

APSE Conversations: Rangam and Source Abled

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<https://apse.org/apse-conversations-rangam-and-source-abled/>

Julie Christensen 0:09

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.

Erica Belois-Pacer 0:36

Welcome to another podcast episode with national APSE. We've been focusing on speaking with our sponsors and keynote speakers leading up to our big conference that will be taking place on June 14 for the entire week. So today we have Jason with us and we've been really lucky on we have been working with them and trying to collaborate where we can. And he is with Rangam. And also Source Abled. So we talked a little bit about that ahead of time, and I have many cases, there's a parent company that kind of over sees different things. But I know that Jason is going to be talking more so about source Able and what they're doing in terms of moving Employment First forward. But we are very lucky to have them as a sponsor for our conference coming up. So we wanted to, you know, chat with them about you know, why they wanted to sponsor the conference and what they're doing in terms of employment for folks with disabilities. So I won't talk too much. But I did want to just have Jason introduce himself, and then we'll just talk about what they've been doing. So Jason, do you mind introducing yourself giving us a little background on who you are? And you know, how you got into this field and what you're currently doing?

Jason Weppelman 1:58

Yeah, yeah, well, thank you for the introduction and for giving me some time. My name is Jason Weppelman. The client Program Manager over here at Rangam via source abled the platform we have for people with disabilities, autism and neuro diversity is to help find Careers Out in the workforce. I always kind of like to say I stumbled into the Disability Employment world about a decade ago, I used to be president of a better business bureau, I used to be head of company wide customer service for a large bank and even worked in radio for five years. So I always kind of had to do things that I was passionate about or thought could help people in the community for a living. And about a decade ago, here in Cleveland, where I'm from, there was a provider who wanted to start an employment service program, but they wanted someone who could do it with a business background, who would focus on having it be a business solution not be a charitable act when approaching businesses and employers. So had a lot of success with that also helped build a collaborative here in Northeast Ohio, that is still going to the state that has 60 unique member organizations in it. Because we're very big believer in collaboration and

that we're not going to get where we want for people with disabilities. Autism, neuro diversity is to have employment and equal opportunity unless we we all work together. And then over the past five years, I've actually been doing this work nationally, working with companies providing them with training, but then connecting them with local talent. So they could scale out that work beyond just say where their headquarters was. So I travel all around the country, providing those trainings connecting with local providers. And now over here with random and source abled doing much the same except now we have this exclusive platform where companies we partner with our you know, posting positions, looking to recruit and hire this talent, and then I'm helping connect to all the local agencies across the country. Because we can have every company in the world wanting to hire recruit people with disabilities, autism, nerf diversities, but if they're not connected to the population, then it's never really going to go anywhere. So that's a big part of what I do is helping bridge that gap between the businesses and all that talent hidden talent that's out there in the supports. Wow, no, that's great to know. So Jason, first of all, I live in Rochester, New York, so I'm not too far from you. And I am familiar with different things within Cleveland, Ohio, so I did not know that about you that is that where you're currently based? Yeah. Yeah. The fortunate thing about the past five years especially is I could work for I work for companies out in New York, New Jersey, all that kind of stuff. So it's really been cool because I got to do a lot of travel but it didn't really make it better where you were based out of so if I wasn't on the road, I was doing a lot of work from home stuff. So yep, right here in Cleveland.

Erica Belois-Pacer 4:49

Nice. And I would agree. I think there's definitely a necessity to what you're doing and I know you know it nationally APSE we often have people email and call us looking for kind of pools of employees that might be able to work for them. But that's not something we do. So I'm glad that you're, you know, doing that for folks that maybe owned businesses or own businesses or in are looking for, you know, I do have diverse work population. So, um, what kind of stuff Have you been doing during COVID? Just out of curiosity?

Jason Weppelman 5:28

Well, we've we've really seen, you know, kind of an explosion, with companies coming to us because we've, we've positioned ourselves uniquely, we're, we're a Workforce Solutions company that's minority women in disability owned. So combine that with a platform that's specifically designed for people with disabilities, autism and neuro diversity and their supports. We are set up with basically how these companies work in the fortune 1000, is they do a lot of their hiring kind of what I call on the back end, where there's about 30% of their positions that never really make it out to the general public, they use organizations like us to do that. So these companies have still had a lot of requirements and needs during this time. And as you're definitely you know, seeing all over right now, companies are still, you know, struggling really to find people. And they've seen that, you know, this talent pool is one that exists and has really high functioning high performing workers, but they just didn't know how to access them. So we've been really fortunate where we were kind of positioned before COVID. But now especially coming out of COVID, with a lot of these fortune 1000 companies seeing that they can be a little more innovative and fluid and how they do things coming to us as a natural fit.

Because as I'm sure everyone listening to this, as well aware, you know, people who fall under this talent pool are really that last population of untapped workforce. So they're seeing that we can help do that bridge, that gap be that connector, and that they're getting people who are ready to work who have high levels of skills, but the great thing about us is, too is we do everything from a very entry level position to working with a company on something that you know, requires a PhD to do. So we're well positioned and then have that a unique ability to reach out to anywhere we need to across the United States, Canada, even getting into Europe, and be able to find the organizations and the talent that is out there. Whereas in a lot of other instances, you know, these companies have wanted to do this for a long time, but they had no idea how to find the talent.

Erica Belois-Pacer 7:34

I was gonna ask about that just in terms of the different types of jobs that you're connecting people with. So it sounds like there's a variety in terms of actual specific jobs, would you mind giving us kind of an idea of, you know, a variety of jobs that you've connected people with? Yeah, I mean, there's, you know, our one of our biggest kind of tenants is we don't believe there's good jobs for people with disabilities, we believe every jobs a good job for someone with a disability. So if you were to look on source abled calm right now, you'd find everything from box making positions, and that's a position the company actually requires two data scientists. Geez, try to think what else? document processors.

Jason Weppelman 8:20

You know, we we basically work with a company holistically so that we're going and looking at every opportunity they have, we're not just looking to segmented off into one or two roles.

Erica Belois-Pacer 8:31

Yeah, I would agree. And I I like what you said about just in terms of, you know, a right job or a job fit. IPF, it really depends on each individual person, whether you have a disability or you don't. So I think that's a great way of looking into it. Um, so, in addition to, you know, working with sounds like a number of businesses, you know, what is the process in terms of working with maybe provider agencies or individuals to, you know, get them started in terms of applications, maybe, or finding the right fit? Yeah.

Jason Weppelman 9:11

So let me answer the business part first, they're really quick, because one of the things I always like to draw a distinction with us too, is that, you know, there there are obviously job boards out there that feature positions, you know, that for companies looking who are at least interested in hiring people with disabilities, autism, neuro diversities, but what I really love about what we do is we spend months with anyone who ends up working with us. And the companies are actually contracting with us to go and do this. So a provider a job seeker never pays, you know, a fee for using us. But what's great is we spend that time to get to know about the company look at their job descriptions. You know, see, is this a nice hat is this a must to have, what is your application interview process your culture, because we want to work with companies who are you looking to they see this talent and they value it, we're not necessarily

looking to work with people who just want to check a box. So we spend a lot of time upfront. So anytime you see a position on source able, you're seeing something with a company who's kind of gone through that education training and vetting process. As for working with providers, job seekers, it's really as simple as going on to source abled, if your support provider, you can sign up as a support provider. And then instead of having to actively come and search for jobs with us, anytime, there's a position that you could set it up to let me know, for the entire United States, or let me know, just for whatever state I'm in however you like, that gets sent directly to you. And that's the great thing is, you know, as opposed to some of the other big job search engines where you might get, you know, 10 notifications in a day. And you know, it doesn't even have a role, it's just kind of spamming you, we're only sending out emails, if you're you know, getting it's an actual position, that could be a great fit for somebody and not just maybe for someone on your caseload, but someone in your circle, because we know only about 10 to 15% of people receive services. So the other element, the per job seekers is much the same, they can go and sign up and source abled, they can set up the alerts to how they want them. But one of the really cool things that I love about source able to is that it is made up largely by people like me who have direct industry experience. So if say a job seeker was to go in independently, they don't have supports, but they might need some, then there's always someone like me on the back end, who's able to talk with them, help them out, whether it be with the application or the interview, or once they start, you know, going somewhere, if they just need someone to talk to, and they don't have formal supports, we can be that. But we always defer to a provider if they are receiving support. So, you know, if you were support provider, letter number eight over here, and you provide job coaching services, and one of your peoples getting placed, then you get to go and provide those services. So it's really the system as a whole was built out with all of kind of those gaps. We see a lot of times and the struggles of people interviewing and applying to make sure that we made it as easy and streamlined as possible. But also that there's always going to be someone to talk to you have a support you it's not like going into a black hole, like with other job search engines where you apply, just cross your fingers. There's always someone like me here who's people can reach out and talk to. Okay, no, that's that.

Erica Belois-Pacer 12:22

Yeah, I was gonna ask that question. So that makes sense. Now, if you're, let's say, a provider agency, or an individual who is looking and getting those alerts, is there a fee or a cost to it?

Jason Weppelman 12:36

No, we never charge any support provider, job seeker, any other kind of agency, a dime for what we do, this all comes straight from the businesses are paying us. And that's a big reason why we see success with our corporate partners as well as because they're paying us a fee, I was gonna say they have a stake in it as well, which exists Exactly. And I think that's one of the big things just kind of industry wide, we have to shift more of a mentality from you know, throwing the word free out there all the time, to where once businesses have skin in the game, and they expect that and then that kind of trickles down from the corporate level all the way up to the operation centers. And plus just coming in and with how we created source abled, and having people from the industry, you know, we know that support providers are going to, you

know, have budgets to afford anything extra like that, let alone, let alone job seekers. So we wanted to build a model not not, not just because you couldn't go to that side of the world for funding. And nor do we get funding from vocational rehab or anything like that. We wanted to build a model where the corporations, you know, saw the value in this and it's put skin in the game. So it was being treated as a business solution. It wasn't being treated as that charitable act or something that looked you know, as a nice kind of thing you can put on some masthead, but really didn't have any infrastructure to it.

Erica Belois-Pacer 13:52

Right or set. You know, it's the right thing to do.

Jason Weppelman 13:54

Yeah.

Erica Belois-Pacer 13:58

Nope, I think that's great. No, that is really interesting. I know, you mentioned that. I think you said 10%. But I was gonna ask, you know, do you see what's the percentage of people that you, you know, placed with jobs that do receive some sort of supported employment, whether it's through VR, or maybe through developmental disability agency within the state? I was curious what the percentage of people that actually maybe do have an employment support professional is that you work with?

Jason Weppelman 14:29

you know,

Unfortunately, I don't really have that number available. But, you know, I know we get a fair amount of independent job seekers and people who are working through organizations because the way we're looking to outwardly promote is you know, I start off reaching out to providers all in I mean, it can be an advocacy group, university, anything, anyone who has any kind of touch points with people with disabilities because we're really big on you know, we we've basically gotten to the point where we have the companies coming to us, we're not even necessarily worried about that. We're doing massive outreach now trying to get, you know, the provider world connected, and not even just the provider. But once we offer ways to work with people where it's not just, you know, hey, sign up for source abled, and that's it, we want to help you if we can help with any trainings, or if we can, you know, speak to job seekers, you know, just a different voice help. So we want to work with people at any given way we can, because, you know, we want to, obviously help any provider with people directly on their caseload for sure. But with knowing so few people get services, but we're really trying to do is kind of spread the word throughout the community at large, because so few people do get services. And quite frankly, I think the game has changed, where now people can with with disabilities, autism, and neurodiversity is can understand these companies, and there are a lot of them see you as talent and want to bring you on board and want to hire you. But you know, so many people fall off the cliff at 22, when they get out of high school, or even when they graduate college, and they just have no way of hearing about this things. So that's what we're

really trying to promote out there. And so we see a mixed bag to your original question. But we're really trying to promote this outwardly to the community at large, because we, we feel we've really kind of crossed a big threshold of getting the companies interested now it's about getting the talent in alignment. And as I'm sure you know, especially within the United States, we have such a fractured system, it's very hard to communicate to a lot of people all at once.

Erica Belois-Pacer 16:30

Yeah, not everybody communicates with each other, which can make it very challenging with funding and a variety of things. So yeah, just out of curiosity, how many states are you currently? And I know, you mentioned that you're also doing stuff in Canada. And I think you said Europe as well. Are you in pretty much every state within our country?

Jason Weppelman 16:48

Yeah, I mean, we we are in a ton right now. I want to say we are doing business, and have open positions in at least 20 states at the moment. But I could be wrong with that. But they're cities we're doing or states we're doing in multiple cities. But you know, part of this too is we're while we're having a lot of success and seeing a lot of companies coming to us. It's really just the tip of the iceberg. I know from when I started officially with random and source abled in around Thanksgiving last year, you know, cities where I saw two or three positions, we now have the team positions. And it's going every week, I see new states that were in I think just just this week alone, I saw us doing work in Texas, we weren't there before Oklahoma. So yeah, it's growing week by week that we're doing it. So that's why we're putting you know, kind of the full court press on doing outreach and getting out to as much talented providers as we can to let them know the service.

Erica Belois-Pacer 17:46

No, that's great. Wow. So it sounds like you are growing pretty quickly as well. Is that true?

Jason Weppelman 17:53

Yeah. I mean, both just in terms of I always like to say we never intend for source able to even be a completed project, right. So even in how a provider can you source abled, it can be used as more than just a place to go and look for positions, it can be modified into a tracking tool. We're doing work with Stanford and Rutgers University where they were doing both different things at each university. Some is doing direct work with students, some is helping build curriculum, some is doing analytic stuff. So we're we're really trying to be kind of that, as I said before, with how our system is kind of all spread out and fractured, we're doing our best to kind of maybe be a unifying force and kind of like a one stop shop for job seekers support agencies, all of that's where we can get everyone kind of rowing in the same direction. And that's going to help just grow more and more on the business side of things where, as they see us having success with other companies, obviously, they want to come and get in on that too. So the more and more we can work together, the more and more you know, if we can go into a city and say, Hey, you know, do your company, we have, you know, 500 providers in this area who are signed up with us, and they all represent hundreds of job seekers. So, yeah, it's a really great time. It's, it's growing incredibly, and you know, it's just, it's fun doing all this outreach

and talking to people about this, and just kind of showing how I think we're really on the precipice of changing, you know, things we've been wanting to do for decades. I think over the next decade, we might be able to do just as much as we've done in the past five.

Erica Belois-Pacer 19:28

I sure hope so. Because we definitely need to, you know, move forward with employment opportunities for people with disabilities. So, I feel like I've learned a lot about what source abled is doing. So thank you. Um, so in terms of being a sponsor with our conference, I know that you'll have some folks attending which is great. And I know you mentioned a couple places that like brokers, we actually have a number of speakers that work at ruckers. So that's kind of cool. You may I actually know them when you hop on. But additionally, I know that you'll have some opportunities for our participants to check out what you're doing, there will be a tile, kind of like Netflix on the platform where you can click on it, and get lots of information about a source abled. So I think it will be a great opportunity to kind of get the word out to not only people with disabilities that may be attending, but also for, you know, different colleges, different provider agencies and state entities that will be there as well.

Jason Weppelman 20:35

Yeah, no, we're definitely excited about it, it's, and selfishly on my part, it's always nice when I can speak to a large amount of people at a time as opposed to one organization at a time. As much as I love it, I'll take I'll take it in the big groups, but no, you guys have done, you know, since I got in this field, 10 years ago, you've, you've been a huge proponent of you know, getting people out there and getting towards those independent lives, and being able to be a part of the conference, you know, is an honor and to talk to as many people and get them excited, you know, because really, the the landscape is changing for these these things, you know, that now that with this exclusive platform and source able calm, you know, we feel there's just gonna be even all the way going to people and entering transition, you know, they're, they're gonna get to understand now that I don't have to just go and sign up and get enrolled in benefits, I can go and have a career I can have it in, I don't have to just have one or two companies who are disability friendly, I can have this whole plethora of Fortune 1000 companies who see me as talent and value me. So, you know, I always go back to when I started up my employment program here in Cleveland, and it always just really bothered me seeing a lot of, you know, guys in their late 40s, or 50s. And, you know, they were just working at the time, we had a sheltered workshop, and I closed it down pretty shortly after I came to the company. And it always just really bothered me that the I know, those guys could have gone on and had independent lives that they had just had more opportunity, especially if they had resources like this. So working together, you know, working with an organization like yours, I think, you know, the sky is really the limit on what we can do and how we can help each other out to get the best results.

Erica Belois-Pacer 22:13

And I would agree on all the things you just said. So my previous role is actually working with transition age, youth and with people that were on staff at different high schools in places to hopefully increase outcomes for students exiting High School for exactly all the same things

that you just said. So thank you so much for joining us, Jason. On I'll let you if there's any last parting words you'd like to mention feel free, but I just wanted to remind our listeners that you can check out source abled right on that platform that we'll be using for the conference starting June 14. And I'm sure Jason, will you be one of the people participating? Yeah, definitely. Good. So I was gonna say you might actually get to talk to Jason in person because we do have those options available as well. So thanks for joining us today. And Jason, do you have any parting words before we hop off?

Jason Weppelman 23:11

Yeah, you know, I would just say my email is Jay w e p p as in paul@rangam.com. Feel free if anyone ever has any questions. Again, part of the reason we built the system is that you always have someone to speak with so I always love talking to anybody if they have any questions but you know also just check out source abled comm if you're a provider, it shows how you can register right there in the middle of the page. It's a tour you know, basically just putting in some basic information you're all set up. And if your job seeker you have questions again, always here to to help with anything and walk people through the process or just kind of explain our vision and what we're trying to do even more but I really thank you for having me on today and appreciate the time.

Erica Belois-Pacer 23:53

Thank you. Have a great day, everyone.

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