

Fact Sheet 13: Customised employment⁴⁵

Many people with intellectual disability are unable to compete for jobs in the open labour market via the traditional advertised job vacancy process. This is because it is difficult for this group of jobseekers to match advertised job requirements.

The most successful employer engagement strategy to find jobs for people with intellectual disability in the open labour market has been via a customised employment strategy.

Customised employment is a process for individualising the employment relationship between a job seeker and an employer in ways that meet the needs of both.

It is based on a match between the strengths and interests of the job candidate with a disability, and the identified business needs of the employer.

This is a business deal.

Customised employment is based on identifying tasks that an employer needs done to effectively conduct business and matching those to the candidate's abilities and interests.

“Employers cited the value of competent disability employment professionals who helped identify operational improvements as a key reason for hiring and retaining employees with intellectual disability and multiple disabilities, in spite of the fact that their employment was contingent on significant customization of job duties and conditions of work...Continuing campaigns to ‘raise employer awareness’ will have limited effect on actual employer hiring behaviour without simultaneous improvements in connecting employers to actual applicants with intellectual disability.”⁴⁶

Customised employment starts with the development of an employment assessment based on an individual's strengths and interests of the job candidate with a disability.

Once the candidate's goals are established, one or more potential employers are identified. A proposal is presented to a prospective employer which sets out the benefit to the employer, (e.g. addressing high staff turnover, providing a solution to job task avoidance, or releasing experienced staff from performing routine tasks), and which meets the strengths and interests of the job seeker.

Participation in this process by an employer is important. A disability service provider usually develops the plan, assists the job candidate throughout the process and provides follow up services when appropriate.

Potential employers can be identified by looking for a match between the job candidate's strengths and interests and the nature of an employer's business.

A customised job is a set of tasks that differ from a standard job descriptions but are based on tasks that are found within that workplace. A customised proposal unites the

⁴⁵ Office of Disability Employment Policy, Department of Labor, USA. Customized Employment - Practical Solutions for Employment Success, June 2005.

⁴⁶ Luecking R.G. (2011). Connecting Employers With People Who Have Intellectual Disability. Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities: August 2011, Vol. 49, No. 4, pp. 261-273.

tasks that exist in a workplace and makes them available to be rearranged in a customised job description.

For example, the customised job may include only a subset of the tasks from one of the employer's job descriptions or a mix of tasks taken from several existing job descriptions. It may include new tasks that are not currently being performed but that fill a need for the employer. The process often causes the employer to think of existing tasks in a new way.

“This approach is designed to result in employment where job tasks are carved from an existing job, or created to match the skills and accommodation needs of the job seeker so that the employer's operation is helped in a specific way. Thus, the individual has a ‘customised’ job description that did not exist prior to the negotiation process, along with other negotiated conditions of work, such as productivity expectations or work schedules.”⁴⁷

Job customisation is important because people with more significant intellectual disability are rarely able to fill advertised vacancies. It is a process which requires a much deeper level of interaction between disability employment support and employers. This is employer engagement at a local, often personal, level.

⁴⁷ Luecking R.G. (2011). Connecting Employers With People Who Have Intellectual Disability. *Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities*: August 2011, Vol. 49, No. 4, pp. 261-273.