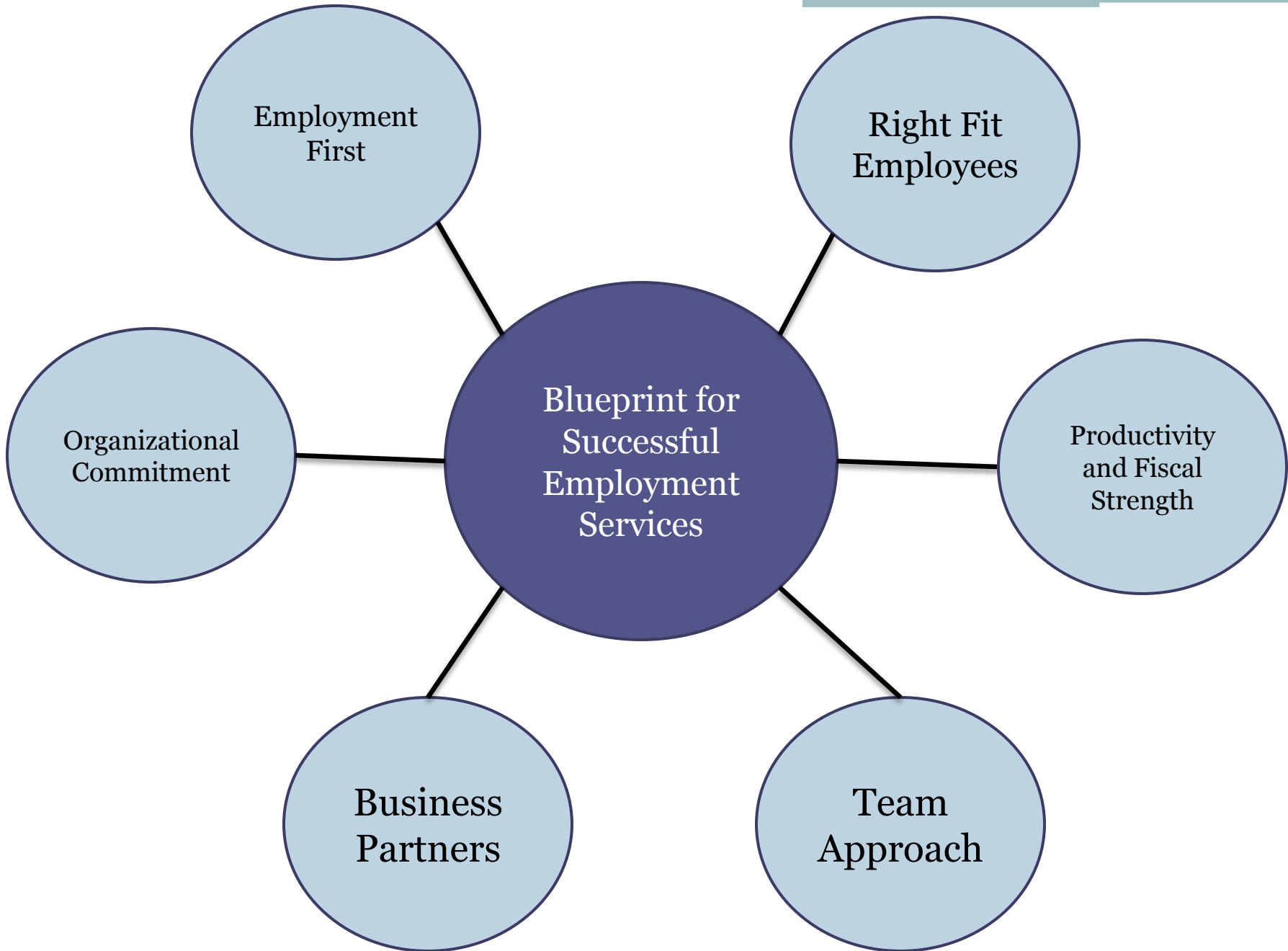# Blueprint for creating an Employment First Culture with Quality Outcomes

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SPIN
A Life of Possibilities

Employment First

Blueprint for Successful Employment Services

APSE Statement on Employment First

Employment in the general workforce is the first and preferred outcome in the provision of publicly funded services for all working age citizens with disabilities, regardless of level of disability.

Employment First

- Employment is community based, inclusive, and pay is a commensurate wage, minimum wage or higher
- Presumes everyone is ready to work
- Everyone is employable
- Other services compliment employment
- Full inclusion
- Focus on abilities and capacities
- Dignity of taking risks
- Individualized supports

Current Trends

- Shift from facility based to community based services
- Tremendous opportunity for growth
- Critical look at how and where services are provided
- Be proactive and thoughtful about changes
- Opportunity for improvement!
- Align services with CMS Final Rule
- Constantly questioning practices, values, and beliefs
- How can we do better?!?
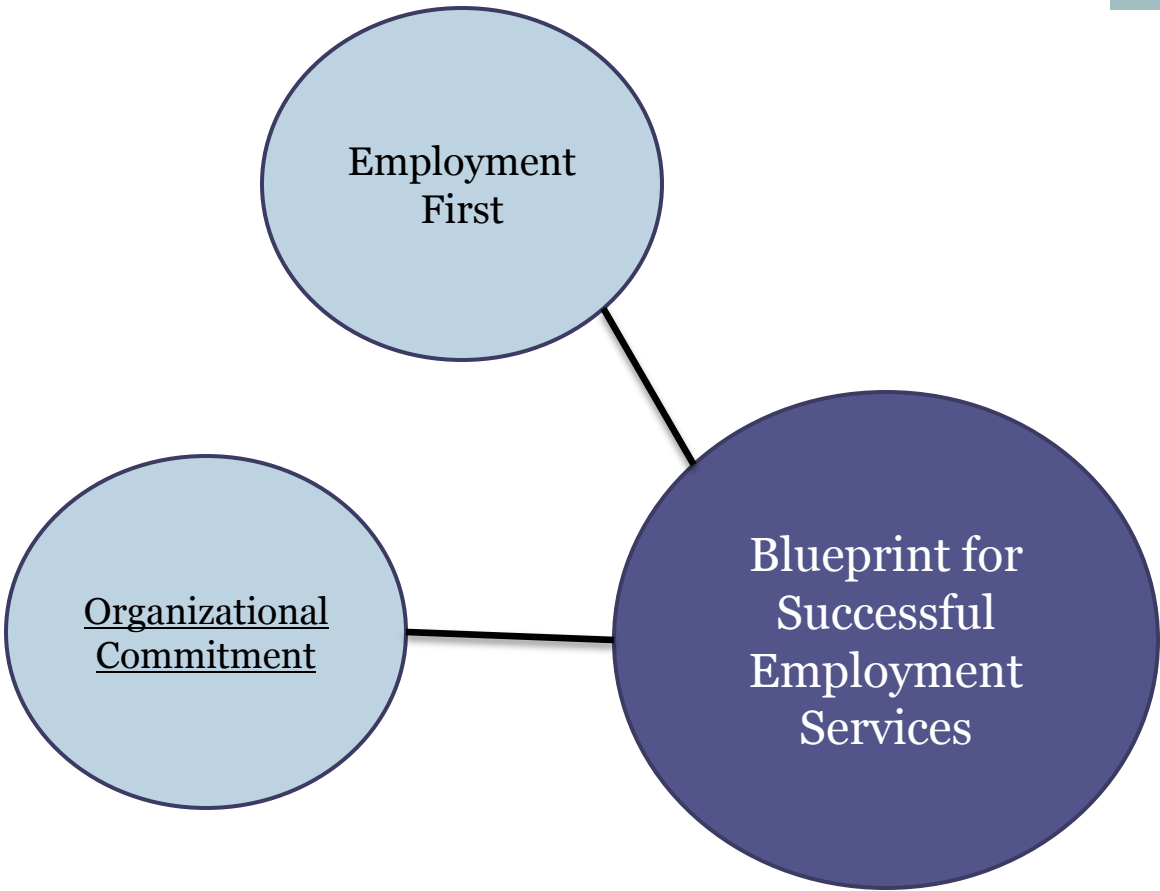
Think about your blueprint for success...

What is your Employment First goal for your organization?

What changes need to be made to reach the goal?

What is your role as a change agent?

What are potential barriers to achieving the goal?

Employment First

Organizational Commitment

Blueprint for Successful Employment Services

Organizational Commitment

- SPIN closed our workshop in 2007
  - Align services with mission
  - 15 year transition plan
  - Individual and family involvement
  - Town Hall Meetings
 - Investment in Employment Services

Organizational Commitment

- Strong Corporate and Board commitment to Employment First
- Create vision and mission
- Engage key stakeholders
- Strategic Plan Goal
- Communicate, Communicate, Communicate!

Organizational Commitment

- Employment training for all employees
- Employment First practices and philosophy across all service lines
- Employment Champions
- Celebrate Successes

Employment First

Organizational Commitment

Blueprint for Successful Employment Services
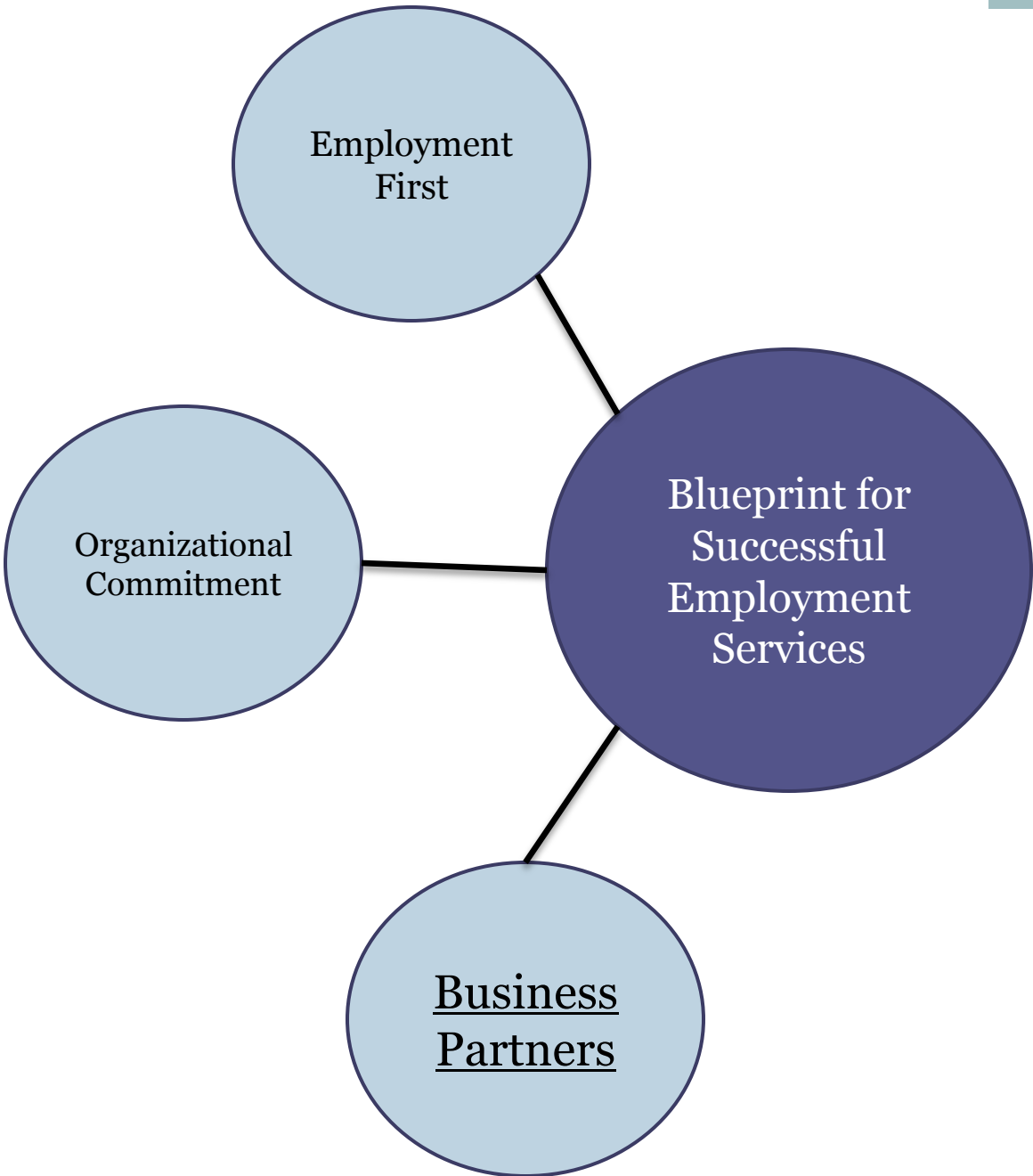
Business Partners

Business Partners

- Build a network of business partners that can help share the mission of Supported Employment
- Look to trusted vendors and stakeholders for networking connections
- Understand business needs before discussing employment opportunities

Business Partners

- Become an active part of the business community by joining your local Chamber of Commerce and attending networking events
  - Invest and build relationships with business partners
- Support individuals to build their own relationships with their coworkers and managers
  - Develops natural supports
  - Fosters appreciation for individual's strengths and contributions to the work place

Business Partners Mistakes

- Taking advantage of supportive employers
- Preference vs. Accommodation
- Tug on their heart strings
- Under sell applicants
- Encourage special treatment when convenient
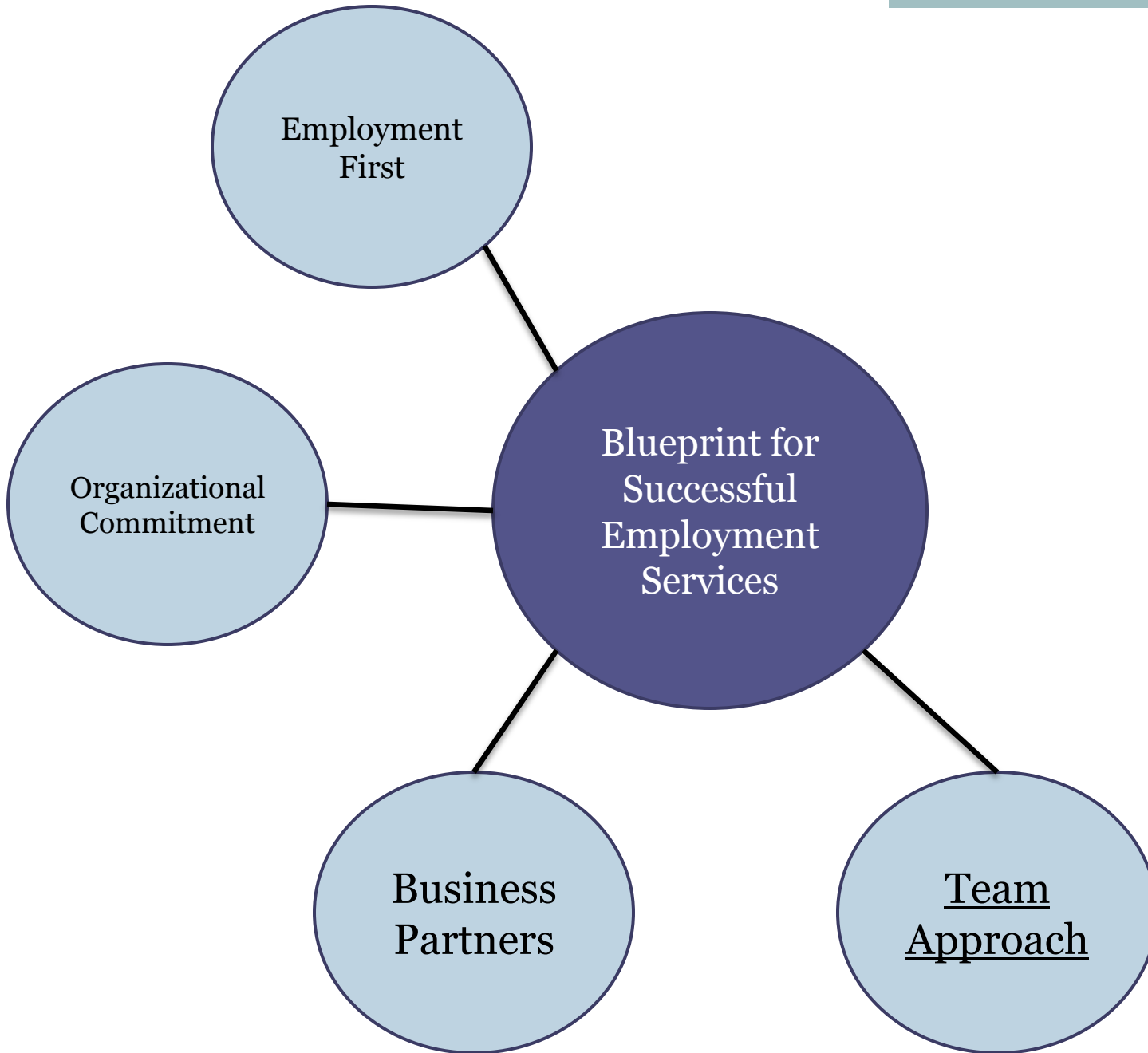- Use system speak

Avoid these common mistakes

- Taking advantage of supportive employers
  - Be respectful of your business partner and understand their perspective
- Preference vs. Accommodations
  - Support individuals to understand and follow workplace policies
  - Follow guidelines for requesting a needed accommodation
- Tug on their heart strings
  - Focus on strengths of applicants and business' hiring needs, not their disability

Avoid these common mistakes

- Under sell applicants
  - Look for right fit employment opportunities that offer the hours and job task desired by individual
  - Any job is not the right job
- Encourage special treatment when convenient
  - Support individuals to expect fair equal treatment regardless of the situation
- Use system speak
  - Use plain language without acronyms

Employment First

Organizational Commitment

Blueprint for Successful Employment Services

Business Partners

Team Approach

Team Approach – Transition to Employment

- Build relationships
- Discuss possibilities
- Address barriers and fears in a safe environment
- Don't sugarcoat it!
- Connect with peers successfully employed
- Joel's story!

Team Approach – Employment Plan

- Collaborate with entire team when creating employment plans (parents, case managers, VR, teachers, family, other service providers, employers)
- Individual is at the center of and leads the planning process
- Utilize Customized Employment Strategies
- Monitor process and adjust plan as needed

Team Approach - Families

- Families and individuals are often apprehensive about finding community based employment
  - Listen!
  - Provide success stories that shows positive employment outcomes
  - Create a mentor network for families
  - Discuss logistics about employment early and often

Communication Tips

- Conversations can go in a different direction than planned when families are frustrated or upset with the service being provided
- During these anxious conversations you can utilize this strategy..
  - Validate
  - Restate
  - Redirect
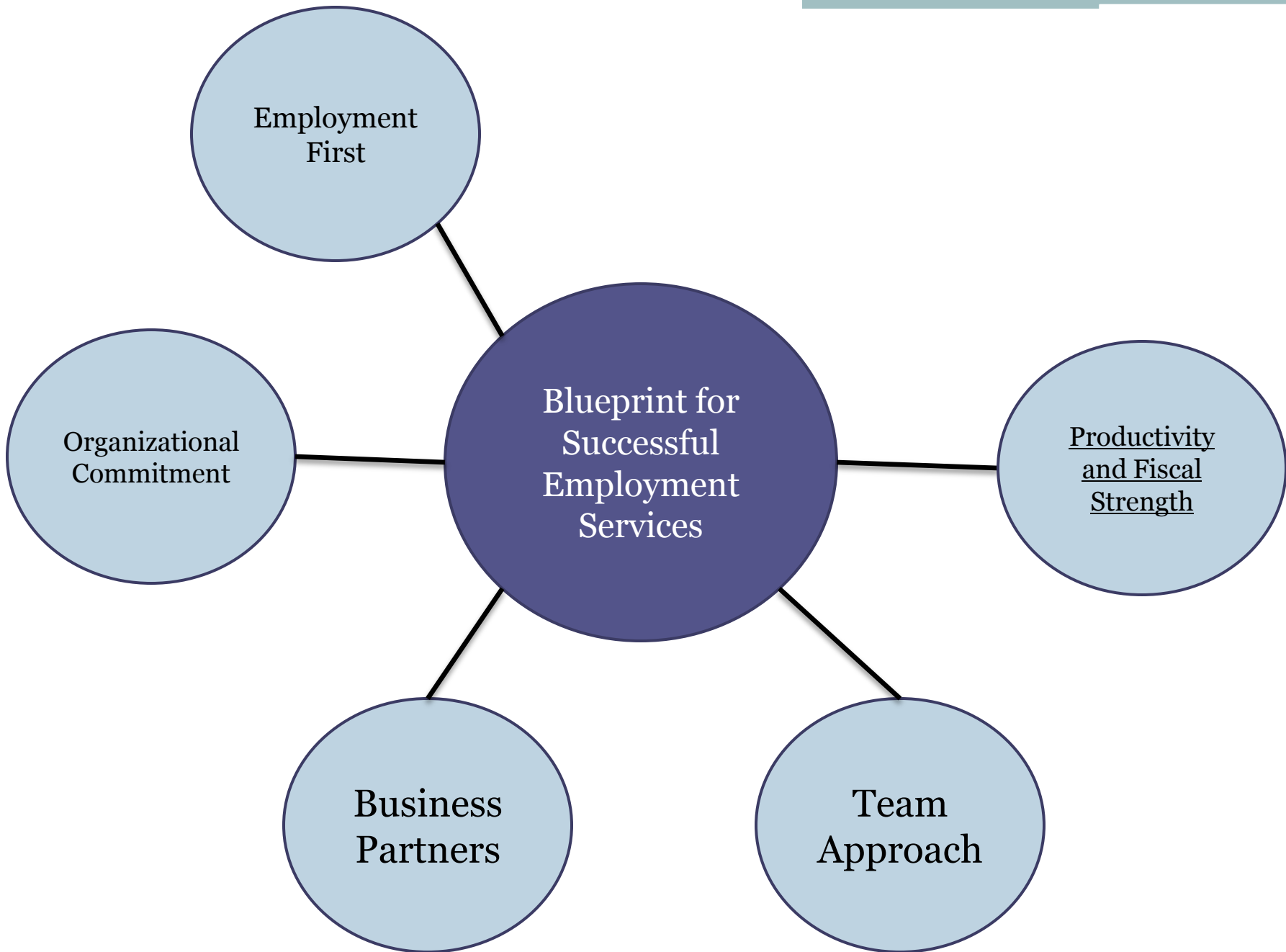
Productivity

- Productivity standards should clearly define departmental and individual staff expectations
- Essential when developing a successful Employment Services model
- Set productivity standards for each employee and for the department as a whole

Productivity-Benefits

- Helps entire department work towards common goal
- Clear expectations for job performance
- Provides structure to weekly schedules
- Establishes achievable short and long term goals
- Ensures department remains profitable throughout entire year
- Improves employee focus
- Unified team

What is Productivity?

- Sustainability
- Solution focused
- Efficiency
- Data based decisions
- Resource management
- Effective business practices
- Effective use of technology
- Financial and organizational strength

How to determine productivity standards?

- Considerations:
  - Support needs of individuals
  - Staff training and vacation time
  - Travel time
  - Operational responsibilities (casenotes, team communication, meetings etc)
 - Department and Organization budget

How to manage productivity?

- Know current productivity
  - Bi-weekly Audit- don't let productivity get away from you!
  - Track productivity increases and decreases to understand trends and progress
- Staff buy-in
  - Clear understanding of expectations
  - Know how to create a balanced and productive schedule
  - Strategize ways to improve if staff is not meeting productivity standards

Fiscal Strength

- Establishing and monitoring departmental productivity will help ensure long term fiscal strength for your department
- Growth is essential to be able to support the growing numbers of individuals who want to find employment!
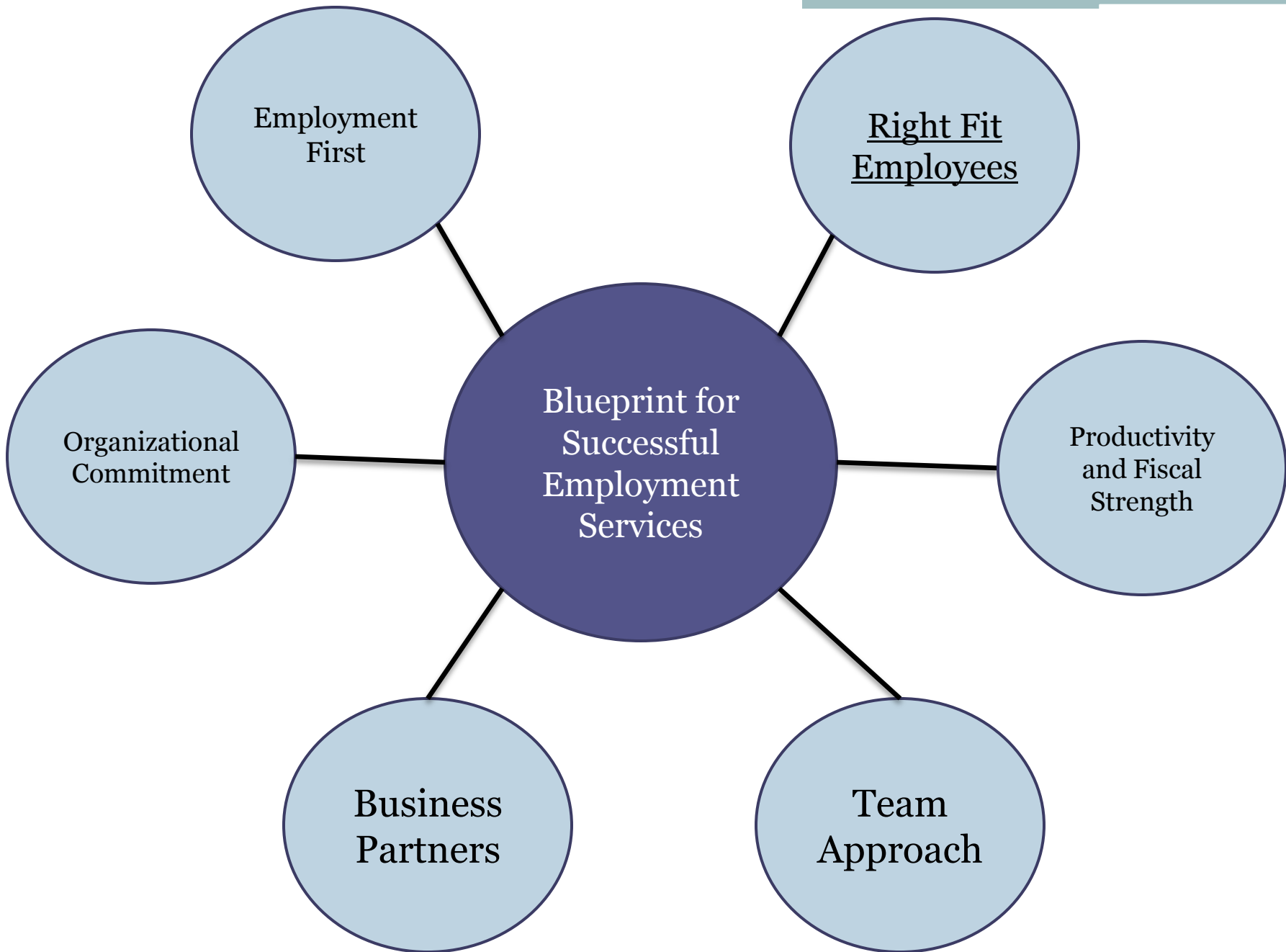
Right Fit Staff

- Ambassadors of Organization and Supported Employment- Employment Specialists interact with the community on a consistent basis
- Variety of backgrounds
- Personality Fit!
- Comfortable in unfamiliar settings
- Flexible and motivated
- Understand the responsibilities of being a mobile employee

Right Fit Qualities

- Energetic
- Passionate
- Flexible
- Problem solvers
- Independent
- Creative
- Reliable
- Team player

TEAMWORK MAKES THE DREAMWORK

- Intelligent
- Compassionate
- Focused
- Proactive
- Open
- Honest
- Driven
- Candid

What do mobile employees need?

- Managers who understand and adapt to changing needs of employee
- Clear expectations
- Communication
- Feedback
- Access to updated technology
  - Sharing information
  - Communicating decisions
  - Collaborating
  - Cost efficiency (mileage, office space, time)

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