't need to complete all the information fields...they can just fill in the things that are most important to them, and for neurodivergent employees, that has the added benefit of reducing cognitive overload."



It's led by the employee and so it gave them a voice to let me know when they were feeling good, bad, motivated, or demotivated. It's a great tool in that regard and it's something I wish I'd had a lot earlier in my career.

Jason Cunningham,  
Principal UI Artist, nDreams

**Q** ...and how did OpenBlend help you to shape 1:1 conversations with your direct reports?

**A** First and foremost, it gave me the insight I needed to create a conversation around the things that were most important to the individual. It's led by the employee and so it gave them a voice to let me know when they were feeling good, bad, motivated, or demotivated. It's a great tool in that regard and it's something I wish I'd had a lot earlier in my career."

**Q** What was the biggest benefit to you as a manager?

**A** "By far the biggest benefit was being able to understand my team better [...] getting to know each person; what they liked; what they wanted to learn; what interested them; their individual strengths – and having a dedicated place to capture all of that information."

Thanks again to Sarah and Jason for talking to us about this important topic. Their stories confirm that effective 1:1 conversations are key to enabling neurodiverse talent. It is through these conversations that managers can empower people to achieve their potential in a way that works for them – and they represent the foundation for wellbeing, productivity, and performance. Not only that, they're fast becoming an employee expectation and we think that's fantastic. I'm sure you do too.

To learn more about OpenBlend and how we can help your employees, both neurodivergent and neurotypical, get in touch with our team or book your demo here.

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