

APSE Conversations: Technology, Employment First, and a Changing Landscape

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Julie Christensen 0:10

Hi, this is Julie Christensen with APSE. We're excited to launch the APSE Employment First employment for all podcast as a new way to connect with you. This podcast is a way to provide updates, real time advocacy alerts, and information related to all things employment. First, be sure to subscribe so you don't miss an episode. And thanks for listening.

Duane Shumate 0:35

Thank you for participating in today's session on technology Employment First and the change changing landscape and ABS the conversation. My name is Dwayne Shumate, and I'm a member of the National IJL Board of Directors as a board member at large. And today's session will be focused on from technology first to remote job coaching the conversation to discuss and cover the resources available to move employment services to online formats. attendees will hear how for Employment First champions are using technology to drive their work. This session will push you to rethink everything you might know about technology and employment. As I said, my name is Duane Shumate, and I've worked in the field of employment services for individuals with disabilities for 29 years. I've worked with vocational rehabilitation as a counselor, a district supervisor and a leader of a task force on redesigning employment services. my current role is the director of employment and community for the Missouri division of developmental disabilities. I'm the president of Missouri absi and as I mentioned, recently elected to the National IJL board. other panelists today, we will first introduce Patricia de Patricia has worked in the field of vocational rehabilitation for over 25 years has held positions as job coach, vocational evaluator, work adjustment instructor, supervisor, Director of Community employment services and various private nonprofit. Patricia has also worked for the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation for 14 years, where she developed programs at state and local levels to create opportunities for individuals with significant disabilities and support employment. She has taught an internship practicum course and rehabilitation counseling education master's program at Utah State University. Patricia is a certified rehabilitation counselor has an undergraduate degree in business administration, and master's degree in rehabilitation counseling, and education. She is passionate about all individuals with disabilities having access to a person centered evidence based approach to competitive and integrated employment, aligning systems and funding structures that are accessible and working with employers to develop an inclusive workforce. Next, I'd like to introduce Katherine Carol. Katherine lives in Denver, Colorado, is a recognized subject matter expert by the US

Department of Labor, Office of Disability Employment Policy. She is co founder of families at the forefront of technology where she and other parents brought giants from the tech industry together with families and individuals with disabilities in shaping and more accessible and prosperous future through technology. Catherine currently serves as co chair for Colorado's Employment First advisory partnership. Most importantly, she has mckell mom, I'd like to introduce Scott Ellsworth. Scott is the principal and owner of Scott Ellsworth consulting. As a contractor to Jobs for the Future. He works to more fully engage employers in developing and implementing effective apprenticeship programs and driving greater inclusion of all populations in the workforce. Prior to founding Scott Ellsworth consulting, Scott was the Director of Business Leaders United for Workforce partnerships, a washington dc based advocacy and education organization that strives to bring employers into the workforce and skill gap discussion. He also has over 25 years experience in managing a variety of manufacturing firms, both large and small, including most recently as vice president and general manager of us operations for typical punch in Hamilton, Ohio. Scott holds a bachelor's degree in Industrial Engineering from the University of Louisville, and an MBA from LSU Shreveport. So starting today's discussion, we wanted to ensure that we all have the same understanding when we reference Employment First and when we talk about technology first, AB C's employment first statement reads employment the general workforce is the first and preferred outcome in the provision of publicly funded service for all working age citizens with disabilities, regardless of level of disability. Key Points are that low participation rate of citizens with disabilities in the workforce is unacceptable. all individuals should have the access to real jobs and real wages. All working adults and youth with disability can work in jobs fully integrated within the general workforce side by side with co workers without disabilities. also part of the employment first statement is All employees require assistance and support to ensure job success and should have access to those supports. That all individuals have the right to pursue the full range of available employment opportunities, and earn a living wage and a job of their choice based on their talents and skills. Additionally, Employment First, principles must be based on clear public policies and practices. When we discuss technology first, a handful of states including Alaska, Delaware, Indiana, Missouri, New York, Ohio, Pennsylvania, Tennessee and Wisconsin, have adopted a technology centered approach which builds upon the concepts of Employment First, technology first initiatives of public policies and practice to expand access to technology for people with all disabilities. with the goal of promoting the ability to live as independently as possible in the community, to committing to technology first state makes a public commitment to integrating technologies into their reimbursable system systems and services. Technology first goes hand in hand with Consumer Directed care approach, and helps consumers to decide what structures and supports will work best for them. And lastly, when we reference technology first, initiative commonly refers to the use of in home technology, remote monitoring, mobile tracking applications and other similar tech innovations. So I'm starting it off, I will first defer to Scott and Scott, based upon the review that we just provided on technology first, what additional types of concepts or constructs would you add to that definition?

Scott Ellsworth 6:38

So Dwayne, thanks. Thanks for the introductions. And thanks for the awesome explanation of Employment First and technology first, just add some context to my role, and kind of why I am here. As an employer, I didn't understand most of what you just said. And part of what we're trying to do with the work that APSE is doing, is to engage more employers in the conversation and get them to be a part of working on bringing more people into work and understanding why people with disabilities can be exceptional employees. I think that one of the things that frequently, employers don't do a good job of saying to organizations is, look, we understand we hold the jobs, but we don't understand the work that you do. And we don't understand when you come and you talk to us in the language of disability organizations, organizations that are supporting people with disabilities, we really don't get it. And we need a lot of help. And frequently, what I have found is by being a part of the FC conference last year, and knowing some people this year, is that folks who are doing the work, assume that employers just understand this automatically. So I can't add a lot to the definitions as far as technology first and Employment First. But what I can tell you is that both of those things, and the work that we're doing as an organization at APSE II, are critical to educating employers so that employers who hold all the jobs by the way, employers are more interested in hiring folks that we're serving

Katherine Carol 8:31

in this is Katherine as, as a parent, we have some of the same challenges that you do, Scott, we don't understand all this language either, and acronyms and meetings that talk about employment, and in terms that are processes that are not familiar to us, we just want our children to get a job. And you just want to hire somebody. So that's kind of where we're at both ends of the sandwich so to speak, in the provider system seems to be in the middle to facilitate that for us. So I think everyday language is really helpful for all of us, and, and just really looking at what the needs are for the employer as well as for the individual seeking the job.

Patricia Henke 9:10

And all time in here. I think I'm appropriately in the middle of you, because I feel like I'm kind of the bridge from you know, state government to business and, you know, in providing services to job seekers and, you know, I'm at the Colorado Office of Employment First, which is a new initiative in Colorado, we have about six months under since I started and, you know, we're, we're that that training entity, you know, for service providers to help train them to know how to talk to employers, right and translate the information. So it's not systems jargon. And and in my background, I've been on both sides. I've been in state government, I've been on the service provider side and it is a completely different conversation. And it's, it's Really you have to know how to translate that information. And too many times when we talk about, you know, these initiatives, and we know that effective partnerships are key rights for Employment First, and all of the states where there's Employment First initiatives, and, of course, I'm going to highlight Colorado, because I think our partnerships are so strong, and that's why we're able to move all of this forward. But oftentimes employers are not at the table enough, right? We're not we're not having in. And it's it's time it's, you know, being sensitive to a candidate, employer and best and I'm impressed, Scott, that you're able to invest so much time as an employer into absi. And into employment first. And so thank you for that. Because it because I know, you know, that's

time away from your business and the bottom line. And And so, in terms of how do we bridge that I, what you say is so true, and really teaching our employment professionals, how to approach an employer. And really, it's about developing that relationship. I think at the end of the day, all of these initiatives are really about relationships, and identifying needs and listening. You know, from a family perspective parent, a job seeker and employer, a state agency, you know, everybody has their own needs and their own kind of pressure points and things that they're dealing with. But how do you navigate that in in a way that you're being supportive and really trying to develop that not just a win win, it feels like it's, you know, a win, you know, in so many different, different ways. So

I feel like we have

an opportunity and a responsibility to really train up and skill up our employment consultants and individuals that are approaching employers to be able to speak the language of business.

Katherine Carol 12:06

I just want to throw in that this is really about community, Patricia said about relationships. And you know, you've got business people, you've got families, you've got individuals and neighbors who live in, in communities. And so the more that we can embrace our community and our rotaries, and our Kiwanis clubs, where business tends to hang out, we can build a strong community, full of relationships. And I think sometimes what we do in our field is that we we tend to get so systems driven, that we forget that there are other aspects of the community, that can be hugely helpful in getting folks with disabilities employed in. And I think one thing I'd like to remind folks is that my daughter is part of the community, you know, she's known in her community. And what I would want from a job coach developer is to go and really access and go through her community, because just within five blocks, there's probably 20 different different employment opportunities for her, if that's what she was looking for. But they all need to interact with technology. And that's where the technology for me as a parent is very frustrating in terms of where we are lagging behind business, and we're lagging behind the community. In terms of our understanding utilization of technology, my daughter uses a wheelchair, she uses a communication device, and we interviewed 17 different providers in the Denver area. And there wasn't a one who could work with her technology. So I'm the job coach. And at some point, I might like to let somebody else do that. But we've got and that's part of my my interest in Employment First, is getting the field up to the point that I can retire. And there can be other people that I know can take the hard work. mckell spoke to Congress, she's been she has her own business, she bought her own condo, I need somebody to be at that level to support her going forward. And an entry level position for her who's been 36 years old, who's been working since she was 16. for 20 years, I need somebody that really understands and can engage with not only what technology is doing now, but what technology will do in the future.

Scott Ellsworth 14:22

So Katherine at risk of taking Dwayne's job a little bit here of moderating first you can't talk about retiring at your young age. So

Katherine Carol 14:33
thank you,

Scott Ellsworth 14:34
that makes the rest of us really

Duane Shumate 14:35
jealous.

Scott Ellsworth 14:37
But from from an employer perspective, when you talk about technology first and how you're having to coach employers, etc. I mean, what is a question for the rescue? What does that look like? I mean, what what are we talking about employers need to know that is helpful to them. When you say technology first, what techniques are we even talking about?

Katherine Carol 15:01
For me, it is just universal technology that you probably employ. In your workforce at this point, there's so much that Apple and Microsoft and all these folks have done to make their products very accessible. So part of it is, you know, smartphone, oh my goodness, if everybody graduated from school with a smartphone, that would be enormous and intimate, we need to kind of look at individual technology plans as part of the transition process, particularly, but also for adults as well, to me, we and I think Dwayne, you do this well, in Missouri, for mine understand you and your individual support plans, which I know is, you know, the plan for people to get work basically, or live in their communities. Scott is just, do we really know what people want and need in terms of technology? And you guys, I think, are pretty revolutionary, you say, why isn't this person using technology? It's an assumption. And right now, Scott, it is not an assumption. We are there very few people have access to this to technology. And in broadband isn't a concern for many people in our rural areas, and that we just don't have the support systems. And there are folks, that could be very helpful, but they underestimate the abilities. I think of people with disabilities to utilize technology, I think we assume that people are not going to grow and learn how to use it. And so I think we have to look at introducing it. And and for those job coaches out there, we kind of need to do a technology discovery process and see what technology works, what they're interested in, how are we going to support that technology, and working with the employer to say, oh, maybe somebody needs some reminders throughout the day, to get things going, well, there's an app for that, you know, there's no better break down the task down, there's an app for that, there's so many things that we can do that would really help people perform better in the workplace. Because there's an app for that,

Duane Shumate 17:01
you know, it's really looking at gap analysis, but like it's identifying with individuals, what are some of the obstacles or barriers they may have, that preclude them from doing a certain aspect or function of a job? And that same analysis with businesses, as talent walks through the

door? You know, it's really exploring with the individuals, what are some of the limitations that they may have? And how can technology be used to to bridge those potential deficits or skill gaps? Yeah, I think one of the things that I love about technology first being parallel to Employment First, is that it's really about looking for universal solutions. Someone so many technological advance advances are advances that equally benefit folks, whether you have a disability or not. And so I think a lot of times, that universal design, when it comes to looking at technology to make all employees more efficient, to help all individuals become more effective. It's just a matter of creating that awareness. And as opposed to asking, Can technology help us Yes or no? I think the question is more based upon these skill deficits are these gaps, these obstacles? What technology is out there that will help us narrow what

Patricia Henke 18:18

I also wanted to share? Scott that, you know, it's, it's, it's an interesting, it's a great conversation, I love talking about this, because when we talk about, you know, technology, I guess, in the world of Human Services, oftentimes it's assistive technology, right. And when Dwayne references, you know, if someone has a limitation or you know, a disability related need, then the conversation that we're having, right, it's so much broader than that, like, that's a narrow, we're talking about just, you know, technology, technology solutions that you probably have in your organization that most employers have, and business hat as that many individuals with disabilities may not have access to, to help them engage employers, or, you know, as Kathryn was talking about, there's just smartphones, and whatever that phone is, you know, with all the apps that are available to support you or, you know, somebody having, you know, I'll just mention, you know, mental health or behavioral health issue. Somebody deals with anxiety, for example, I mean, there are so many apps out there that you can access on your own, if you're feeling anxious to then calm yourself down, you know, just taking a timeout and, and that's kind of, you know, developing your own accommodation for yourself. So, the employer, it doesn't impede your productivity at work. But those are things that individuals that we work with don't have and don't have access to right now. I mean, it goes from a communication device that Catherine that mckell uses, which is probably more specialized and you know, has a certain provider that helps train or learn or upgrade and you know, things like that to a simple, you know, app calm app on a smartphone. And one of the key pieces, and I think that the difference between or a gap, a gap in terms of state government, and private business is even within state government, often the technology is not parallel to maybe private industry. And so even the counselors, the case managers, the service providers, or whoever the support individuals are, or job seekers may or may just may not be up to speed either, because their job hadn't hasn't required them to have that level of knowledge around technology. And, and that's it, I think it's getting better. I know, here in Colorado, where he looking at a lot more innovative solutions. You know, to me, especially, we have to I mean, that's what's so, you know, although we're in this this crisis, and this really uncertain time, it's put everyone in a position to innovate and to create change out of necessity, to do business. So I think it's creating an opportunity for us to have a deeper dive into this conversation. And, and we have to get up to speed so that everyone has equal access, and that we don't lose momentum in Employment First, that we are still we are not stopping the conversation about employment

first. And employing individuals with disabilities, that just creates a new and different opportunity. And we have to rethink how we do that.

Scott Ellsworth 21:46

So we're not always talking about \$100,000. elevator? No. And so, so as at how do I find out about that? And how do I, you know, who's going to teach me what kinds of things I would need to do for somebody who shows up at my door? Well, they don't show my door, you show up at my door? And, you know, talk to me about hiring people with disabilities? How am I gonna learn about any of that.

Katherine Carol 22:14

So, there are a couple things, you could go down to the Apple Genius Bar. Honestly, we have community resources that are available to us, there's a community college, there's a library, there's a media specialist, there, I you know, our field is probably going to take some time to grow into technology and understand it, but we have resources within our communities. So I'd like job coaches and job employment specialists to think about connecting with people already know, technology within the community and bringing that to bear with the employer. And have you sitting down and having those conversations, as Dwayne said about the gap, what's the employers need? What does this person wanting to do? What's the desire of both of you? What do you want? What do you need to be successful, and who's going to be responsible for it, I think it's important to reach outside of our boxes, families are at the forefront of technology, we and I've been working with Apple's senior engineers, and you call them you reach out, you do your your development work to for technology, and, and, you know, we've developed a really good relationship with a senior engineer from Apple. And he would give him ideas on how they were going to improve the Apple products. And then those would go into the business and they become part of the apple accessibility site. And that which is a great site to show how different technologies can work. Microsoft has a great accessibility of site, too. So part of it is understanding what's available, both to the business and to the, you know, the family and the individual and, and the service provider. But I think we've, if we can begin to utilize community colleges, and their technology and their and these media centers at the library, I know at the Denver Public Library, there's a podcast studio, there's 3d printing, there's a TV studio there, there's all those things that you can do. But there's some simple little things like a PowToon. If you're not familiar with PowToon, it's it's how you create your own cartoons that help an employer, welcome somebody with a disability who may not be a reader and can't get through the HR forms. But you could have somebody help learn your HR process, the job coach could go to powtoons translate that into a cartoon that an individual could understand. And you could that would help a lot of people who speak different languages connect and so we can be a resource for the diversity that employers often encounter and there are tools out there that can do that. But how to is a great one for you folks that are out in the field. A pic telo is another one that writes an individual story so you could break down the test. And it reads aloud. You can do pictures. There's some really simple, inexpensive apps and programs, software, you know, sites to, to find those tools. But I think what we can do is provide 10 opportunities, if we get good at 10 things, and 10 basic apps, that's probably all we're going to need. But we have to start doing that. And so the question I, like people say is, who

understands technology best in my community? And how can I get them engaged? And how can that be a resource for an employer? How can I solve some problems for the employer, by having my expertise, because they have turnover issues, they have a diversity and inclusion challenges. They have all sorts of things that are going on, especially remotely now. So how do we get good at remote supports, and maybe offer some resources to the employer and the individual and the family and you know, we can go down the list. So that's there you go.

Duane Shumate 25:54

Most states have independent living centers. And I think a lot of those independent living centers have specialists on staff who work with assistive technology. Also, each state has an assistive technology project, where individuals are able to connect with professionals who have a wide and very diverse set of skills and background around using smart devices, apps, and maybe other types of assistive devices, and really just be creative and innovative. On how do we begin to bridge these physical distances with each other through the use of various social, you know, platforms also. And so I do think it is one of those things that as we continue through the new world that we kind of live in, I think it's just really people getting out there and trying things. And you know, kind of unleashing that creativity, unleashing that innovation, and really identifying what are solutions that work, and then sharing those practices. You know, it's great to have just unbridled enthusiasm. But ultimately, we need to begin to capture those success stories and those successful strategies. So then we can have more of a formalized approach to replicating it in other situations, other settings, with new businesses or with new individuals. So Dwayne, and Patricia then,

Scott Ellsworth 27:18

I mean, I'm looking at this and I'm thinking, Oh, I had to learn zoom and GoToMeeting, and teams, and so on, and so on, and so on. And I, my brain almost fried during the COVID thing, trying to learn all of these opportunities, or different platforms. Are we saying that service providers and job coaches and the individuals who are working with people with disabilities, are they going to be able to help me as an employer, because I'm running out of brainpower to figure all of this stuff out? So is that kind of what this is doing? For us?

Patricia Henke 27:54

I would say absolutely, there there are. Oftentimes, when I've worked with job seekers in the past, that they were teaching me, um, you know, technology, and especially our younger, you know, individuals, they know, smartphones, they know, these apps, they know, you know, they know how to manage a lot of a lot of technologies. And, you know, some I would say, do have, you know, access, you know, maybe that's to their family, and their family is really engaged and can support them with that. So they're absolutely individuals with with disabilities, where that is their strength, you know, we, and that's what's so i think so interesting. And always so fun about working with, you know, job seekers, just in general, is really identifying the strengths and and we call them conditions for success or uncovering, discovering personal genius, or, you know, there's many different phrases, but really, what we know and just in with everyone is when individuals are working within their strengths, then they're thriving, right? When we're doing we're love what we do, that's how I feel every day. I love my work, I feel honored to do

this work. And I have endless pretty much endless energy in terms of doing it. And when it's going well, I feel like I'm thriving, it's the same, you know, for any other individual or an individual with a disability is identifying with their strengths and if your business needs are right now having someone that knows technology and and knows how to help you incorporate technology, technology solutions moving forward. I would say there's probably somebody in Ohio that that could assist you in that that has a disability we have in terms of skill sets of individuals that we work with, it's it's it's from entry level positions, all the way up to, you know, high level executive positions and so it's a matter of making that match. That's Going to meet your needs, and is going to help help the individual thrive in employment. And I wanted to comment on Scott, because, you know, when we talk about, and I don't know, specifically about Ohio, but and in Colorado, and likely in Missouri, you know, we have a team, there are teams of like Business Outreach, you know, individuals and, and, and job coaches and employment consultants, but you know, what I would, and I hope that this is the approach our employment consultants are taking. But, you know, when you go to employ an employer, it's not to say, you know, what jobs do you have for my client, it's to sit down with you, and to see what your employment needs are, you know, and really do that employer analysis that needs analysis, and, you know, and, and have that conversation and really trying to find a match for you, that that's going to benefit your business. And, and so that that is the and that and that, probably looking differently now, for a lot of employers so that conversate, what we've known before, is not is not what we're going to know, now we have to really learn what business is, is needing,

Duane Shumate 31:22

with this year being the 30th anniversary of the Americans with Disabilities Act. You know, just the concept of reasonable accommodations, I think is I mean, it's just a natural extension, tech first, as providing part of those reasonable accommodations in the workplace. You know, so I think from an employer perspective, you know, it's really not necessarily changing any new questions, or, you know, looking at the world necessarily different, I think it's just being more open and receptive, and kind of creating more tech sensitivity for those individuals who may need to utilize an iPad or a smartphone, I know, a lot of workplaces have rules or restrictions around people utilizing their phones, you know, while at work or other devices, and I think it's just being sensitive. You know, it's kind of part of that interview process and that ongoing support process of, you know, employees, that some individuals may be needing that as part of that reasonable accommodation for them. Devin.

Katherine Carol 32:27

Yeah, um, I think shake. Anna's who's going to be doing the keynote, for, for this is going to be talking a little bit about machine learning, artificial intelligence, robotics. And Scott, I would like to ask you, where is your business in looking at it technology and innovations in how you produce your product? And if you're looking a little bit forward a couple years, are you looking at those kinds of breakthroughs in technology that are coming into business in significant ways, because there's probably a way that we can work together on that. But I I'm just curious, and I think our viewers would be really interested in where you see the changes coming in your business. And we need to be aware of that as we move forward as well.

Scott Ellsworth 33:14

So fortunately, for me, being a contractor now, I don't have a lot of those those issues. But every one of my clients, as I meet with employers is facing this. And it's the hole in manufacturing, they're starting to call it like industry 4.0. And, and so it's the fourth industrial revolution. And it's this whole idea of the Internet of Things and how equipment talks to each other. And I just think that the whole interface between equipment and people is changing. And quite frankly, I have found my daughter works with youth that have autism, and some of them have incredible focus and ability to accomplish some of the skills that that we require in manufacturing or in distribution, etc. And so what I would say is that, that across the board in all industries, I think that everybody is looking at technology, and they're saying that this is completely changing how we operate. And the folks that I meet that are in it, they're all talking cybersecurity now, and as was evident through the whole COVID crisis, where you can't have a zoom meeting was without somebody coming in photobombing you and so even healthcare, the changes in health care, you know, there's technology and every one of those components, and I think that's the struggle that I'm saying that employers tend to face is we're learning a lot of technology just to operate our business. You know, and so that's why it's so important to have the job coaches who are knowledgeable on technology, but then they also come to the business with some some solutions. I want to, I want to echo what Patricia said. And I said this the other day, when we were talking just as a group, that the single worst sales pitch to an employer is, is the right thing to do. Because in the end, the right thing to do is, is what's good for the business and all of that. And so we need to be thinking about how can we do the right thing for people with disabilities by employing them, while bringing benefit to the employer and filling those jobs that today, and I know that there are, I don't know, 30 million people unemployed, I don't sense that that's going to really last that long. And we'll probably go back to the situation we had two months ago where we couldn't fill jobs. And so we have to be much more creative and how we help different kinds of employees and potential employees to do well and, and their work roles.

Duane Shumate 36:14

And one of the things that you kind of mentioned Skype, you know, I think a lot of times too, we kind of forget that our provider agencies that we work with, and state agencies, that we too are a business, and that we're looking at efficiencies. And I think that's one of the things in the sorority, that we've really tried to have a pervert technology first initiative as it relates to employment, is helping our service providers understand how through the use of technology, they may be able to extend their staff to more locations, and not lose a lot of that windshield time. Also, through technology, when you have an ever changing workforce, and we know how much of a crisis there is, with employment support professionals and direct support professionals, the more you can utilize technology to where you don't have to necessarily have as many people out there and multiple locations, you know, it really kind of bridges that gap for some more providers. And the other thing that it can do is it can create greater fidelity as to how services and supports are provided. Because through that technology, you can be job coaching, a job coach, you know, you can be providing support to them in a way that creates those ongoing business efficiencies. And at the same time, you're promoting greater autonomy

and independence of the individual on the job. Because as opposed to having this unnatural job coach in the workplace, that individual is now in the workplace no differently than other co workers. And they're just utilizing a device to provide that support and guidance, as opposed to having this extra unnatural person who's following them around everywhere telling them what to do. You know, it's a way to really promote autonomy, create business, the agency.

Katherine Carol 38:05

Yeah, I just want to give a family perspective on that, because I'm with you on that. I think all businesses and organizations look at succession planning well, so to some of our families. And technology has been one of those areas that we've been able to give my daughter Macau a lot more autonomy, and and focused on self determination, she hires and, and trains all of our people through technology. She has all of her daily tasks, mapped out video tapes, she has an ability to train people on all of that. So that gives her a lot of control. So it also gives her the opportunity if she were to go work for you, Scott, she would be able to communicate and show a portfolio a website. She's a podcaster and nonverbal podcaster with, you know, the shining, beautiful series, by the way, and chances are, you know, our own website, technology didn't change our lives much where a lot of people were deeply impacted. By COVID. Our life has not changed that much because we had such a strong technology platform. And so her work continues, nothing much has changed. The only thing that has really changed is she has a small business, where she sells bracelets and she used to sell a lot of them at the coffee shop. And that's a little bit more different. But now we have an Etsy store. So we've upgraded to those kinds of things. So those are natural platforms that exist and it's no special technology. The only special technology has is the communication app that Patricia referred to but it's an iPad. It's not even a first generation or latest generation. You know, it's got a camera. It's an older one, it was donated from a neighbor, you know that somebody knew and had one sitting in their in their house. So technology is not as expensive or as inaccessible as we think for people because most of us have two or three generations of electronics sitting around our house. We could easily adapt that, too. So the cost has always been a barrier to people, the complications, I think the biggest challenge and is it is for you, Scott, and you, Dwayne and Patricia is upgrades. When everything updates, that's the one of the biggest challenges that we've got to begin to look at is it's not a one and done kind of situation. It is a part of our routine, as an employee, or as a worker, or as a person with a disability is that we've got to build technology and technology support into everyday routines. And that's when it will work well. And we've got to have those relationships with our tech developers and our app developers, you'd be amazed how accessible these people are. Apple changed its operating system and an app that a friend of mine, it's part of families at the forefront of technology, it her app wouldn't work anymore. Well, they did a soft protest in front of an apple store, and they did change Oregon, Apple changed their operating system for one person. So advocacy is really important. And you have to know what you want, and then you have to go out and get it.

I think sometimes we have such low expectations for ourselves that we say, well, we can't do that we can't do that, well, I don't know about you, I've had to fundraise for my daughter and, and I've had to pick up resources forever. And so I just don't take no we have a thing in our house, if you're going to doubt anything, doubt your limits. Go for it. If you need something, go

figure it out. And it that's to me, for those job developers out there. That's the fun part. That's you take the thing that looks absolutely impossible. And then you go create something magical. And I think one of the things that is so exciting about this time is there is a this creativity, this magic and we know when we get the right employer and the right person together, that's that's that we live for that. Because we've changed not only the employer and how they do business in their culture, we've changed the individual and their families perceptions of disability. And now that family expects success, not labels and disappointment. And now that community looks at this person as a contributing citizen. So this is really where the juiciness of the work that we do lies, is it in that creativity. And now nothing works like it did before. So this is the perfect time to really exercise that creativity. And I think it's our job to be enthusiastic about that. And not look at this as a time to, you know, we're going to grieve because it is a time of loss. I mean, we've lost a lot of people, a lot of the ways that we used to work together are not really, they're not available to us right now. So there is a sense of loss, and letting go there. And so we have to help people through that. But then you get to the good stuff. It's the art, it's the creativity, and our processes just get better. And our the way we do this just improve, we have to think like the total quality service, what is the best way we can do this? Not what is the basic way we can do

Duane Shumate 43:07

Katherine start talking a little bit about some of the obstacles and barriers, and then, you know, strategies for overcoming those. I know, one of the things that we had to do here in Missouri, was really do a systematic kind of analysis of our funding strategies. You know, we had to ensure, you know, as funders, whether it be vocational rehabilitation, or you know, through our division of developmental disability with our waivers, did we allow for the use of technology? Or were we able to find supports and services to providers to be able to provide those services when done remotely? You know, so many different times funding streams have specified that folks have to be in person to deliver the service? And so, you know, I think that is definitely some of those obstacles and barriers. are, you know, does the funding stream in your states allow individuals to be able to build services and deliver services to support a business or to support an employee, you know, remotely? And and how do we look at funding that do we funded at a different rate than what we would traditional in person support? in some regards, you might say that there's less admin time, an administrative ratio when doing it virtually. But on the flip side, you have to have the devices you have to have the aircard, you may need, you know, all of the technological equipment to be able to deliver those supports remotely. And so sometimes it increases the admin expenses and delivering those services. And so I think that's definitely an obstacle and barrier that I think a lot of states have. And again, I would just encourage folks to, you know, to work with your state agencies, and explore with them, you know, how could we go about ensuring that there's adequate funding and support to enable providers to deliver those services But also are you creating, Catherine referred to earlier? are you creating expectations in your planning process? To have technology as a fundamental question? In every single plan? You know, how do we how can we use a GoPro? How can we use Alexa? You know, does the person have a smartphone? Do they have access to broadband. So I think it's both through a funding stream. But also when that case management, case

coordination, it's making sure that those barriers have been removed, as well. So Patricia, other thoughts on obstacles and barriers and ways to potentially resolve those?

Patricia Henke 45:38

Wow, I so I, before I go there, Dwayne, I have to respond to Catherine's description of how beautiful it is, when an employer and a job seeker lineup and I, I have to throw in there, it's like a lovely Tango, it's like a dance right? Where it's, um, and so those of you that may not know, Katherine likes to tango dance. So I had to, I had to throw that in there as because it is, it's a beautiful dance when when all of that is aligned and comes together, and you described it beautifully. And I just want to also just comment on, you know, what you described with mckell. And her and, you know, you guys partnering and working with with providers, that you have her technology figured out, you know, you know, what her needs are, and what would help her be employed. And, and ultimately, that, Scott would be what I would hope service providers are doing, you know, when they're approaching an employer, that they're helping their job seeker already figure out their own accommodation needs. So it's not the employer is having to figure this out, or like, Oh, god, this is gonna cost me a lot of money. Cuz that's what we hear a lot, you know, in terms of accommodations, or just technology is the cost, what is this going to cost me, where if that is already figured out and resolved or taken care of as much as possible before entering a workplace, then that that, then you know, then there's just maybe some modifications to consider based on the work environment or the workplace. And like Dwayne said earlier, that could just be taking breaks at certain times of the day where that, you know, that should be a no cost solution, or maybe it's just visual prompts or reminders that are around your workplace that that are helpful to everyone. So I just wanted to kind of go back to that, because that is a, we hear that a lot, you know, from employers about the cost, and, and it's a perception. And I get it, you know, it's it's it, but it's also I think, just, you know, we need to do a lot more education in that area and provide examples, where of individuals, you know, with significant disabilities that really didn't need a high cost accommodation to go work in a competitive job. I mean, that happens happens all the time. So but that's your question, Dwayne about funding structures. And and, you know, even, you know, sequencing, like you said that, that funding between the different state agencies, and really leveraging all of the resources that are available and bringing those individuals together, and, and sometimes that's the employer as well, because, you know, not one entity can absorb the cost of all of it. And so really sequencing that and being on the same page, and

ensuring that,

you know, we're

aligning with our policies and things like that, but also being creative within policy. I think that's one of the areas that, you know, just working in state government, and then also kind of in private nonprofits that, you know, we have our federal guidelines that that we have to follow, right, and we have certain kind of allowables that we can send funds on. But I also think that there's creativity within policy and flexibilities that if we ask the question, or if we, you know, do have those creative Conover conversations and innovate and just ask, you know, and say,

yeah, we want to do this, let's find out if we can, and usually when you engage in the conversation, there's usually an outcome that is maybe your meeting in the middle, but maybe it's more creative than you than what you thought you could do. And so, I if there's any individuals that are, you know, working in state agencies that are, you know, having to follow those policies and, you know, to not allow that to hinder your creativity and and to ask those questions. And you know, same with service provider organizations. And I really think it's a mindset. And I got excited. Catherine, just when you were, you were enthusiastic about it because you know, where that's where the the creativity and the innovation and, you know, if you're if you're a problem solver, like that's the ultimate job, right. And like, you know, I used to work with job developers that, you know, they got energy by getting a no, you know, buy from an employer. They're like, well, I'm going to get to it. Yes. But it's going to take me probably a few nodes to get to that. Yes. As as when we're applying for jobs. How many nodes Do you get before you get to? Yes, I mean, that's just part of part of the process. So I hope that this conversation, maybe reinterred re energizes, you know, some job developers, or even administrators, or employers that are that are joining that, you know, it's, um, you know, we have solutions for employers. And, and, and so it's a matter of, you know, developing the conversation and in creating it, and as Catherine said, usually those solutions are that conversation leads to solutions and

a richer work environment for everyone.

Because it's a, it's a professional development opportunity, right? When when you're working with a diverse group of individuals, and you just really seek to understand whether that's disability, ethnicity, you know, background, and it's just creates a more rich, much richer learning opportunity for everyone.

Duane Shumate 51:45

So Scott, for a business perspective, what do you see as some of the obstacles and barriers and solutions? I know, you talked at the beginning, a little bit about just the language in the vernacular that we use, but are there other obstacles and barriers that we all should know and solutions to those?

Scott Ellsworth 52:04

You know, Dwayne, I would say that the one thing that, to me and so many of my peers, this was never a discussion for us. It just wasn't, it wasn't Top of Mind, we weren't thinking about hiring individuals with disabilities intentionally. So if it wasn't a part of what we were trying to do, if it happened, if somebody came, we wouldn't discriminate in any way. And we'd be more than happy to do that. But we weren't intentionally looking at folks and saying, gosh, I think this is an exceptional pool of very good candidates for my job. And that's probably the the big piece of it is frequently, it would be a social service organization that would show up and, you know, they're trying to convince you that do good in the community. And, and that's great. But the first thought come into mind is, I've got a job I need to fill, and I want somebody who's qualified to do it. And so I would say one of the biggest obstacles to overcome for a job developers is helping the employer to understand this is really a solution to their problem. It's, it's not a

solution to an individual's promise a solution to the business's problem. And it can change the mindset of the employers. And I think that when you've got one employer, who has hired somebody with a disability, and has had exceptional results, they become your best advocate. They will talk to other employers and, you know, employers are just like anybody else, we tend to listen to people who are in the same situation that we're in, and say, if, if that's your experience, then I bet that would work for me. And so I think that's one of the things I would encourage job coaches and those folks to do is to go out and get an employer to be there. You know, the person that they lead with, and, and lead with lead with employment first. So it's, you know, it's kind of a taking the Employment First and flipping it a little bit, you know, but but it's the employer we need to think about its employment, this is employment. This is a social service organization. And for and I want to thank you all for for keeping it today in terms that I understood, that was really helpful. The other the other day, I thought I was going to be underwater, not understanding anything anybody said,

Duane Shumate 54:50

Catherine, I don't know family perspective. Are there other obstacles or barriers that you see in educating other families and what are some solutions to To assist with that?

Katherine Carol 55:01

Well, I think hope is one of the things that we need to give people, especially now that there are things out there, that can be even more customized for the family and the individual because of technology, and employment, and that we have to kind of, I think, give families some definitive, trustworthy advice and support. And I think one of the things that's challenging for us, and I don't think people realize this is how many people we say hello, and goodbye to. And because we have turnover in our field. Trust is not a high, you know, it's a very valuable thing. And so, that's why I got so involved in my daughter's adult life, because we had too many of them, frankly, and it was causing her some challenging, and so she needed somebody to be stable. So I think creating stability, for whatever you promise you're gonna do, do it. That's a, that's a simple advices. I, I think we often over promise. And under deliver, we we sometimes favor systems, and checking boxes instead of people an example. And I think we really do need to look at the customized approach. got a call from a provider, rename nameless. I need to do my quarterly check up on mackell. We play phone tag, I left throw a 45 minute 45 seconds. answer troller question. She said, that's great. Thank you never interacted with my daughter. that concerns me checking in with people. How are you doing during this time? Is there anything you need, she got a boredom box from which sounds like a good idea. But it was there was because of her physical limitations, there was nothing in there she could do. So the good intention actually created resentment on all of our parts, because it's like, well, you didn't really pay attention who you're sending this to, this was just a generic give. And you pull things off of the shelf, thinking this is going to be great, but it was nothing that she could interact with. So now I have to deal with a box of stuff that I have to find somebody to do with. So that adds on to my to do list. So I think really thinking about getting you know, as Patricia said, this is an and you've got you know, business, you get sales through relationships, and being trustworthy, you people are not going to buy your product unless they can believe in your product. And I think as we look at business and providing service solutions to individuals and families like mine, I gotta

believe it. I gotta, I gotta, I gotta trust you as a person. Even though the system is broken, I gotta trust you as a person to show up. When you say you're going to show up to deliver what you say you're going to deliver. And that can be very small on my bar can start very low. You return phone calls on time, you show up when you're supposed to you Look, my daughter in the face, you don't talk to me, you talk to her. Those are some basic kinds of very basic kinds of things, but they're really important things that I have my own internal checklist. The other thing I think is that, you know, when I do, I do some family engagement, webinars and you have to take time to get to know me as a family member, and what I can bring to supporting my daughter. I have a wealth of information experiences, but many times I'm labeled as my daughter can be labeled as I've just mom and Macau's a person with CP cerebral palsy, and she can't do anything, which is what she was told by many people that she couldn't work. But she'd had four jobs, you know, but they couldn't imagine her working because her physical limitations, but she works from the neck up. Well, how can you do a podcast when you're nonverbal? Well, we figured it out. And she's got 2500 people who have been following her and listening to her podcast. She perhaps is the first nonverbal podcaster in in the world. But I think you have to just start where can we go with this? Well, this is let's try it this way. So I think this mark golden associates for those of us who are in the field, try another way. I've got the poster behind me try another way. It is that persistence and that patience, and that belief that somebody can be successful, and that those relationships with business in the community are so vital, because that's our that's what we worked so hard for for our kids. We went through education, we did all this so they could be a part of the community.

Duane Shumate 59:49

Thank you very much, Catherine and I believe we are at the close of our time. I know we could go another hour if we all needed to, but hopefully you all have found today's session to be informative Considering the business perspective, the family perspective, the individual perspective, and the role which funders and state agencies can take in promoting employment and the use of technology. Thank you all very much.

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