What Makes Customized Employment Work?

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What do you do?
Public Art Celebrating 25 years of the ADA

Tia Nelis portrait & quote at the National Museum of American History

"co-worker" at the heart of this!
"Disability only becomes a tragedy when society fails to provide the things we need to lead our lives."

Judy Heumann
State Department Special Advisor for Disability Rights, Co-Founder of World Institute on Disability.
Leader of Disability Rights movement since 1970, paving the way for the ADA.

In 1990, people with disabilities pulled themselves up the U.S. Capitol steps and demanded equal rights. An action that led to the Americans with Disabilities Act. For its 25th anniversary, we celebrate disability rights.
From the National Museum of American History (Olmstead v. L.C.)

LOIS CURTIS

was among thousands of Americans involuntarily segregated in institutions rather than supported within the community because of her mental illness and developmental disability. The successful lawsuit she and Elaine Wilson filed for their release began in Georgia and ended with the Olmstead v. L.C. Supreme Court decision in 1999.

Lois Curtis, Georgia, 1999

Courtesy of Robin Rayne Nelson, photographer
The Reality

Stereotypes regarding people with disabilities abound.

It’s not fair. It just is.
Why this work is hard
(as if you need a reminder)

• Oh, such a big heart you have to do *that* work!
• Oh, my Kroger hires lots of *those people* to bag groceries.
• That’s great she has a job, but the business doesn’t have to *pay her* do they?
• What kind of jobs can *those people* do?
• My cousin goes to one of those places, but he has the mind of a 7 year old, so I don’t think he could work.
• But she’s been at a center for years and doesn’t want to leave.
• Like if you think it’s great she took *him* to prom!
Employment First

- It’s here
- It’s difficult
- It’s for everyone
Customized Employment

Customized employment means individualizing the employment relationship between employees and employers in ways that meet the needs of both.

It is based on an individualized determination of the strengths, needs, and interests of the person with a disability, and is also designed to meet the specific needs of the employer.
Customized Employment

“It means doing what makes sense.”

-Sara Tinker, Employment Specialist & KY APSE Board Member from Customized Employment in Kentucky

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UlkaHkQKukQ
So What do we want?

- Presumption of Employability
- High expectations
- Quality, individualized services
- Educated, well trained staff
- To be able to pay the bills
So What do we want?

⇒ PRESUMPTION OF EMPLOYABILITY.
Contribution vs. Competition

Or

Entry level service job not utilizing skills or interests because he can “apply & get it”
Same woman. Same impact of disability. Different way of thinking about work, different way of getting to know her, different way of thinking about support. Higher wage. Better job.
So What do we want?

- Presumption of Employability
- High expectations
“One of the biggest problems has been the low expectation of providers… Until I was connected with a ‘keeper of hope.’ He had hope for me when I didn’t have it for myself. This (kind of relationship) shouldn’t happen by accident - it should happen by design.”

J. Rock Johnson
Do you ever feel tired from working all day? I am and I am getting used to it. Life is life! LOL

13 Likes  4 Comments
“Those programs where businesses hire people with Autism are great and I hope they have success and lots of people get jobs. But they aren’t talking about my son. When they say Autism is an invisible disability, that may be true for some, but they aren’t talking about my son. For my son it is very visible….But that doesn’t mean that a job isn’t an important goal for him too. All of his life people have tried to tell his father & me that we shouldn’t expect him to work. But we did. It wasn’t easy but he is now employed part time in a customized job. And we live with the hope that someday, when we aren’t here anymore, he will be gainfully and meaningfully employed and will be OK.”
Our ideas about work come from our life experience, from the world around us, from the people we meet and the interactions we have.
So What do we want?

- Presumption of Employability
- High expectations
- Quality, individualized services
Personalized Jobs (beyond “job placement”)

[Images of people in various activities related to job placement]
Jessica

Placement

Individualized
Tim
Michael

Placement

Individualized
Randy
Initial Meeting – How to Set Up

- **Where?**
  Somewhere comfortable. Home, library, coffee shop, etc. (Familiar! His turf)

- **What to do?**
  Introductions, explain SE process, set out expectations

- **What to ask?**
  Tell me about your day? What do you enjoy doing? What do you do well?
Avoid: “What do you want to do?”

- Many people have not had the chance to explore possibilities
- Ideas expressed have been “stereotypical”
- Work hasn’t truly been considered
- If just saying first thing on top of head...is it true choice?
- THIS makes a huge difference in “individualizing.”
Need alternative questions

- What do you like to do?
- What do you do well?
- How do you spend your time?
- Who can help offer insight into what you’re good at and enjoy doing?
- When are you at your best?
Discovery = Translation

The finesse of discovery is to identify typical aspects of life and to translate those activities into Conditions for success, Interests toward employment and potential Contributions to be offered to employers.

Discovery is essentially an activity of translation.
What we know about someone. From referral or from other services.

The depth we need to learn (discover) in order to figure out what a good job could be for someone.
Randy cleans at the day program.

He is a hard worker who wants to be busy and prefers to use his hands.
He goes to the movies every Friday night.

Randy goes independently because he likes to watch movies. His preferred work conditions are totally opposite those of a movie theater.
“He always...”

- Takes stuff apart
- “Check your money please”

Even (sometimes especially!) when said in exasperation... find out why someone “always” does something.
Ideal work tasks for Randy:
✓ uses interests and skills in taking things apart
✓ uses unique ability to memorize numbers
✓ consistency and predictability
✓ quality versus quantity

Ideal co-workers:
✓ small group
✓ mature

Ideal setting:
✓ small business or defined work station
✓ industrial
✓ not a lot of interaction with a variety of people
Summary of job conditions (tasks, setting, people, preferences…) to be sought for person-- from the Person Centered Employment Plan.

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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Task</th>
<th>Names of Businesses/Contact People</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Mail sorting                | 1 - Matsushita
| 2 - Dana Corp               | Debbie Barrett
| wire                           | 5 - Kohler Engines
| 3 - Bay West                | Bill Schwartz
| 4 - Danville Engine Builders | Jane Little
| 6 - Jackson Repair Shop      | Drew Brown
| 7 - UPS                      | Thomas Jackson
| 8 - Auto Zone                | Contact Randy’s dad
| Order picker                 |
"Equality doesn’t mean Justice"

One way of providing services

Individualized services

justice NOUN
just behavior or treatment: "a concern for justice, peace, and genuine respect for people"
Targeted Job Development

- **Gives you a list for that particular job seeker**
- Creates the basis for your “pitch” to an employer that makes sense
- Keeps momentum going
- **Avoids** “but we’ve put in applications everywhere in town and haven’t found anything…”
- **Avoids** “I know of 3 employers who are hiring, which of these interests you?”
Leading Questions – Labor Market

- What type of work do you do here?
- What’s most important to your company?
- What skill sets do you look for when hiring? What about experience & education?
- What openings do you have now? Do you foresee other openings in the near future?
- What is your hiring process?
Leading Questions – Customized Employment

- Can you tell me about your business, the products & services?
- What is most important to your company?
- What types of work are done here?
- What about additional tasks - things that happen when people have time to do them?
- What happens when those things don’t happen as needed?
- Are there tasks that you need to be completed more efficiently or timely?
- Can we talk about ways my client might contribute to your company in a manner I think you’ll find very useful?
- Could I set up a time to tour your business and also see these tasks more in depth? (If no tasks mentioned, then begin with general tour to further the conversation)
We need something useful to say to an employer

Why would you ever say “person with a disability” in your opening line to an employer? Never start with a perceived negative.
Compare the jobs

- Worked only when on the schedule - no consistency
- Groceries needed to be bagged at a fast pace; other tasks when asked; no routine
- Lots of people interaction – public & high turnover of co-workers
- Needed a lot of support

- Worked everyday, set routine regarding tasks & schedule
- Responsible for tasks which utilized his competencies
- Quality was important
- Same people every day who knew him
- Reduced support
So What do we want?

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- Educated, well trained staff
Do you require continuing education?

- In Kentucky – one of our Medicaid waivers (one that promotes employment) requires 12 hours every year.
- If there’s not a state mandate, set one for your agency.
- Look to UCED, APSE, etc. for quality education.
- Not only does it promote learning, but shows support of your staff.
- Reinforces that best practice is expected.
In house/Staff Meetings

- Do you discuss relevant topics/strategies at staff meetings?
- Read an article & discuss
- Share a recorded webinar and ask everyone to watch when their schedule allows
Findings also suggest that job developers have limited opportunities for professional development, including both formal and informal chances for learning. However, employment specialists who do receive appropriate training and mentorship improve the number and quality of the jobs they develop.

(Italics inserted)
So What do we want?

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How do we get there?

- Pay the bills.
Kentucky – Supported Employment

- Office of Vocational Rehabilitation:
  - $900 for Discovery (Person Centered Job Selection)
  - $900 for Job Development
  - $4400 Outcome fee
  - IF ES has completed Advanced Training:
Kentucky – Supported Employment

If ES completed Advanced Training/certification

Office of Vocational Rehabilitation:

- $1900 for Discovery (full MG&A Vocational Profile)
- $1500 for Job Development of Customized Job
- $5000 Outcome fee
Kentucky

- 1 Medicaid Waiver will pay $42/hour for Supported Employment (after billing all of VR $)
- Other waivers will pay $22/hour for Supported Employment (after billing all of VR $)
- VR pays NO on the job support $
There’s never enough $$

- Yes, states are adding “Discovery” payments because it is widely accepted that this part of service is crucial to finding good employment
- No, there’s never enough money
- Getting disability professionals to agree on how to allocate $ is challenging
To Customize or Not to Customize?

- In the same state/same funding mechanisms you will find areas of excellent, individualized service and areas that lack these options for people
- The dollars available are the same
  - It’s the priorities of the agency/management
  - It’s the expectations upon Employment Staff
  - It’s HOW people use their time
By the Numbers

4... PERCENT OF JOB DEVELOPERS' TIME THAT IS SPENT WITH EMPLOYERS

6... NUMBER OF STATES REPORTING 40% OR MORE OF INDIVIDUALS SERVED IN INTEGRATED EMPLOYMENT SERVICES

9... PERCENT OF CRP STAFF WORKING ON INTEGRATED EMPLOYMENT

12... AVERAGE HOURS (PER PERSON) WORKED PER WEEK IN AN INDIVIDUAL SUPPORTED JOB

13.5... PERCENT OF IDD AGENCY DAY AND EMPLOYMENT FUNDING SPENT ON INTEGRATED EMPLOYMENT

15... PERCENT OF INDIVIDUALS WORKING IN INTEGRATED EMPLOYMENT

18... PERCENT OF INDIVIDUALS PARTICIPATING IN AN INTEGRATED EMPLOYMENT SERVICE (OF THOSE RECEIVING A DAY SERVICE FROM STATE IDD AGENCIES)

43... PERCENT OF INDIVIDUALS WHO ARE IN NON-WORK SERVICES

44... NUMBER OF STATES THAT HAVE SOME FORM OF EMPLOYMENT FIRST INITIATIVE

47... PERCENT OF INDIVIDUALS WHO DON'T WORK WHO SAY THEY WANT TO WORK.
Example of Survey findings

Percentage of ECs performing these activities for most or all job seekers…
to get to know job seekers

- Talked to acquaintances: 17%
- Talked to former employers: 19%
- Situational assessment: 38%
- Observation in non-work environment: 43%
- Talked to family members: 54%
- Talked to referral and funding agencies: 59%
- Facilitated/attended person centered planning: 61%

N= 163 Ecs in 28 states
...to search for jobs?

- One-Stop Career Centers: 16%
- Searched without referrals in mind*: 18%
- Negotiated job descriptions: 27%
- Knocked on doors of businesses*: 33%
- Involved family members or…: 34%
- Asked employers about related…: 39%
- Attended business events*: 51%
- Approached past employers: 53%
- Made cold calls to employers: 53%
- Reviewed classified ads: 53%

*In the past three months
If we want different results for employment then we need to shift:

- How we figure out jobs
- How we figure out supports
- How to encourage and support our staff

- How time is spent so that dollars brought in are used efficiently & effectively
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A culture that supports – expects - Customized Employment
Thank you

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