

APSE Conversations: Jason with Source Abled

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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

Welcome, APSE listeners! We are excited to have another person with us today. Over the next few weeks, we'll be highlighting our keynote presenters and our sponsors for the National Conference that will be taking place in Denver, Colorado, the week of June 13. So we're very excited. Currently, we are almost at capacity for our registration for the in person conference. But we do have the opportunity for people to purchase a virtual pass. With the virtual pass, they'll be able to get six sessions and access to our keynotes and our awards ceremony. So if you didn't get on board to go in person, there's always opportunities to join us other ways as well. So today, I have Jason with me from Source Abled. And Jason actually was with us last year as well with our virtual conference. And some of you may remember him because I think he did a really great job, attending different sessions providing information on what they do, and just highlighting their platform. So I really wanted him to come today and talk a little bit about it again. So Jerry is not joining us today. But Jason is here. And do you mind introducing yourself and giving a little bit of background?

Jason Weppelman

No, not at all. And well, I mean, first off, I wanted to thank you, Erica for that, but also for the great job you guys did with the virtual conference last year. You know, those are always really challenging to pull off. But I told a lot of people epsy did an amazing job with it and allowing people to actually network where a lot of conferences didn't do that. So thank you for all the amazing work you guys did last year with that.

Erica Belois-Pacer

It was fun, so I appreciate it.

Jason Weppelman

No, but yeah, so I'm Jason Weppelman, the client program manager over here at Rangam Source Abled. My background is I would like to tell people, I kind of stumbled into the world of employment for people with disabilities, autism, neuro divergence about a decade ago. Prior to that, I used to be president, CEO of Better Business Bureau, I was head of customer service for a

large bank, I even worked in radio for five years. So I always had to do things that I was really passionate about or thought could help people are helping the community. And about a decade ago, here in Cleveland, where I live, there was a provider who had a day program a residential program, and wanted to get into community employment, but they wanted someone who had a business background to kind of come and create that program. So it would be treated as a business solution and not a charitable act and kind of came into it, you know, learned everything I had to learn and fell in love with it and started working our first couple cases. And within about a year and a half, two years, we were doing 80 to 100 cases, had a lot of success with that also kind of saw how job development was done and thought we could maybe do it a little bit better. So helped build collaboratives to get organizations to work together had a lot of success in that element to where we kind of turn Northeast Ohio from one of the worst places in the country for these folks to find work to really kind of moving up the ladder pretty quick. And then that was basically my first five years in the field. And then about five years ago, I started doing this work nationally. So now I kind of do the opposite of localized job development, where I work with Fortune 1000 companies, building initiatives with them to help them recruit and hire talent with disabilities, autism and neuro divergence, create holistic programs that is just part of who they are and what they do in wanting to hire this talent. Not a one off program, not a hey, we've heard this particular group is good at this. So we're only going to Hiram is that really making it so that they see and value this as a business solution. But then taking that extra step to connect them to all the local organizations, service providers, advocacy groups, colleges, universities, going that extra mile, because one of the things we really saw is that, you know, it's one thing to get companies trained and excited about doing all this but if you don't help them actually connect to the population, then the company his efforts are really going to kind of stall because they don't necessarily know where to go to find that talent.

Erica Belois-Pacer

Thanks, Jason. So I guess you somewhat covered what source evil does. But you know, I just say that you have a database to connect people is definitely not enough. So do you mind kind of explaining what it looks like? For someone that might be looking to connect with an employer, whether it is maybe a job developer, or an employment provider or a person who has a disability that is looking as on their own?

Jason Weppelman

Yeah, definitely. There's so many different layers to it. And we basically built SourceAble from the standpoint of when we did this work as local job developers, and then even as we did this work nationally, what were all those gaps and pitfalls? And how can we fill those in, and it works on different fronts. So first off is sourceabled.com. The platform itself, the way I like to describe it in a lot of different cases is to think of it as the indeed, or LinkedIn or what have you. But think of it as for people with disabilities, autism, neuro divergence, but just as importantly, for you that support system out there that's helping them, you're able to actually go onto that platform and sign up as a support provider. And now those positions are sent directly to you. So you don't have to constantly go back and check the website to see if there's new opportunities. But also, one of the big things that we did is we built this system out so that instead of going

out and getting redirected to a company website and having to fill out an hour long application and an hour long personality test, you're now going and doing an application, that's a few button clicks. There are no personality tests. The one the big way that we're not like indeed or monster is that we're set up and made by people like me who have worked, lived and breathed in this field who have disabilities ourselves, just as I do. We understand how the application in the interview is often the biggest barrier for these folks to find work. So let's say you are a job developer, and you're working with John, and John maybe won't present well on paper, every position we have actually comes with an email link where people can reach out and directly speak to someone so you don't go into that black hole when you're applying. So you can have a conversation about someone or John can have a conversation with someone without just you know, crossing their fingers and hoping someone looks at them. We wanted to make that ease of access and those direct point of contacts where people can, you know, get past that big barrier right there, too. We've also made it where again, we want to be very diverse in our offerings of positions that we have, you'll find everything on source abled from making boxes to positions where you need a degree and years of experience, and you can make six figures. So you know, we're very proud of kind of creating the system that makes an ease of use have points of contact so people don't fall between the cracks. And again, you're speaking to people who aren't just in the recruiting or staffing industry, but people who have actually lived and breathed this type of work.

Erica Belois-Pacer

Oh, thanks. I know you mentioned just the variety of employment options that you have. Do you mind giving us just a few ideas of different companies that you currently work with?

Yeah, we currently work with Johnson and Johnson with Cargill. Schneider Electric. Let's see here. Geez, I'm trying to think there's some that we're not allowed to say their name just because of the work we do. But those are a handful a handful of ones that I know that we're able to divulge what we do. One of the cool things I do like to point out though, too, is that even when like a lot of times we're in a market and we have boots on the ground positions, but at any given time, we have dozens of roles that are permanent work from home roles, too. So even as we work with a different area, like I was just in Florida last week for the MC conference and talking to different providers. I'm able to sit there and say, you know, while we do have jobs here in Tampa, and Jacksonville, you know, there's your job seekers could be working for a company out of California. So just an idea that, you know, we work with about 30 or so fortune 1000 companies right now, and that list is ever expanding.

I was curious if you are just in the United States?

Jason Weppelman

Yeah, no, we're actually ever expanding. We are all over the globe, we've literally just expanded our team into the UK, and are doing work over there. And it's growing exponentially over there. But definitely all over the world right now. And one of the beauties of what we're doing and how we have this system even set up is it's built around expansion and constant notification to

people as we grow. So people can sign up at any given moment and be alerted of opportunities. Even if we're not in your area right now. It doesn't mean we literally won't be in a week or two.

Erica Belois-Pacer

Thanks. Another question that I frequently ask people, is there a cost. So if maybe a job developer or an employment support professional, or a person that is looking to get a job who has a disability is there a cost to them when they get onto the platform and get their information in there?

Jason Weppelman

No, we're 100% funded by the companies we work for, it's actually one of the biggest things we want to distress and working with our corporate partners, you know, going to them and approaching them as a workforce solution company, which is what we are and where these companies do about 30% of their hiring routinely, you know, we're able to go to them and meet them, where they're used to spending significant amount of money to find talent through those traditional talent pools. But now we get to highlight this population as a legitimate business solution as a legitimate talent pool. And now, they're investing financially in that. So that's something that we're very proud of is that the company is doing that so that the provider, the college, the job seeker themselves, never have to do so. And one really great benefit of that, too, is that, let's say you are a job seeker, who doesn't happen to have any kind of formal supports that you go through, if you were to come to us, because we're getting that funding from the companies. And because my team is made up of people like me who have worked in the industry, we can help you and support you all the way from the application to the interview to once you're actually working on site, if you need some kind of supports or guidance, we can serve as that and be able to do that. And even if you are someone with supports, we want you to you know, use the supports that you have and have that job coaching or whatever it may be. But if you hit a point where you have to walk away from that, or you hit the 90 day retention mark that you know vocational rehab serves and all that good stuff. You know, we're someone who can be there long term to help. We train our companies extensively on natural supports. But we always know that sometimes people need that extra person to come to understands their world, we can be a person that they can come to afterwards, but no, never charged them at all.

Erica Belois-Pacer

Thank you. Thanks so much for clarifying that. So one other question I have for you is, why are you sponsoring the National APSE Conference this year?

Jason Weppelman

Yeah, you know, I've been a member of APSE for ever since I've gotten into the fields over a decade. Now, I'm a very big fan of it. Very big fan of employment, obviously. And we want to do everything we can to support the organization. But, you know, obviously to we want to get our name out there where we're probably a little different than a lot of the attendees even who come to the APSE conferences, where we are kind of on the other end of things where a lot of the you know, the attendees are kind of talking about how do we connect to businesses? And

how do we get people hired, and we attend the event kind of saying, hey, at any given moment, we have hundreds of positions we're trying to fill. So you know, we're really out there looking to kind of let people know that these companies want to hire and we have a platform, and we have, you know, engagement system set up to get your people hired and let them know. And also, hopefully get the word out there too, that, you know, we know, about 80% of people don't receive any kind of formalized services. So we want to build relationships with the attendees beyond just the platform. We want to be someone that you can come to and we can collaborate and, you know, whether it be on webinars or just forming some best practices, things are, Hey, you want to build a collaboration in your area, we can help you with that. We want to do things that we can all start working together and rowing in the same direction because, you know, state to state you know, even in the bigger states, region by region, this work can often be done differently and sometimes we even look at each other as competition you know, when it really does more harm than good. So, you know, we do this to help promote awareness of who we are and what we're trying to do, but also let people know there's a resource you can come to whether you're a job seeker are a provider a business? And if we don't have the answer, we can point you in the right direction. But also just to let people know that there's a place you can go if you're a job seeker or a provider, and there's jobs just waiting to be filled, and they will be filled by talent with disabilities, autism, neuro divergence that it's not a hey, we're open to it. It's it's a commitment that the company has made.

Erica Belois-Pacer

Thank you. So I know that at the beginning, you mentioned a little bit about where people can find information. I think you mentioned the website. So I was curious, you know, if our listeners want more information, and they're not attending the conference, how can they reach you? And you know, what else would you suggest in terms of getting more information about Source Abled?

Jason Weppelman

Yeah, well, obviously, the website, source abled.com. And that's S o, u. R. g cheese board when I tried to spell it out, it's hard to do. sourceabled.com Sorry about that.

Erica Belois-Pacer

You're fine.

Jason Weppelman

And then you could you could always reach out to me to on my email, I always like to say I'm more than happy to talk to anybody anytime, and help in any capacity. I can. And that's J WEPP. J. WEPP. At Rangam, r a n g a m.com. And yeah, happy to have a conversation, whether you're a job seeker, whether you're a parent, a provider of VR, agency, business, whatever, you may be happy to kind of be a one stop connection for you to answer any questions you have and point you in the right direction if I don't have the answers, but yeah, we're just like I said, trying to bring everyone together and, you know, be a place where people can go and you know, if your job developer or job seeker instead of having to pound the pavement for 30 hours or whatever, that, hey, here's the first step. You know, maybe there'll be a great fit for you, maybe, maybe

not, but eventually there'll be things that are great opportunities for careers, just sitting there waiting for you.

Erica Belois-Pacer

Thank you. So before we hop off today, Jason, I did want to ask you, and I always do with my guests. Is there a fun fact that you would be willing to share about yourself?

Jason Weppelman

Um, let's see, when I was a kid, I was in the semifinalist and then Nintendo World Championships.

Erica Belois-Pacer

That is super cool.

Jason Weppelman

Just I've mentioned it a little before, but my dream job growing up was working in radio, and I worked in sports talk radio here in Cleveland for five years when I first got out of school. And love doing that. It's it's actually one of the things I always used to work in, when I was running my program. And I would do intakes with folks, I would say, you know, hey, you know, I, it's okay, if you don't know what necessarily what you want to do. That was my dream job. And somehow I ended up working with people with disabilities for a living and loving that. So, you know, it's, it all kind of ties together. But yeah, so those are, those are a couple things that come to mind.

Erica Belois-Pacer

Yeah, that's super fun. So quick question. Did you say Nintendo World Champion national champion?

Jason Weppelman

World World Championships? Yeah, back in? Geez, I want to say Brown 8889, something like that. Maybe 90.

Erica Belois-Pacer

And what did that entail?

Jason Weppelman

Did you have to travel? No, they did. They did a national tour where they came around to different cities, and just did qualifiers and all that stuff. And you know, here in Cleveland, I was semi finalist for for here and everything. So didn't, yeah, if I find probably one more step here, I probably would have gotten to like Orlando or something like that. But

Erica Belois-Pacer

Well, that's pretty exciting. My kids would be impressed. So thanks for sharing. So let's see here. So I just wanted to let our listeners know that we're excited to have you at the

conference. As you mentioned, I think that you're more than willing to talk to anyone, or answer any questions. So for sure, look for Jason at the conference. And is there anything else you wanted to share before we hop off today?

Jason Weppelman

No, I think we covered it all. But yeah, just really can't, you know, hammer home enough that please don't hesitate to reach out to me I, I really mean as much as we talk about the platform in terms of, you know, obviously jobs and everything, it's really there. And I'm here to be a person that is to really talk with people and help them navigate these systems and help you know, kind of create a better world for those who are serving. So you cannot, you know, reach out to me enough or ask me too many questions. If I can help in any way I want to do that. And we just want to promote awareness. And the more we can do that we can start you know, again, reaching that there's a lot of people getting services and getting great supports and even they can use some extra help. But then there's a whole world of people who are just kind of you know, floating around round out there who may be graduated high school and don't have anyone. We want to be someone who can help those folks especially so if anyone needs anything at all, don't ever hesitate to reach out to me. I'm always here for you.

Erica Belois-Pacer

Thank you and I really appreciate you being with us today. So, I hope everyone has a great rest of their day and I hope to see many of you in, gosh, just a few weeks in Colorado.

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