From Possibility to Reality: Helping People with Developmental Disabilities Find Great Jobs that are Custom-Fit to Their Aspirations, Talents, and Support Needs

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Helping People with Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities Find Great Jobs That are Custom-Fit to their Aspirations, Talents and Support Needs

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Transition to....

LIFE
Lifelong Learning
Independent Living
Fun, Family, Friends
Employment

Employment

“It is the right of all people with disabilities to contribute to the productivity and prosperity of their country.”

Brown & Kessler
Journal of Vocational Rehabilitation, 2014

Nationally

• Since 1975, billions of dollars spent on educating youth with significant disabilities
• Extremely high drop out rate
• Many thousands stay where they live all day long
• Tremendous strain on aging parents, family members and taxpayers

• 300,000 in expensive segregated shops where average cost per person is $22,000/year
• It costs less than $9,600 per person to help them achieve community integrated employment.

Some reasons cited...

• Not enough professionals with right skills
• Outmoded instruction in schools
• Low expectations for life achievements
• Lack of opportunities to build marketable skills through authentic work
• Little exposure to role models – peers without disabilities & those with disabilities who are living their dreams
• Cost and access to long term supports
Btw—why do we work?

Another way to look at it....

People work to:
• To get by
• To get ahead
• To dabble in something or get their feet wet
• To try something different
• To gain security
• To get some balance in their lives
• To build skills and experiences

Denise Bissonnette

The Employment Process

Desired outcomes:
FOR EMPLOYEES:
...meaningful employment...
...step towards long-term...
...career satisfaction...
...independence and...
...self-reliance
FOR EMPLOYER:
...maximum productivity...
...customer satisfaction...
...long-term viability

Hardest part about getting to know someone’s career interests and aptitudes?

• How? Tools & strategies
• No interest — “I dunno.”
• They have an interest, but can’t express it.
• Unrealistic (what does that really mean?)
• Low expectations (self and others)
• Lack of desire, training, background, ability
• Where to even start?
• No/limited prior exposure to possibilities
• Gaps between Desire, Ability, Resources
Positive Personal Profile (P3)

- Support Team (Champions)
- Interests
- Talents/Skills
- Learning Styles
- Values/Preferences
- Positive Personality Traits
- Dislikes; Pet Peeves; Idiosyncrasies
- Work experiences (paid/unpaid)
- Other Life Experiences
- Dreams/Aspirations/Goals

TILSON’S MANTRA

Exposure
Precedes
Interest

Dreams and Goals

- All human beings have aspirations
- Some can more easily express them
- Can be inferred through behavior
- Others who know the person well can make suggestions
- Often emerge after experiences
- Are often very realistic; if not – think:
- Dream job → "Field of Dreams"

Specific challenges

Might be related to:

- Disability
- Life circumstances
- Environment
- Lack of opportunity
- Experiences tightly directed by others
- Limited support
- Unimaginative interventions and services
- Other

Solutions and Accommodations:

Accommodations and Solutions....Solutions and Accommodations:

1. eliminate a specific barrier – or lessen the impact of that barrier;
2. help a person feel competent, confident, and comfortable;
3. highlight a person’s strengths.

Who can assist with the P3?

- Youth/adult job seeker
- Family members
- Friends and neighbors
- Teachers
- Parishioners
- Day program staff!
- Current and former employers
- Anyone who knows the person well – and has high regard for her/him
CULTIVATE A MINDSET OF POSSIBILITY

Tilson’s Biases
• We are not in the business of dragging people to work.
• Assessment is a starting point for ongoing exploration.
• Ask: What don’t we know about person?
• Make it clear from outset: what you as the professional can and can’t do. All of us are partners in the effort – with the job seeker front and center.
• Finding a job IS a job; getting work requires work

What is Customized Employment?
Customized employment (CE) is the negotiation of a personalized employment relationship between a specific individual and an employer.

This approach provides an avenue to employment for job seekers for whom traditional job search methods may not have been successful.

Customized Employment
Job tasks may be:
**Reassigned** from one position to another;
**Restructured** from one or more existing jobs; or
**Created** to match the skills and support needs of the job seeker with tasks that will benefit an employer

CE includes:
• Supported employment services
• Supported entrepreneurship
• Individualized job development
• Job carving /sculpting and restructuring
• Job sharing
CE also includes:

• Using personal agents (including family members)
• Developing micro-boards, micro-enterprises, cooperatives, and small businesses
• Using personal budgets and other forms of individualized funding that provide choice and control to the person, and promote self-determination (Ex. PASS, IRWE, etc)

Customized Employment is Not New!

• It’s just job development and job seeking done well
• All of us are in customized jobs
• Do not let the process get in the way of going right to a good job opportunity that presents itself

The Result

The job seeker is hired by a company – and has a “customized” job description.

In ALL cases:

The customized employment approach MUST help the employer’s operation in some specific way.

This approach demonstrates respect for:

Individuality
Choice
Participation
Competence
Social Inclusion
Community Settings with Minimal Intrusion

AUTHENTIC ENVIRONMENTS & EXPERIENCES!

Essential

• Believe in your job seeker
• Focus on skills – not deficits
• No prerequisites
• Everyone is “job ready”
• Look for “Rays of light”
• What will an employer really value about the job seeker?
The Life and Career Assessment Matrix

1. My Community
2. My Interests
3. My Talents
4. My Positive Personal Attributes
5. My Career Preparation
6. My Career Aspirations
7. My Life Aspirations
8. My Challenges and Solutions
9. My Ideas
10. My Action Plan

The Individual Job Search & Community Participation Plan

Always!

Tell everyone your job seeker is looking! Families need to do this as well. And to the extent possible, the job seeker should do the same.

“Do you have any contacts, ideas, leads for me?”

Networking

Systematic use of our contacts.

A menu of Employer Partnership options!

• HIRE!
• Informational interviews; tours
• Situational assessments
• References/referrals
• Resources
• Business advisory group
• Practice interviews/resume review
• Career Fairs
• Training in specific skill areas
• Guest speakers; mentors
• Other?

What is an Informational Interview?

A first-hand look at a company and its operations. A chance to talk to people who work in the organization. A site visit or tour of the workplace.

Can be set up formally – or during a “drop in.”

As much as possible, do your background research FIRST!
The Benefits?

• Foot in the door
• Low pressure
• Chance to make a great first impression
• Start of working relationship
• Uncover possible opportunities
• Puts focus on company needs rather than “selling” a particular candidate or your program

Hi. My name is ____________. I’m a career counselor with _______.

“I work with job seekers who have expressed interest in your industry. I’ve learned a lot from your website and I’m wondering who I might talk to about setting up a visit to find out more about your organization.

Be on the lookout:

• Possible ways to improve work flow
• Employees bogged down with important yet non-essential tasks
• Core staff who struggle to manage their work loads
• Customers unhappy

Be on the lookout:

• Duties that might be performed in a different way – but will still yield desired outcomes
• Degree of flexibility of the workplace
• Seasonal fluctuations

Observe and listen carefully. If possible, talk to line workers as well as managers.

See if you can spot ways to help the employer:

• Serve more customers or improve services
• Increase efficient use of:
  • Resources
  • Time
  • Staff
• Save money
• Earn more money

If you have a potential, viable candidate:

Prepare an Employment Proposal
(may be formal or informal)
Negotiations begin when the job developer recognizes the value a prospective applicant can offer a business.

Infiltrate the Hidden Job Market

20/80

Marketing is anything you do or say that conveys:

1. You Exist
2. It’s worthwhile knowing you (mutually beneficial)

Employer Concerns:

• Ability
• Interview
• Accommodations
• Communications
• Co-worker and customer reaction
• Self-Expertise
• Supervision
• Failure
• Safety/liability
• Time pressures
• Quality control/production

Role of the Workplace Consultant

• Know the Workers
• Know the Co-Workers and Customers
• Know the Worksite environment
• Know the Work

People may need assistance...

❖ Learning new skills
❖ Generalizing/transferring skills
❖ Making judgments
❖ Taking initiative
❖ Solving problems
❖ Communicating
❖ Remembering task sequences
❖ Understanding social cues/rules
❖ Other
Support the Worker and the Employer

Within the worksite:

Orientation
Training
Social Aspects
Performance
Appraisal

Support the Worker outside the Worksite

• Transportation
• Health and Well-being
• Financial, Legal
• Housing
• Child care
• Other essential needs

Create a Job Retention/Fading Plan

• Team (and contact information, esp. cell phone #)
• Point person (official lead)
• Issue(s)
• Strategies to address each issue
• When, where, how? How often?
• Resources needed (people, funding, time, other)
• Communication process
• Contingency Plan (aka Plan B)
• Process for fading (with emphasis on natural supports)

From 2014 Journal of Vocational Evaluation

“More than ever, there will need to be an army of highly successful, passionate, highly competent and totally driven employment specialists in every city and in every state in order for us to meet the demand for integrated employment of people with disabilities.”

What kinds of people are really effective at career counseling and Job placement?

Tilson & Simonsen, 2013
Journal of Vocational Rehabilitation

Four Attributes of Highly Effective Employment Specialists

• Principled Optimism
• Cultural Competence
• Networking Savvy
• Business-Oriented Professionalism
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Rutgers University

READING/RESOURCE LIST


