



Graduate to Work E-News

University of Montana, Rural Institute Transition Projects

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Future Newsletter Topics:

- Impact of Work on SSA
- Self-Employment
- Collaborative Funding

An Introduction to Customized Employment

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Customized Employment

Customized employment involves individualizing the employment relationship to meet the needs of the job seeker and the employer. The concept was first introduced in 2001 by the US department of Labor's Office of Disability Employment Policy, as a strategy to assist Workforce centers employ people with disabilities and other substantial barriers to employment.

As people in the disability field familiarize themselves with the strategies of customized employment they recognize the similarities between customized employment and supported employment, a strategy which has been in use for people with disabilities since the early 1980's. Although both supported and customized employment share the same foundation, there are several factors which set the strategy of customized employment apart.

How Customized Employment Differs from Supported Employment

First of all, customized employment is a strategy that can be utilized for anyone who needs a different approach to employment, regardless of whether or not they experience a disability. Customized employment could be an option for anyone whose skills and abilities don't readily match what is available for job openings within a given labor market, or someone whose impact of disability inhibits them from competing against other people or against existing

job descriptions. This might include a senior citizen returning to the job market, a career woman who left the work force to take care of her children and now wants to return to work but in a different capacity than before, people with health issues that make a typical 40-hour-a-week, 9-5 job impossible, or someone with a disability.

In customized, you always begin job development from the individual job seeker's perspective rather than the labor market perspective. Your first step in customized employment is to get to know the job seeker for the purpose of developing a "blueprint," so to speak, of the job that will be custom tailored to them. In supported employment you *might* start with the individual but many times job developers are looking at available job openings first and backfilling them with people with disabilities who can perform the required tasks for that position. In customized the individual drives the job development process.

The final distinction is that due to the premise that you begin a customized job from the individual's perspective, the job developer will be negotiating a unique employment relationship based upon the parameters identified as conditions of employment for the person and the individual's contributions and meshing these with the needs of the employer, rather than looking for job openings. Most likely the negotiation of the job will be done by a representative of the job seeker rather than the job seeker him or herself.

Continued...

Resources:

ODEP - Office of Disability Employment Policy, Customized Employment Fact Sheets
www.dol.gov/odep/more.htm#fact

The Advance, Volume 15, 1, June 2005 Customized Employment - A Discussion: An interesting "Model" or the Next Generation of SE? Callahan, M. & Rogan, P.
www.apse.org

TASH Connections, Volume 28, 9/10, 2002. Customizing Employment Opportunities for People with Disabilities.
www.tash.org/publications/newsletter/previous_newsletters.htm

University of Montana's Rural Institute
<http://ruralinstitute.umt.edu/transition>

Marc Gold & Associates
www.marcgold.com

Griffin-Hammis Associates, LLC
www.griffinhammis.com

For information about how these concepts are being applied to students visit these links:

The Individualized Career Planning Model <http://ruralinstitute.umt.edu/transition/careerplanning.asp>

Customized Career Planning Articles <http://ruralinstitute.umt.edu/transition/Onesizearticles.asp>

More tools and resources for the process of Discovery <http://ruralinstitute.umt.edu/transition/Discovery.asp>

Samples of Customized Employment with Students www.myti.org

An Introduction to Customized Employment, cont.

Self-Determination

Why don't job seekers represent themselves in the employment negotiation? Many job seekers can represent themselves in applying for jobs or in interviews but if someone is in need of a customized approach, active negotiation of a position will be required in addition to making a presentation to an employer that explains customized employment. Having a representative put the issue of disability on the table may be more effective to negotiate any needed accommodations or supports than having the individual lead negotiations with the employer.

Tools to Customize a Job

Many of the tools utilized in customized employment are the same strategies used in supported employment.

Job Carving: involves taking pieces of an existing job description and forming a new job based on a portion of the original job.

Job Renegotiation: in job renegotiation, tasks and duties are carved from several different existing jobs and reassembled to form a new job.

Job Creation: involves beginning with an employer's unmet need and creating a new job for the purpose of meeting this need.

Self-employment: is another option for customized employment. An individual could own their own business and design the business in such a way to meet their own support needs as well as maximize their participation in their business.

Is the End Result of Your Job Development Efforts a Customized Job?

Just because it is a carved job or deviates from the typical job description in a company doesn't make the job customized. The tasks performed as part of the job, the parameters of performance (hours of work, method of production, accommodations to enable the person to perform the tasks), and supports provided to an individual are all negotiated based on a job developer getting to know the job seeker. That's what makes a job customized, not just carved.

Discovery as the Foundation of Customized Employment

The information which you need to know about each job seeker in order to develop a customized job for them is:

- 1) The conditions of employment, or what parameters of the employment situation are critical for them to succeed. This could include environmental features, time or location of work, supports that need to be in place, etc.
- 2) The individual's preferences and interests.
- 3) What the individual's contributions to a potential employer include (skills, experiences, personal attributes, resources...).
- 4) A list of tasks that they can perform, or could perform.
- 5) Prospective employers who might have a need for the contributions the person can bring.

Therefore, the information you need to gather is different from the information gleaned during your more traditional vocational assessments or evaluations. One alternative to these assessments is a process referred to as Discovery. Discovery is simply the process of intentionally getting to know a person. In this case this information is for the purpose of job development. To get to

know someone, it makes sense to spend time with them in environments where they are the most comfortable, that they enjoy and that are familiar to them. Interviewing people who know the job seeker well and/or gathering information from the job seeker are also useful activities. In order to negotiate job tasks and supports, it is critical to understand how an individual's disability impacts them. For example, you need to observe how they get things done, be able to explain their support needs and successful strategies to meet those needs, and recognize accessibility issues and/or the need for accommodations to be able to represent this information to an employer.



Resources:

Training and Technical Assistance for Providers hosted by the Virginia Commonwealth University Rehabilitation Research and Training Center
www.t-tap.org

NCWD - National Center on Workforce and Disability/Adult, based at the Institute for Community Inclusion, UMASS, Boston
www.onestops.info

Upcoming Trainings

- EM-GTW Teleconference #1
An overview of Customized Employment and the Customized Career Planning Model, Nov. 22, 1:00-2:30pm
- METNET: SSA, Part 1: Introduction to SSI/SSDI, and the impact of wages on Benefits and PASS, Dec. 13, 1:00-4:00pm (Missoula, Glendive, Glasgow, Miles City, Billings)

You can register for a training by emailing Ellen Condon at least five days in advance at:
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