Customized Employment:

A Curriculum for Creating Community Careers

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Chapter One

Thinking Outside the Box Store:

An Introduction to Customized Employment

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Introduction: What’s customized about it?

This is the question we must answer when using the term Customized Employment (CE), because while other approaches (e.g. placement, supported employment, competitive employment) all share similarities, there are significant differences in the customized employment approach to achieving community employment.

Because CE is predicated on a “negotiation” between the job seeker (or his/her representative) and the employer, the means of getting the job differs from the traditional approach of applying, interviewing, orienting, and working. The negotiation is not just about salary and hours, the negotiation is the very process itself, often beginning with only the potential of a job but no formal position opening.

This curriculum details the most commonly used tools for achieving CE. These pages
cont
ain the details for conducting Discovery, using informational interviews, assembling
the Lists of Twenty, designing portfolios, initiating interest-based negotiations, and using
an economic development approach to circumventing the labor market. Many of these
processes are unique and proprietary, while others are commonsense approaches adapted
from supported employment. As this material is applied in the field, modifications and
adaptations to meet local conditions are required, and encouraged, because flexibility is
the root of innovation. Caution should be taken in thinking, however, that there are
shortcuts. *Customized Employment is the shortcut*; the fastest way devised so far for
assisting individuals with significant disabilities in attaining employment of choice.

Interestingly, over the past decade of introducing CE approaches, outcomes vary. In some
cases, CE results in brand new jobs with duties not previously assigned to individuals in a
comp
pany (e.g. job creation). In other cases, the CE process led to modification of existing
jobs (e.g. job carving). Sometimes CE approaches resulted in foregoing wage
employment altogether (e.g. self employment). And sometimes, CE processes
circumvented the traditional comparative hiring steps resulting in attainment of an
unmodified existing job (e.g. competitive employment/placement). Regardless, the
strategies herein represent the authors’ experiences and sometimes novel, but always
evolving, tactics.

**Setting the Stage for Change**

Approximately 30% of adults served in developmental disability programs across Canada
can expect to find meaningful employment in their communities. Changing this reality of
under and unemployment endured by people with significant disabilities, requires changes in our approach to employment services. In British Columbia, these changes are being pioneered by progressive community rehabilitation agencies, by the Ministry of Housing and Social Development, through the advocacy of the Association for Community Living, through the policy initiatives of Community Living BC, the energetic folks at Self Advocate Net, Community Futures, and others.

Many community rehabilitation agencies adopted supported employment, and lately microenterprise development, attempting to address the unemployment and underemployment rate. However, people entering day programs seldom permanently leave for real work of choice in their communities. Regardless of disability type, be it developmental, psychiatric, brain injury, sensory, or physical, no particular group of people with disabilities is flourishing in the employment arena. Despite the ever increasing funding for disability-related programs and the additional layers of enabling legislation, the overall unemployment rate remains at unacceptable levels.

The past twenty years witnessed the success of supported employment (SE) techniques, with many individuals now in community jobs. These workers were once considered too disabled for employment, but providing on-going workplace and personal supports, coupled with proper job matches and worksite training, eroded the prejudices of rehabilitation professionals and employers. Before the advent of SE, funding for community rehabilitation programs serving individuals with significant disabilities focused mainly on services in day activity centers and sheltered workshops. These programs included sheltered work settings that performed a variety of assembly and
hand-work tasks drawn from contracts with businesses. Instead of seeking jobs for people with disabilities, it was, and still is, largely believed that people with disabilities need such intensive training and support that having them remain in segregated settings surrounded by staff is the best approach to habilitation.

Today, these practices are changing. Many professionals, employers, special educators, policy makers, families, and job seekers with disabilities recognize that everyone is ready to work; everyone can work; and indeed, it is the obligation of all citizens to work and contribute to the greater community. The myth that one must be close to perfect before entering the work world is crumbling with the realization that employers accept a broad range of employees, train them to their standards, offer varying degrees of support along the way, and create options for employees who generate profits thereby creating money for wages.

**Exercise: Write down your first 3 jobs. Pair up with another classroom participant.**

**Discuss these questions:** Did you answer a want-ad to find/get the job? What was the benefit you brought to the employer? Did you receive any informal or formal training? Describe the supervision you received. What did you learn from your employer, co-workers and the work experience in general? Would you hire your younger self today if you were that employer? Discuss.

**The Labor Market**

People with disabilities and job developers face the challenges of the labor market daily.
Competitive employment approaches to choosing, getting, and keeping a job, while generally accepted, are largely ineffective and ill advised for people with complex disabilities. Common employment readiness programs still emphasize perfecting one’s public behavior, grooming and hygiene improvement, development of resumes and interview skills, and other preparatory steps. And while these approaches work sometimes for some job seekers, they largely fail people with disabilities. Supported employment best-practices sought to alleviate the most challenging aspects of the competitive job market by introducing person-centered planning strategies; by assuming that everyone can work and that the concept of work readiness ignores the work world’s broad acceptance of a range of worksite behaviors and skills; by providing for worksite coaching and training; by emphasizing the particular qualities and talents of each job seeker and individualizing the employment process; and by seeking a match between the worker’s desires and the employer’s needs.

However, most employment specialists still rely on traditional methods of identifying employment opportunities. These strategies include searching out openings in the want-ads of local newspapers, networking with Human Resource managers, attending Chamber of Commerce events, and sitting on local job development boards where members share job leads. Regardless, the Labor Market rejects most employment candidates with disabilities. Even during the last economic boom period, the employment rate stood still for people with disabilities. The so-called Labor Market has almost no impact on the employment rate of people with significant disabilities. Much of the disability service system isolates people from the social and economic life of communities; erects buildings
and programs that reinforce the idea that people with disabilities are doing fine; and
fosters stereotypes through charitable events, as well as segregated recreation programs,
that makes people the objects of pity. The Labor Market is pliable and accessible, and
good job development techniques reduce the stigma induced by the on-going clienthood
of people with disabilities.

A note on terminology: the authors are using the terms job developer and employment
specialist interchangeably for the reader’s convenience. However, in practice we find that
having job developers responsible only for the negotiation of jobs sometimes leads to
problems of consistency when responsibility for worksite training is transferred to the
employment specialist. Having an employment specialist take the lead on Discovery, job
match, placement, and worksite support improves consistency for all stakeholders and
reduces problems that can contribute to job loss.

**Big Sign Syndrome**

Customized Employment is meant to be a truly individualized approach to creating
opportunity: opportunity for both the worker, who develops a career over time, and for
the employer, who profits from the contributions of the worker. When job searches are
individualized, the focus narrows on enhancing and capitalizing on the personal genius of
the job seeker. As such, the need to seek out existing job descriptions fades and job
creation rises to the forefront of employment specialist duties. Job creation demands
creativity and strong negotiation skills, hence the term Customized Employment. Because
CE circumvents traditional hiring systems, it is best to seek out the myriad small
businesses where formal hiring practices, job descriptions, and layers of bureaucracy are scarce, and bottom-line decision-making by the owner or manager is rapid and honest.

Small business in Canada creates more jobs than big industry, and according to the Canadian Government, 98% of these businesses employ less than 100 employees, with the vast majority having significantly fewer than 100 employees. This means the employment candidate and employment specialist have fewer barriers to overcome when seeking to speak directly to the hiring decision maker. The western provinces lead in the establishment of small companies, while self-employment nationwide is the fastest growing career option for Canadians aged 15 to 24, and from 55 and older. Neighborhood businesses, often hidden from view, with narrow niches, are prime targets for job seekers with disabilities.

**Big Business Attraction**

Job developers celebrate the accomplishment of finding jobs in large, prestigious corporations. Those who work with the big companies find that success means multiple placements once a relationship is nurtured with the Vice President for Human Resources. It is true that these companies have good jobs for people. It also means significant time and effort getting past the gatekeepers, competing with 100 other applicants for a job, and it also means that even after a job is secured changes in managers, something very common in big business, can bring a change in corporate culture on the local level that results in folks with significant disabilities losing their jobs or receiving reduced hours and opportunities. Still, the seductiveness of landing a dozen jobs scattered throughout a
factory, or more likely a retail outlet, with just one major sales call is too hard for most to resist. And having a few big, corporate references on an employment specialist’s vita is a quick means of personal career advancement.

Experience shows that working with big companies yields significant opportunities for people with disabilities. In the early 1990s in Colorado, co-author Cary Griffin and our team at the Center for Technical Assistance and Training (CTAT), along with the state rehabilitation agency, and the U.S. Department of Labor, established the prototype for what would become the Business Leadership Network (BLN). At their monthly meetings, this group of employers was actively involved in meeting job seekers, using their personal and professional networks, and creating employment throughout their professional and social networks. With Dave Hammis taking the lead on a daily basis, these members of the BLN, many from very large corporations, helped find work for about 50 people with significant disabilities in one year. Interestingly, the small business members were just as active as the others, but the complications in creating employment were significantly reduced. Sometimes in seeking the status of a corporate account, employment specialists may be creating more work than necessary.

Looking for jobs in big companies makes sense. Cultivating relationships with HR people is one important aspect of identifying opportunities for employment that often results in long-term employment. But, it is just one part of the job development equation.

Driving through the commercial district in almost any community reveals many of the
same box stores. The home improvement company, the department store, the grocery warehouse, the discount store, the fast food chains are all there. And while these companies are happy to employ people with disabilities in entry-level positions, they can also be the toughest to customize with. Larger enterprises have standardized approaches; HR people and attorneys develop their job descriptions at a distant corporate headquarters; and when they advertise positions available, dozens of applicants converge for the same job opportunity. The competitiveness of this job market, the slothful movement of the corporate office in approving a local job modification that accommodates an applicant with a disability, and the dead-end nature of common part-time positions must be a consideration for job seekers and employment specialists alike.

Also, many of these box store giants are largely retail in nature. These outfits have simplified the process of selling so much that the complexity and skill has been laundered out, leaving a shell of a job for entry-level workers who unpack boxes, stock shelves, and perhaps direct customers to certain sections of the store. Without complexity wages stay low, there is little growth in career-advancing skills, and there is high turnover of co-workers resulting in weak natural job site support.

In a recent job development seminar, one of the authors was reminded by dozens of employment specialists working in a community of 6 million people on the West Coast of the U.S. that HR staff complain regularly that human services agency staff are continually knocking on their doors, looking for jobs. These developers suffer from Big Sign Syndrome. That is, they drive the town’s commercial area, pulling into every
corporate chain store, seeking jobs-in-a-box; neatly packaged through a routine application and interview process, sealed with a written job description. Over the course of the year, every rehabilitation agency, school, and other job-seeking agencies visit each store numerous times. Of course, the small businesses, many hidden from view and requiring a networking effort to crack open, remain unsolicited even though they often have no set application method, they hire based on word-of-mouth, and written job descriptions are a rarity.

**The Small Business Imperative**

Getting out of the box store may be the most obvious fix for Big Sign Syndrome. But, getting into the back room at a small company requires a social/work network and negotiation skills. Those are easy enough to develop of course, and involve at least a few of these items:

1. Using the agency Board of Directors member to get a lunch or an informational interview with small business owners they know and who might have employment opportunities related to the interests of a job seeker;
2. Joining a Service Club (the Lions, Rotary, the Chamber) and getting to know the owners and managers of local business and industry;
3. Recording the key relationships of others in the agency to identify staff family and friends who own or work for local businesses, and who can provide an in for the job seeker and employment specialist;
4. Accumulating the same relationship information using families and consumers to identify in which local companies they spend their money for goods and services, and what family members either own businesses themselves or can serve as the entrée into businesses they frequent or work for;

5. Identifying the suppliers of the many goods and services the rehabilitation agency buys and enlisting them as employers or as advocates connecting to other potential employers in their networks.

Having identified smaller employers who may fit the employment needs of specific consumers is just one step in thinking outside the box store though. Because many small businesses are under-capitalized and surviving on limited profit margins, a job creation approach is sometimes required to attract employers. Breaking the cycle of dead-end employment for people with disabilities mandates a creative re-thinking of positions and opportunities. The typical work reality for people with the most significant disabilities is part-time, minimum wage jobs. One successful approach the authors used for years now is Resource Ownership, discussed in more detail later. This approach recognizes that a small business might sell more goods, better satisfy customers, or increase market share by adding a person with particular talents or technology. For instance, an office products and services shop owner we worked with overheard customers complaining that they could not get color copies anywhere in the small town. The owner simply could not afford a new copier. But, a young man at the sheltered workshop, known for his lifelong devotion to making copies with almost every dime he earned, through a customized employment project and other funding dollars, was able to purchase the machine and
create a new position within the company, making copies and performing other related
tasks. This mutually beneficial approach helped a local entrepreneur and created a career
opportunity based on an individual’s work skills, his commonly performed tasks, and his
interests. Furthermore, happy customers mean more business, which means higher
profits.

In this case, the color copy machine is the same lever that a college degree or a carpentry
certificate represents for other job seekers. Having exploitable resources, whether it be a
specific set of valued skills or a color copy machine that boosts customer satisfaction at
the local copy shop, is critical to creating jobs. Resource Ownership is simply the concept
of acquiring materials, equipment, or skills that an employer uses to make a profit. For
instance, many people spend $50,000 or more on a college degree, and that degree is a
symbol of exploitable resources. Employers know they can profit from a graduate’s
knowledge so people with degrees get hired and earn substantially higher wages than
those without. Concretely stated, the graduate gives the employer that degree in trade for
a salary. The same occurs when a truck driver who owns a tractor-trailer applies for a job.
Without the truck, the individual faces under-employment in a lower paying trucking job
where employer is forced to provide the equipment. People need exploitable resources to
secure good jobs, and by putting the means of production in the hands of people with
disabilities, they become more employable, and less susceptible to lay-offs.

Large companies, of course, can afford the equipment they need, and using this means of
job creation in big companies ends in a bureaucratic nightmare. Small business is the
preferred place for Resource Ownership because the employment specialist and job seeker are likely dealing with the owner or manager, and there are few, if any, layers of approval to navigate. A small business owner can also see immediate results in the bottom-line by adding valuable products or services, and employers tell us that they enjoy creating jobs for people. Giving back to the community by employing one’s neighbors is one of the rewards of owning a business.

** CE: The Next Technology**

Supported Employment has produced outstanding results, but these outcomes recently plateaued, leaving individuals with the most complex disabilities outside the work arena. The lessons learned from SE are important and include:

- Individuals can and want to work;
- Individuals can learn and grow through experience in paid employment;
- Support in job development and worksite training stabilizes employment;
- Individuals with real work report higher quality of life and greater economic participation in their communities.

The next iteration of employment strategy, CE, builds on these lessons and augments the technology with an emphasis on:

- Creative person-centered evaluation of the job seeker’s skills, talents and interests;
- A focus on non-comparative means for getting employment;
- The use of an economic development strategy to proactively create employment
opportunities;

A focus on smaller, more person-friendly businesses as the focus of job development efforts;

Engaging successful employers in giving career advice and guidance during the career planning process;

Recognizing that there are unlimited ways to make a living;

Understanding that there is an ecological fit for everyone in our diverse communities, no matter how geographically isolated or small, no matter how large and cosmopolitan.

CE relies on the same guiding values base as SE which include:

Zero Exclusion

All people, regardless of complexity or type of disability, have the right to live, work, and recreate in the integrated settings of their chosen community.

Partial Participation

All people have skills or partial skills they perform and enjoy using. It is our job to see that this "spark" of personal genius is utilized to begin the development of real work and/or civic involvement.

Zero Instructional Inference

For many people with disabilities, the best place to learn is in environments where their skills will be utilized. Therefore, the use of developmental continuum and earning the right to a job or a social activity is eliminated based upon the solid evidence that
preparatory training has little validity. Segregated settings are not necessary, and are indeed a detriment to teaching and learning.

Mutuality
We must at all times attribute thinking and feeling to all people regardless of level or type of disability. Services should not be proposed that individuals with disabilities or anyone else find undesirable or irrelevant.

Interdependence
All people rely upon a social network that buoys them in daily life and through times of personal crisis. People with disabilities typically have limited social networks and few friends. The opportunity to participate and exhibit competence in a variety of settings with non-disabled citizens is critical to the establishment of such relationships.

Exercise: Pair up. Discuss ways in which you and your agency promote and demonstrate affiliation with these core values. Use concrete examples of how alignment with these values is demonstrated, not simply talked about (e.g. there’s a budget line for self-advocacy investment; the Board Chair employs people with disabilities in her company; you personally coach an integrated intramural sports team). Report back to the class on current best practices and what you and your agency need to do to better align with and demonstrate these values.

CE Critical Concerns
Customized Employment (CE) has been adopted in communities across the nation and numerous questions and concerns are being raised as this evolving employment strategy expands.

The principal hallmarks and activities of CE include:

- Identifying specific job duties or employer expectations that are negotiated with employers;
- Targeting individualized job goals to negotiate based on the skills, talents, and interests of the employment seeker;
- Meeting the unique needs of the employment seeker and the discrete, emerging needs of the employer;
- Starting with the individual as the source of information for exploring potential employment options;
- Offering representation, as needed, for employment seekers to assist in negotiating with employers;
- Occurring in integrated, non-congregate environments in the community or in a business alongside people who do not have disabilities;
- Resulting in pay at at least the prevailing wage;
- Creating employment through self-employment and microenterprise;
- Facilitating an amalgam of supports and funding sources.

Making Customized Employment work raises numerous questions, both unique and anticipated. The following is a sampling of the common questions about CE, and some
Is Customized Employment just a new name for Supported Employment?

CE is a refinement of supported employment, but varies in important ways. Supported Employment often reacts to the Labor Market. The job search process is largely driven by what jobs are available, advertised, or easy to find in that community or region. In CE, the employment seeker’s profile is developed through Discovering Personal Genius (DPG) without consideration of what might be available for work in the community. In essence, the first step is getting to know the employment seeker without the prejudice of “appropriate work” or “realistic goals.” Once the person is known, then a career plan guides vocational exploration. In other words, employment situations are sought that match the profile of the individual, and negotiations follow that mesh the desires of the employment seeker with those of the employer. The existence of a Labor Market mindset tends to drive the kinds of jobs sought for people with disabilities under a Supported Employment model, hence the high proportion of entry-level retail food service, custodial, and other high turnover jobs. There is nothing inherently wrong with these jobs, but they have largely been based on availability, not personal preference.

Further, Supported Employment makes allowances for congregate or group settings such as Mobile Crews and Enclaves. CE is specifically individualized, resulting in one-person one-job, or one-person one-business. And, as noted, CE includes business ownership as an important career option.
How does one get to know the employment seeker?

The most widely used process is called Discovery, a process that relies on the work of several groups including Employment for All, Griffin-Hammis Associates, the Transition projects at the Rural Institute in Montana, et al. Discovery is not planning, it is an assessment process that seeks to answer the questions “Who is this person?” “What are the ideal conditions of employment?” and “Where does this career make sense?” using information collected through conversation and observation, not testing. The process most often starts at home, includes an inventory of the surrounding neighborhood, and expands to places where both skills and interests can be explored through informational interviews, paid work experiences, or engagement in work and social activities where the individual can be observed performing tasks that may be beneficial to an employer. One vital point to remember during Discovery is that the CE team, employment specialist, employment seeker, family member and whoever else is involved, is not looking for employment; the outcome should be a reflection of the complexity of all human lives. In other words, there should be multiple employment directions revealed, not a job description, but rather vocational themes and a revealing of skills, which are used to create employment in the community. Discovery is covered in chapter two.

Isn’t Customized Employment too expensive?

While there is no definitive cost data on this emerging technique, preliminary analyses
from over 20 U.S. CE projects, and anecdotal time and effort reports from Employment for All, Griffin-Hammis, the Institute for Community Inclusion and other sources indicate that CE is on par with supported employment regarding costs. This may be because the job development strategies are more effective even though assessment and profile development stages can sometimes take longer. This question also raises another:

Too expensive for whom?

Approximately 70% of adults with developmental disabilities in Canada remain unemployed, the unemployment rate for individuals with psychiatric disabilities is worse, and people with physical disabilities rank high in the unemployment figures as well. The tremendous expense of building day programs across the Provinces, maintaining specialized segregated transportation systems, and all the other associated parallel services has not delivered gainful employment, adequate training for employment, or social inclusion. CE can be accomplished for those needing such an intensive approach by blending funding, engaging families in support, and starting early in schools with the expectation of work both before and after graduation. Examples to date do not reveal extraordinary costs at all. In fact, it can be effectively demonstrated that using one year’s typical day program funding can easily fund wage employment or business ownership for an individual with significant disabilities.

*Is Customized Employment about helping people find their Dream Job?*

People with disabilities, just like everyone else, live complex lives. The more exposure
we have to ideas, tasks, diverse environments, people, and activities, the more interests and skills we develop. Believing that any one of us has only one dream job is quite limiting when careers are considered. The process recommended herein broadens our thinking by requiring the identification of no fewer than three overarching vocational themes. This allows for creativity and innovation and forces teams to look for complexity and options, rather than for one single answer to an employment problem. Focusing in on a dream job is too limiting. CE reveals themes in people’s lives and invites combining interests to create new and diverse career options.

*CE sounds creative, but what about today’s Labor Market?*

Over the past decade the economy has been both good and bad. The unemployment rate for people with disabilities, however, remains largely unchanged. In fact, the labor market has almost no impact on the employment rate of people with disabilities. What does have an impact is the will of leadership at all levels to make employment a priority. The money exists, the technology and techniques exist, and the employment opportunities exist.

CE is significantly different from competitive employment. CE recognizes that employers are always hiring. That is, there is always room in a company for people who match the culture and values of the company, and who perform work that ultimately produces a profit. Without profit there are no jobs, so matching people with duties that create revenue overshadows the power of job descriptions that historically screen out
people with significant disabilities. In essence CE demands that we focus on utilizing the existing skills of individuals, while growing new ones in real work environments (where the rest of us learned our skills), and realigning our efforts using the principles of economic development and job creation as the antidote to reacting to the demands of a fluctuating labor market.

Final Thoughts to Kick-Start CE

Exercise: Read the following pages and select one of the topics concerning CE presented here. Assemble with 4 or 5 others in class interested in this same topic; discuss the points; report out on how these approaches will change the way you do your job in the future, and how your organization may need to change to support job seekers.

In his recent book, *Outliers*, Malcolm Gladwell determines that successful careers depend on two fundamental elements:

1. Starting out in a supportive environment, and
2. Acquiring skills through repeated application and refinement

Gladwell notes that Microsoft CEO Bill Gates grew up in a family that supported continuous learning, and he had easy access to some of the first computers in the country where he could practice and learn. The Beatles landed their first real work in the strip clubs of Berlin where they had to perform grueling 8-hour shifts. Playing ceaselessly for years made them incredibly good musicians. For our purposes, the lesson here is that
interests are important, but that skills mastery determines an individual’s degree of success.

Recent employment practices, based in person-centered planning, have not proven overly successful. The focus of many person-centered approaches is the listing and cultivation of interests. However, interests devoid of related skills makes meaningful and lasting employment a tough goal to achieve.

It is true that strong interests motivate learning, but past assessment approaches reveal serious weaknesses in eliciting unique personal desires. Typical among the interests listed for people are: animals, coffee drinking, music, movies, etc. These are bland at best, and certainly universal likes among human beings. The Discovery process, however, illuminates interests, accompanying tasks, and skills that have specific application in businesses.

While several groups have proprietary Discovery processes (e.g. Griffin-Hammis Associates, Marc Gold Associates, The Rural Institute, et al.) all share the premise that employment derives from the creation of profit; profit is generated by producing goods or services of value to customers; and production requires the performance of skills-based tasks. Again, while interests may help us find a career direction, instruction, application of skills, and mastery play an often-overlooked role in securing solid employment.

Steps to Discovering Personal Genius
Discovery stages the job development efforts to follow by answering some basic questions about the job seeker. The process typically begins where the individual lives, with listening sessions with friends and family where professionals should maintain silence except when prompting conversation. We recommend a simple: “tell me about your son,” when doing the initial home visit with a family. This discussion is not an interview or interrogation; there’s no checklist or script. The conversation goes where it needs to go and is not interrupted until all that needs to be said has been spoken. Generally there is time for follow up and clarification. Some rules for conducting Discovery include:

1. **Start with the person’s home and those he or she is closest to.** Explore the rooms of the home for clues about interests, skills and tasks performed. Explore competency levels as well as the surrounding neighborhood for employment or work-experience opportunities, transportation resources, and places to learn new skills.

2. **Don’t simply go to places of interest; participate.** In other words, plan activities that demonstrate the skills and tasks the individual can perform, wants to learn, and has an interest in learning.

3. **Seek to establish at least three over-riding vocational themes in the individual’s life.** These are not job descriptions, such as “wants to refuel airplanes.” Instead, think more broadly; in this case think aviation. This leads to a richer series of activities in relevant environments. Someone interested in refueling airplanes may simply be grasping at the one job they’ve seen or that someone has told them they might be able to do. By exploring the broader field of
aviation, using both Informational Interviews and short work-experiences, a world of possible tasks and environments is opened.

4. Develop a solid profile statement capturing the essence of the person, their predominant skills, and the three areas of vocational relevance.

5. Make Discovery a project. That is, manage it with a start and finish date.

Customized Employment is not about getting a dream job. CE sees a job as the beginning of the rehabilitation process, not the end. Therefore, starting with a job that matches existing or quickly learned skills, in an environment that matches the individual’s profile is the target for now. We are finding that precise focus on an individual by a team should result in adequate Discovery that takes 20 to 60 hours over an 8-week period.

**Job Development**

Searching for work begins as Discovery ends. Some rules for this economy that utilize the CE approach include:

1. **CE relies on negotiated job tasks that mutually benefit the employee and the employer.** By approaching specific employers who have task needs matching the job seeker’s talents, a match is more easily determined.

2. **Understand that employers are always hiring!** They are hiring people who fit their company and who can generate their paychecks through profits.

3. **If filling out applications and going through interviews is anything more than a formality to make Human Resources happy, then it’s not customized.** CE circumvents these traditional comparative processes that screen people with disabilities out. There is nothing inherently bad about these processes for people
who can survive them; but many people with disabilities are immediately screened out. Again, CE is based on negotiation, not the traditional employment process.

4. **For each of the three vocational themes, construct a non-duplicative list of Twenty Places where the career makes sense.** In other words, list 20 specific places of employment in the community, accessible to the person, where people with similar skills and interests work. There is nothing magical about the number 20, but 5 or 10 is just too easy, and creativity in employment, along with complexity, comes after the obvious employers are listed.

5. **Use Informational Interviews to gather advice for the individual’s career plan.** By asking for advice, and a tour of the company, the tasks are revealed and if a match seems possible, job development can be introduced. Informational interviews should not be used as a bait and switch technique, but they often reveal needs employers have as well as opportunities for a business-within-a-business. Also, Resource Ownership possibilities can be determined through the informational interviewing process, wherein the individual brings specific tools or technology with them that make them more employable, in the same way a college grad brings their diploma or a mechanic brings their tools to a job.

6. **Stay away from retail.** In this economy, retail is tough. And, regardless, retail has been stripped of much of its complexity. Complexity in work tasks often means more stable work, an abundance of natural supports via co-workers and equipment or technology, and higher earnings potential. Of course, it also means more rigorous use of systematic instruction by Employment Specialists.
7. **Seek out small businesses.** The economic engine that drives Canada and creates the most jobs is its estimated two million small businesses. They are often hidden from view, with few employees. Use social capital and networking to get inside.

8. **People come together over shared interests.** Therefore, having an opportunity to meet with a small business manager or owner who shares the interests of the job seeker make the negotiation easier. As noted of course, interests are not enough, there must also be the potential for learning the requisite skills of the job, but the presence of shared interests is the foundation of all human relationships. And, employment is as much a personal relationship as marriage.

9. **There are unlimited ways to make a living in the world,** therefore, thinking in terms of job descriptions and job openings is pointless. Most of us only knew the 5 or 6 job descriptions promoted by our Guidance Counselor: teacher, nurse, firefighter, police officer, and lawyer. For people with disabilities that list became: janitor, dishwasher, paper shredder, grocery bagger, and recycler. CE represents an unrestrained economic development approach to infinite job creation and restructuring. Negotiate with employers while highlighting skills that match their customers’ needs instead of looking for stereotypical openings.

**Conclusion**

It’s a tough employment market out there. But then, it’s always been tough for people with disabilities. Go where the career makes sense, emphasize tasks and skills, and negotiate for mutual benefit.
Resources

This curriculum draws heavily on the experiences of Griffin-Hammis Associates in implementing CE with its many and varied customers. In our work we find that learning from others, reading extensively, and experimentation are essential elements to progress. We offer the following short list of resources at the beginning of this curriculum, instead of at the end, in hopes that readers will immediately sample this information and grow from it.


Discovering Personal Genius: Person-Centered Employment Assessment

by

Griffin-Hammis Associates, LLC

and

The Langley Association for Community Living

DRAFT

Introduction

Discovering Personal Genius (DPG) is one of several emerging iterations of a process more broadly known as Discovery. Just as Personal Futures Planning of the 1980s morphed into variants of Person-Centered Planning, Essential Lifestyle Planning, and the McGill Action Planning System, so to is Discovery taking several formats. DPG has been evolving for about a decade, but still owes a good deal to the clear thinking approaches articulated by Marc Gold Associates (www.mga.com). DPG is simply the Discovery process Griffin-Hammis Associates (www.griffinhammis.com) has developed, first assisting individuals transitioning from large congregate institutions into employment, and over the years, helping people face various life complexities and significant changes in employment status. DPG strategies are also being used today to assist individuals in residential programs of various designs access their communities and neighborhoods more effectively, but for this curriculum, DPG relates first and foremost to gaining successful employment.

DPG is not used to determine and acquire a dream job or the career of a lifetime. Rather DPG is used to focus on getting individuals into the work arena, be that wage or self-employment, as quickly as possible where they can begin the more long-term tasks of
sculpting a career. Therefore, DPG is a time-limited, quick-paced, goal-oriented process with the solid outcome of work that fits the individual and provides opportunities for personal and professional growth. Employment derived from DPG is ecologically relevant, beneficial to both employee and employer, and is generally developed without regard for the “labor market” or traditional comparative methods of recruitment that tend to unfairly favor those applicants without disabilities. DPG produces a here-and-now vocational profile that drives employment development using a process that unveils remote or hidden career opportunities. Because DPG shuns the pursuit of job descriptions and instead focuses on interest and skills, unique vocational situations often result.

DPG also deviates from the foundation laid by person centered planning in that the latter’s emphasis on the individual’s interests is tempered by the former’s focus on skills and *in situ* skills development. While it is true that interests breed personal engagement and buoy the accumulation of skills, beginning the DPG and job development processes with an eye toward skills the individual possesses, and which can be built upon, is of profound importance. Many of us have interests but lack skills. Many people would love to be a famous actor, but few of us actually have the skills to become one. Matching the preferred work to existing and teachable skills is crucial. DPG activities may be identified through recognized interests, but the DPG activities themselves are used to identify existing skills, or those which can be cultivated through systematic training, workplace supports, and technology.

**Stages of Discovering Personal Genius**
The “Discovering Personal Genius Staging Record” frames DPG in seven basic stages, and within each tier exists an array of tasks and observations that the individualized team takes into consideration. Current anecdotal information from numerous project sites across the United States indicates that DPG can be accomplished in 20 to 65 hours, over a period of approximately 6 to 8 weeks, sometimes less, and occasionally more, such as when interruptions such as illness intercede. DPG should be managed as an urgent team-based task force with the common goal of formulating a descriptive paragraph capturing who the person is at the present time and answering the basic question “Who is this individual?” Without a time limit, DPG can conceptually go on forever, since people are constantly learning and evolving. The purpose of DPG is not to decipher all of life’s twists and turns, but rather to build a case for targeted career development. DPG is not simply an alternative to day program. The steps of DGP lead to a vocational profile, captured throughout the Staging Record, illuminating at least three (3) solid vocational themes and enough knowledge of the individual to guide the successful development of employment.

The Stages of DPG include:

1. Home & Neighborhood Observation

2. Interviewing Others

3. Skills & Ecological Fit

4. Review

5. Vocational Themes
6. Descriptive Narrative

7. Career Development Plan

The sample DPG Staging Record form included here illustrates the collection methods and types of information sought. But, prior to starting, there are some elements of DPG that require refinement.

Smooth Listening

In traditional home visits or individualized meetings held in program facilities, the individual and any family involved are typically interviewed and questioned about the individual’s likes and dislikes, behavioral issues, program funding, future plans, medical concerns, et al. In the worst scenarios these sessions become regulation-satisfying events where little is communicated, little is learned, and the next year unfolds much the same as the year before; deficits are thoughtfully categorized and treatment plans and interventions are constructed, but little changes for the individual. Professionals do the talking.

DPG is a conversation, not an interrogation. Service Coordinators (e.g. Case Managers) and others who traditionally lead the planning process are part of an engaged team including the individual and family, if available and desired by the individual, with a common goal: get employment. The teams assign tasks that compliment each member’s skills and interests, and spread the work across the 4 to 7 member group, who are responsible to the individual and the other team members.
The initial home visit is essential to setting the stage for this on-going conversation, and the critical skill for the professionals involved is to probe and then listen. In essence, the focus moves from the smooth talker to the smooth listener, because the relative silence of those listening elicits more information from the talkers. Here, the talkers are supposed to be the individual and those who know him/her best.

Smooth Listening Exercise:

Align with someone in the room you do not know well.

Find out 3 skills each of you have that aren’t obvious (skills are refined abilities that allow task accomplishment: cooking a soufflé, building cabinets, growing orchids; as opposed to interests such as watching football, going for long walks, or liking dogs).

Do this without asking each other any questions.

Hint: Have a conversation.

Solution: This is extremely difficult and not entirely natural, of course. But running through a litany of questions in a traditional service program planning meeting quickly degenerates into an interrogation, or a series of yes/no questions that provide little opportunity for personal illumination, and it restricts the in-flow of information simply because if the correct question is not asked, the information will not arrive.

The best way to start the conversation is: “Tell me about yourself.” What we learn is that people start these conversations where they believe the important information lies. So, in DPG’s first stages, we prompt folks to: “tell me about yourself” or “tell me about
Joanne.” Sit and listen, perhaps take some notes. Do not interrupt the flow with un-needed patter or reinforcement such as “oh, I didn’t know you all took annual vacations” or “that’s interesting.” The very act of speaking reinforces what was being said and tells the talker that you think this is the important part. This little reward may derail the conversation as the talker now pursues what the listener has indicated is important, but which may have just been a simple statement of fact. When the listener hears something that is relevant, just jot it down inconspicuously and come back to it once the talker is completely finished. No news from the listener is good news and silence prompts the talker to keep talking.

Of course, questioning is an important aspect of all information seeking, but surprisingly rich conversations occur using this technique, especially during the first home visits. There are several questions that do frame the pursuit of knowledge during DPG stages though. We are most interested in finding out, of course, who this person is, and some of the components that will help us sculpt a profile, using interview and observation in a variety of community and work experience settings, include learning:

Where this person is most at ease;

When the individual is most in-flow or engaged and by what people or activities;

What supports are needed most in particular situations and how they are best delivered;

Situations and environments to be avoided;

Personal skills, talents, and interests.
Occasionally conversation stalls out. To prompt more or an increased depth of discussion, priming the pump may be useful using such prompts as:

Tell me a bit about chores and tasks done around the house;

Tell me about routine and special family activities or traditions;

Tell me about family vacations or holiday celebrations;

Tell me about major life events that have influenced your son/daughter;

Tell me about events or activities your son/daughter really looks forward to;

Tell me about techniques you’ve found helpful when teaching your son/daughter something new;

Tell me about your son/daughter’s favorite people, such as teachers, clergy, relatives, or neighbors.

**DPG is not a Test**

DPG relies on experiential situations in real environments to reveal clues about vocational interests. The team performing DPG is not to be asking, “What career, business, or job would be best?” Psychometric testing, taking interest inventories, and other forms of vocational assessment are largely discarded as irrelevant for people with complex support needs and lives because the traditional avenues these assessments assert often keep the person trapped in a system of comparison and competition for employment. In most comparative situations with employers, people with significant
disabilities lose. And, these assessments typically account for only a small number of vocational options.

Most of us only understand a few jobs and have experience in only a few businesses or organizations. Trying to divine a job for someone with our limited experiences is futile at best. Even a test battery pulling on 400 job samples is still wanting for several reasons:

1. The tasks represented are a small sampling of what often goes on behind-the-scenes in a business or factory;

2. Co-workers and supervisors in a work setting have a tremendous and unique influence on skill development and success;

3. Job descriptions often frame the test samples, and job descriptions may contain tasks irrelevant to the individual’s skills or interests;

4. There are unlimited ways to make a living in the world.

Developing a vocational profile by pursuing interests and skills revealed by DPG is a more ecologically and individualized method of creating unique opportunities for an individual. A form that may be of use in the earliest information collection stages of DPG is the DPG: Interests, Talents and Skills Inventory:
**DPG: Interests, Talents & Skills Inventory**

This information is collected through *observation* during the initial DPG activities needed to create an individual narrative answering the question: “Who is this person (and what skills do they have)?” This information is then used to guide the “Going where the career makes sense” portion of DPG.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ITS</th>
<th>Observations &amp; Descriptors</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Interests</strong>: The Strong Vocational Themes identified thru DPG such as: enjoys military history; regularly sings karaoke; collects old clocks and watches</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Talents</strong>: Potential contributions to a workplace such as: a sense of Customer Service; being Friendly; Being Organized; being Punctual; having a good sense of humor; being curious</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Skills/Tasks</strong>: Specific and Demonstrated proficiencies, abilities, and knowledge. Include related skills that appear potentially teachable &amp; valued by the individual</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
DPG Stages: Methods and Tasks

The outcome of DPG is a vocational profile, captured in the DPG Stages Record, that reveals the Ideal Conditions of Employment for the individual. The basic process, as modified from the work of Ellen Condon at the University of Montana’s Rural Institute (http://ruralinstitute.umt.edu/transition) involves following certain steps. Depending on the step you are on, you will:

- observe
- interview
- listen more than talk
- take notes
- take pictures when it makes sense

After each step the team compiles notes being thorough and descriptive about what was done and what was discovered. The team identifies themes in the person’s life and seeks to find at least three of them by the end of DPG. Themes are not job descriptions or generic interests that almost everyone has (e.g. eating ice cream, drinking coffee, playing with kittens). Themes include: “playing sports,” “interested in aviation,” “is very organized,” “has a strong affinity for dogs,” “is very attentive to self-presentation.” The themes must be further supported by the individual’s existing skills, or proof from DPG activities that these skills can be readily attained by the individual or accomplished through the use of technology, tools, or other supports.
The steps for DPG include:

1. **Gathering a team** of people. This will include the person assigned to do job development, and additional people who can help with the process. Some team members may only be involved in one or two steps. One person should act as team leader, ensuring that the process is thorough and well documented.

2. **Explain** customized employment, the DPG process, and the vocational profile to the individual, family and other significant support people. Be clear about what you will be doing and what is expected of them. Make certain the information you have about the employment seeker is current and complete.

3. **Schedule your first meeting** with the individual and family at the person’s home.
   
   If meeting at home is not an option or the employment seeker does not wish to meet there, find an alternative location.

4. **Tour the neighborhood** around the person’s home observing surroundings, safety concerns, businesses, culture, transportation and services near the person’s home. This step may be completed after step 5.

5. **Meet with the individual** and family for 1 to 2 hours in their home. Discuss:
   
   a. Daily routines
   
   b. Chores and other household responsibilities
   
   c. Activities the individual enjoys and engages in
   
   d. History of the family/individual, especially as it relates to employment

   If the person is willing, have him/her show you his bedroom. Look at how it is organized, what’s in it, and what it says about the person. Have him/her demonstrate how he performs chores, engages in activities etc.
Throughout the visit observe interactions, living context, interests and skills. *Ask yourself if any themes are beginning to suggest themselves and make note of them.*

Ask for names and contact information of people who know the person well. Ask permission to interview those individuals.

6. **Interview other people** who know the employment seeker well. This may include parents, siblings, teachers (if a student or recent student), neighbors, support providers. Ask especially about the individual’s interests, support needs, successful support strategies, skills and performance in various activities. *Look again for themes in the person’s life.*

7. From information gathered so far, **identify several activities** the employment seeker participates in successfully. Do those activities with the person and observe interest, performance, demonstrated skills, connections, etc.

8. **Identify activities outside the home** that are familiar to the person. Accompany the person to these places and activities and observe skills, relationships, supports etc.

9. Based on the individual’s interests and the themes you have identified so far, **identify unfamiliar places and activities** that may be in line with his interests. Go with him to these places and activities. Observe to gain additional information about support needs, reactions, attention to natural cues, interest etc. *Continue to identify specific skills and refine the themes.*
10. **Go to some places of employment** with the person related to the identified themes. Make an appointment with a manager and conduct an **informational interview**. In addition to conducting the interview, ask for a tour and observe the kinds of jobs people do at the business. Look for the jobs that are out of view and/or are unexpected. Look for clues about the culture of the work place and whether this person might fit into it. Do several of these interviews. (Note: Informational interviews are covered in detail in the Job Development chapter. Note that when using Info Interviews during DPG, it is made clear to the employer that no job is being sought, simply career planning information. During job development the focus of the interviews does change to acquiring employment).

11. **Return to the individual’s home** if needed, to collect any additional information needed, have informal conversation and make more observations.

12. **Review** files, memorabilia and records of past and current activities and services.

13. **Develop a list of places**, specifically 20 places of business where people do jobs related to each of the three themes identified for a total of 60.

14. **Review the notes** taken throughout DPG and add to them as needed to ensure they are thorough and descriptive.

15. **Write the draft vocational profile** using the information gathered during DPG. Identify the person’s ideal conditions for employment including skills, interests, culture, environmental considerations, preferred or required days and hours for work, supports needed, equipment or adaptations that may be needed and any
other important considerations. Reference the three themes and the list of 60 jobs where people with those interests work.

16. **Review** the draft vocational profile to the employment seeker, family, and others involved on the DPG team.

17. **Meet with the individual** and/or family and others as needed to discuss the profile, for comments and for approval. Develop a customized employment plan to be used for job development.

18. **Distribute final copies** of the DPG Staging Record, vocational profile, or other form of customized employment plan to everyone involved in the job development process.

19. **If needed, develop a representational portfolio** for the employment seeker using visual and narrative information developed during DPG. This may be a photo album with captions, PowerPoint, narrative description or other medium that can be easily utilized by the individual to demonstrate his skills and interests to prospective employers.

20. Following the vocational profile/CE plan, **begin job development.**

**DPG Activities**

Throughout DPG, the team is asked to engage in activities that test the information derived through interviews. These observational opportunities can be used to develop ideas, test themes and interests, but most importantly to witness existing and emerging skills. While it is true that interests breed skills, skills are critical to getting and keeping jobs, so witnessing skills usage and acquisition is the crux of the activities.
Activities Exercise: The emerging interests of an individual you are working with in DPG are dogs, trucks, and tattoos.

What are perhaps the larger emerging themes for each interest?

(Answer: Dogs = Animals; Trucks = Transportation; Tattoos = Alternative lifestyles and Art)

Where would you find people engaged in the pursuit of these interests in the community?

(Answer: Animals: zoo, veterinarians, University biology lab, environmental organization, dog park, farm, horse stable, aquarium, pet store etc.

Transportation: Car club, garage, filling station, body shop, trucking company, train depot, vehicle museum, parts store, etc.

Art: galleries, artist’s studio, print shop, graphic design company, architecture firm, sign company, art supply store, glass blowing company, photography studio, etc.).

What activities would be useful in observing the individual perform through a short try-out or a time-limited work experience?

(Answer: Animals: grooming horses; washing dogs; organizing veterinarian records; prepping a surgical room; feeding fish; exercising pet store animals, etc.;

Transportation: driving a fork lift; gassing up a car; changing oil; washing a vehicle; entering part numbers into inventory into a computer, etc.;

Art: painting; framing a picture/cutting a mat; blowing glass; running a Xerox machine; using sign making software; throwing a clay pot, etc.).
What employment ideas/locations/businesses result from combining interests and skills?

Art and Transportation: Customized Car Paint shop; Car audio design/installation; Skywriting airplane service, etc.

Animals & Art: Children’s mural design/painting service; Stuffed animal manufacture/sales; wildlife art, etc.

Animals & Transportation: Service Animal training; Ranching/Feedlot operation; Animal Control, etc.

The combinations often create unique opportunities for job carving, creation, and small business development.

The more places of employment explored through the informational interviewing process and through DPG activities, the richer the activities lists will become for future DPG sessions.

The DPG Staging Record

Throughout DPG, use the Staging Record, or some other form of vocational profile, to collect the information as it is gathered. Remember that DPG is not concerned with speculation about an individual’s motivations or interests or behaviors. Record exactly what was observed and discussed without interpretation. The sample included here provides an example of a typical DPG process.
Sample DPG Stages Record

**DISCOVERING PERSONAL GENIUS STAGING RECORD**

Instructions: This form is used to stage, structure, capture and record the major events of DPG. The recorder(s) should pay particular attention to how the tasks are typically performed, any accommodations, technology, supports, or specialized training strategies that should be employed.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name: Phillip Dailey</th>
<th>Date initiated/Date Completed: 6/09/09 - 7/21/09</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Family Contacts: Father: Phillip, Sr.; Mother: Imelda; Brother: Frank; Sister: Melann</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Phone/E-mail: 555-5565</td>
<td>Person(s) completing DPG Record: Jeff Moore, Rita Farley, Dee Wolfe, Kim Starp</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Additional Contact Information: Sister lives in another province (AB)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Team Members: Phillip, Brother, Jeff Moore, Rita Farley, Dee Wolfe, Kim Starp</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Consultants/Experts to Contact: Christine at the Business Abilities Program in Kelowna if Phillip starts a biz</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Comments/Considerations: brother has similar interest and some contacts for Phillip, but is very busy, travels for work.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Stage One: Home & Neighborhood Observation**

(Preliminary step: review records, files, assessments to establish current issues, cautions, training, etc., that may be of relevance). Note that Phillip has medically controlled seizures but does wear a helmet; heat and work in direct sunlight are big contributors. Has not worked due to family safety fears. Brother is strongest advocate; parents are supportive but cautious. Has worked in Workshop since leaving high school at 19 years old. No work history, but has been doing assembly, recycling, janitorial, and shredding for the Worc Center in Kelowna.

Initial Interviews: Begin with the individual’s home and/or family home (if residing there). Called to arrange time when mom, dad, and brother could meet. Phillip is 33 years old and lives at home with parents.

Date: 6/9/09

People interviewed & relationship to Individual: Father, Mother, Brother. Dad is retired police officer and was a security guard in retirement until a few years ago at Montgomery Air Field. Mother was a school librarian now retired; Brother is a
purchasing/manufacturing agent for a subsidiary of Lisle Corp. which makes machine tools. He travels extensively to “spec out supplier processes and tooling designs, quality control, and inventory management.”

Recap of Information (attach field notes, pictures): Phillip wants to go to work; brother is really pushing this; Phillip wants to move out on his own; Parents are supportive but a little cautious. Phillip says he’d like to wipe tables at MacDonald’s; he had a work trial there last year and got paid $10. The family thinks MacDonald’s would be a good place for Phillip to work but haven’t got other ideas. They do not want him near heavy equipment vehicles; Phillip wants to drive but seizures are an issue.

Observations of home, bedroom, property, belongings that seem relevant: Very neat home in nice neighborhood; bus stop one block away for city bus; evidence of parental hobbies: Mom: reading, water color landscapes; Dad: model airplanes, woodworking, large vegetable garden. Phillip’s room has a TV, CD player for music (rock and country); an old collection of WWII Canadian aircraft pictures on the wall, closet and drawers are neatly organized by him, dog bed in corner for his dog Turbo.

Chores & tasks performed at home: Phillip has set chores including: setting the table for dinner and always preparing the mashed potatoes; he clears the table and fills the dishwasher after meals; accompanies mom or dad grocery shopping; takes trash out to curb weekly. Does not mow lawn or work in garden due to seizure fears of family. Feeds Turbo twice a day and takes him to the neighborhood pond and park for exercise and ball throwing, in the evenings when the sun is down after work.

Hobbies, Sports, Collections, Interests noticed during home visit: Likes going to Montgomery Field where his dad worked to watch planes take off and land; Annually goes with Dad and Brother to watch the Royal Canadian Flying Aces perform; loves his dog and understands basic training, grooming, play, leash methods; paints with mom some and has learned to paint her backgrounds for landscapes before she inserts the details; brother is restoring an old farm tractor and has been helping with that a few weekends, mostly scraping & washing grease and dirt off parts. Brother notes that Phillip constantly repeats: “get a car” and seems to want to drive.

Family/friend/community activities individual engages in and regularity: Attends church Sunday morning with parents. Although Phillip has a very low voice and limited verbal language he loves singing from the hymnal. Mom noted he doesn’t seem too excited by church otherwise. The family also has a big Sunday dinner each week and brother and friend of the family attend regularly.

Neighborhood Mapping (resources, employers, transportation options, neighbors of
interest, activities, civic engagement): This is a residential neighborhood. We walked around the block with Phillip; he knows a few neighbors, but no one was outside at the time. There is a bus stop at the end of the street. Parents know quite a few folks since they have lived here for over 20 years. A small commercial district is about 2 blocks north; the small commercial airport is 3 blocks east and there is an attached air-park according to the Brother (he uses its services to ship/receive parts for the business). Their church is about 1 mile away. Grocery store is within a few blocks as well. Most people drive from the neighborhood to other community activities. The neighborhood park is just down the street. There is a school, mom’s former employer, just a 2 block walk away.

Talents, interests and skills observable/revealed: Phillip’s interests include music, dogs/pets, driving, airplanes/aviation, painting/art. Skills we saw or heard about included:

Setting the table; running the dishwasher; walking and grooming the dog; cleaning tractor parts; painting backgrounds (sky, clouds, various neutral hues) with watercolors and oils using brushes and a pallet knife; selecting specific items from the shelves when grocery shopping; limited cooking…. He also is in charge of laundry for the house and does several loads per week using the washer and drier; then folds and puts the clothing away.

Activities, situations, & locations that need to be avoided: Hot direct sun or extended work in temps above 32 C should be avoided.

Stage Two: Others to be interviewed (person/relationship/role):

1. Worc Center floor supervisor
2. Sister
3.
4.
5.
6.

What was learned from each:
1. Worc Center floor supervisor: 6/22/09 reported Phillip is a “hard worker” who really enjoys cleaning and recycling.

2. Sister: phone interview on 6/22/09 says she remembers Phillip being very interested in flying kites with her in the park and cooking although since she married and moved away 12 years ago after marrying a rancher in Alberta they have not stayed in touch regularly. They see each other only once or twice a year for long weekends. She was surprised Phillip was still going to church since her recollection was that Phillip use to resist going. She mentioned that she would be happy to help anyway she could and was intrigued with the idea that Phillip might be able to own a business, saying she could give him some money if needed.

Patterns Emerging: (Interests, Talents & Skills): Interests include music or perhaps church? Working with brother on the tractor; getting to drive; his dog (not too sure about other animals); airplanes/flight/transportation; painting/art.

Skills as listed above, plus according to Worc Center he gets quite focused when working and tends not to take a break until the assigned task is finished. The jobs recycling and cleaning were not mentioned by Phillip, although cleaning at MacDonald’s was
suggested by the family.

Phillip has various cooking and kitchen skills that may need to be explored/witnessed. His brother says he learns fast and his mother reinforced that, commenting that he is really great with the painting she gives him. His mother mentioned that Phillip is “very helpful.” He also does all the laundry for the household.

Stage 3: Skills & Ecological Fit

Five places where this individual can be observed in activities that give context to their Interests, Talents & Skills:

1. Taking a painting seminar at the Artist’s Cooperative

2. Observe working with his brother on the tractor

3. Arrange an informational interview at the aviation park

4. Arrange informational interview at a dog groomer

5. Drive go-carts at the local motorplex

Observations for each location and the specific activities observed:

1. 6/24/09-6/25/09: Took a water color class at the Artist’s Co-op. Wednesday and Thursday night; 2 2-hour sessions. Phillip was really tired the first night and barely stayed awake. The 2nd part of the class (night 2) he did really well. His abilities are more technical application of the paint, setting up and putting things away; he didn’t seem to have much artistic talent, but enjoyed the activities associated with doing art (not the art itself). He offered the 2nd night to clean everyone’s brushes for them.

2. 6/27/09: spent the morning with Phillip and his brother working on the tractor. The
brother asked Phillip to assemble the tools by naming them and he was able to get them all but wasn’t able to recognize wrench sizes, so just brought them all over to the work area (brought a handful of sockets instead of just the ones requested). Took several small parts to the parts washer as requested, and scrubbed them clean, dried them with the compressed air gun, brought them back to his brother. He also helped his brother hold a part to steady it while his brother straightened the metal with a body hammer. Phillip was careful near the air compressor, was careful walking around tools and parts on the floor; asked his brother occasionally “is this ok?” as he was doing an assigned task.

3. 6/30/09. Informational interview with Judd Gregory, manager of flight maintenance at CarterAir Services at Kelowna Air-Park. Explained to Mr. Gregory that we are working on Phillip’s career plan, his interest in aviation and mechanical things (mentioned his work with his brother and the tractor and his father’s connections to the airport). Asked Mr. Gregory for advice on getting started. He told us he started in the royal Air Force, became a flight instructor and was now head of maintenance services. They are open 7 days a week serving commercial airlines, local tourist flight-seeing operators, medivac, oil company, mining company, logging company and charter-photography helicopters, etc. We toured the facility; Mr. Gregory told us they are the largest maintenance & service facility in the area and they serve 8 other companies all in the air-park who run various charter services, including running a kitchen to prepare light snacks for commercial, tourist and private jet charters (flight crews and customers), and a small laundry for shop towels, flight uniforms, and coveralls. We asked about emerging business technology and he told us things are always changing regarding avionics. We asked about hiring and training and he noted that they trained their own personnel and ran the flight school too, which served as a recruitment tool for them. We asked his advice on starting out in the aviation field and he suggested that someone without pilot or mechanical training would start as an assistant to the mechanics and aircraft maintenance people (ranging from painting, cleaning, sheet-metal work, electronics, food prep, laundry, etc.). We asked if he thought we could arrange perhaps a short work experience for Phillip doing an array of these tasks. Mr. Gregory hesitated and said he’d have to check with the owner first. We will follow-up in 2 days. (Since Phillip’s brother knows this company, he may be of some assistance).

4.7/3/09. Made arrangements to visit the owner of Petcetera, just a couple blocks from home. The owner, Sara Brown showed us around and explained their boarding, dog training, and grooming operations. Noted that they board cats and dogs, and also have a rehabilitation specialist to help with pets recovering from surgery. We asked specifically about grooming and she invited Phillip to help her wash and dry a yellow Lab who was a regular customer due to his infirniation with local skunks. Phillip said he really enjoyed learning how to use the overhead spray faucet and the blow drier. He did great with just a little instruction from Ms. Brown. She noted that even in the bad economy her business was growing, perhaps because people were working 2 or more jobs and not being home as much.
5. 7/6/09. Took Phillip to the go-cart track on Monday morning when no other customers were there. We used a two-steering wheel training cart and Phillip was not very good at steering, using the gas or brake. He started and stopped suddenly several times. After about 30 minutes his driving improved and we drove slowly and cautiously around the track. As our time was ending he asked if we could go fast around the track once with me driving (he wanted to go fast, but not be the one driving). We did, and he smiled from ear to ear. He said he wants to go back next week; I asked him if he wanted to maybe look into working there and he said no.

Emerging themes: Helpfulness/Helping Others do their jobs; transportation; pets; art.

Supports needed during these activities (be specific): Initial training needs to be paced and precise; (Phillip seems to know when to ask for help)

What environments & activities need to be avoided and why? Hot; sunny.

What places, skills and activities need more exploration? Aviation biz: noted that there may be a biz-within-a-biz opportunity doing laundry for the other businesses in the park; also running the parts washer; learning about the food prep operations. Lots of options in this one business. They are open 7 days a week so weekends might be a good starting option. Will follow-up for a work trial.

Need to explore pet businesses. Phillip showed great interest.

Team will meet 7/7 to consolidate observations; next steps; and will brainstorm combining the themes into unique ideas (art and pets; transportation and helpfulness; art and transportation; helpfulness and art)

Where/when will this exploration occur? Week of July 15th: scheduled work trial (through brother) at CarterAir. In setting up with Mr. Gregory discovered they have kenneling services for transporting pets and for injured game animals/or wildlife relocations; and specific hands-on training in the laundry and running the parts washer for the mechanics.

Follow-Up Notes:
Stage Four: Review

Former school/rehab staff to be interviewed: See previous notes

Other family members and friends who may reveal insights: Sister was consulted

Read files, assessments, medical/medication, behavioral and other records that may still be of relevance: Epilepsy and developmental disability predominates

Impact of this information on individual’s emerging profile: Instructional and support strategies need to be clear and intense at first; rapid skills acquisition appears typical if matches to proper mount of information given.

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Stage Five: Vocational Themes (not job descriptions or business ideas)

Emerging themes that meld Interests, Talents, and Skills:

1. Transportation, especially aviation
2. Pets & pet care, especially dogs

3. Art, especially when helping others with their work

(note: a 4th emerging area is helpfulness, which appears to be the theme running through all the other themes; may be developing an Info Interview at Okanagan Restoration Service which provides emergency clean up services for victims of natural disasters, house fires, flooding, etc. This may merge Phillip’s skills and his helpfulness…)

Identify 3 places for each theme where people with similar themes work:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Theme 1</th>
<th>Theme 2</th>
<th>Theme 3</th>
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Select 2 places and arrange informational interviews.

CarterAir

Dog-ease Service Animal Training

Notes from interview:

1.7/15/09 Met with Mr. Gregory and we began with a tour of the airplane service facility including the laundry. They use industrial machines, but the supervisor explained the operation step-by-step to Phillip and together they completed loading and starting a wash of coveralls. We moved to the kitchen and spent 45 minutes assembling 20 wine and cheese snack trays for 2 scenic flights scheduled for later in the day. Phillip watched and then assembled the trays perfectly after we modified the layout for him. Finally we entered the mechanics hangar and were instructed in the use of the parts washer. Phillip was asked to clean and dry a dozen wheel bearing retention washers; a set of rocker arms; and a brake caliper. He did have some trouble with the air gun for drying (the trigger was very stiff), but we worked together to complete the task; the mechanic noted that the gun...
was very difficult and should be replaced. There were no animals in boarding this day. We met up with Mr. Gregory before we left, 4 hours later, and thanked him for the opportunity to explore the tasks. Will follow up with a Thank-you note as well.

2. 7/16/09 The staff at Dog-ease were welcoming, thinking initially that Phillip was there to explore ownership of a service dog. The manager worked with us and Phillip learned how to measure and bag food for the night shift; he spent about 20 minutes walking a dog around the exercise yard on a leash; and he assisted the groomer with nail clipping by steadying the paws and sanitizing the instruments with cleaning formula and a cloth. Phillip did well on all tasks, but mentioned on his way out that the staff “looked at him funny.”

Which themes seem strongest? The aviation and helpfulness themes are very strong, especially when paired; the Dog-ease trial may have been less successful because the idea of helping others could be too far removed from the actual tasks? (note: this appears speculative!)

New interests/talents revealed? Very comfortable with strange dogs; listens intently to whoever is instructing him

Arrange further informational interviews and/or short (up to ½ a day) work experiences at the following places:

1. Collectors Auto Supply (which cleans and restores antique car and truck parts for sale through their website, Ebay, and Hemmings Motor News)

2. Western Wildlife Studios (which features wildlife and landscape paintings and sculpture from numerous artists sharing studio/gallery space)

What was observed:

1. These will be scheduled as part of job development if needed.
Stage Six: Descriptive Narrative

Consider the following in the description:

1. Interests, Talents, Skills as observed; best ecological fit; best learning mode/methodology; places/situations to avoid; personal resources (benefits, family support, savings, transportation); most endearing/engaging qualities; exploitable skills; 3 strongest vocational themes:

Phillip is a 33-year-old man with strong family ties in this community and has interests in aviation, transportation, dogs, art, and helping others. He is skilled in the kitchen and laundry, has assisted in the restoration of an antique tractor, is a fast learner who pays strict attention to his instructor/supervisor, and knows how to operate such equipment as industrial parts washers, air compressors, and kitchen equipment. He is skilled at preparing blank canvases for both watercolor and oil artists. Phillip enjoys assisting others in doing their jobs.

2. Ideal Conditions of Employment: Working in a cool or well-shaded setting where Phillip can pursue his interests while working in partnership with his co-workers. Phillip learns best when shown a task and allowed to perform it at his speed; his speed rapidly increases with repetition. Work hours and days of week are not a concern at this time.

Stage Seven: Job/Business Development Plan

List of Twenty Places where people with similar Vocational Themes Work:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Theme 1: Aviation/Transit</th>
<th>Theme 2: Animals</th>
<th>Theme 3: Art</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>---------------------------</td>
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<td>-----------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17. BC Farmers Cooperative</td>
<td>17. Interior Reef &amp; Marine</td>
<td>17. Architectural Blueprinting Company</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Create representational portfolios, picture books, resumes, and other tools for Job
Development as needed;

Select 3 or 4 places and arrange Informational Interviews for moving into job development stage.

**Will occur after Team Meeting 7/20/09 to compare notes and begin Job Development**

1.

2.

3.

4.
Introduction

Andrea’s vocational themes were dominated by her emerging artistic skills. After completing her three (3) lists of twenty (20) places where the career makes sense, several businesses were chosen by Andrea and her team for informational interviews, appointments were set, and a small portfolio of her artwork, including paintings of landscapes, photos of her pottery, and a bit of her hand embroidery was readied. Her ideal conditions of employment hinted at a job where she could learn from others, produce art that was interesting to her, where she knew her assignments daily with few surprises to trigger her more serious behaviors, and where she could earn enough money to move into a place of her own.

The first couple interviews went smoothly, but did not feel quite right for Andrea. At a pottery store she felt too removed from actual art production, and at the Artist’s Cooperative she felt her time would be spent serving other artists, but not spending much time actually producing art.
At the sculpture studio though, she found a steady work pace, production work that was new to her and that also had vast variety. What really attracted her to this place though was the boss. He too was an artist and had come to the studio a decade earlier to earn money for college, and to expand his skills. While touring and interviewing, he mentioned that they recently had a staff layoff and were not hiring, but he leafed through Andrea’s portfolio and began asking about her technique and interests. When they entered one of the finishing rooms where several artists hand painted highlights on some statuettes, the boss asked Andrea if she would like to try the task. She sat down and with minimal instruction from the manager, performed the job terrifically. On the spot he asked if she would like a job. She agreed and started out at 20 hours per week for the first six-week probationary period. After that, she was given a raise, increased hours to full time, and fringe benefits. Six years later, she still enjoys her work at the studio and uses her free time to paint and sell her art, which is displayed across the city.

Andrea’s story illustrates numerous points about customized employment job development:

1. DPG illuminates vocational themes that allow for a broad collection of possible jobs, many unknown or unseen to the public;
2. People connect over shared interests and employers connect to potential employees in the same way;
3. CE circumvents the Human Resources (HR) filter and connects the business owner or manager directly with the employment seeker;
4. Employers are always hiring; they are hiring people with similar interests, values, and especially, who can generate profits;

5. Skills matter.

CE job development is not based on old models founded on sales techniques. Job development today is an interest-based process, transforming the art and science of securing good jobs from one of salesmanship to one of creating mutually beneficial relationships between employment seekers and employers.

Recognizing the potential contributions of individuals with significant disabilities and, synchronizing these with the needs and motivations of employers is the step that overlaps DPG. The concept of employability maintains a foothold in our profession, but CE refutes the concepts of “job-readiness” and “realistic career objectives” with the simple notion that everyone possesses personal genius of value in the marketplace. Making the profitability of an individual’s personal genius visible to an employer, as well as to various funders and family members, is the task of the modern job developer.

Certainly, sales training is an important tool in the employment specialist’s arsenal. Employment specialists must know how to manage their time, understand their services, and represent job seekers in a respectful manner. But, over-emphasizing selling misses the point of customized employment. CE’s foundation is built on the match between personal contribution and the needs of the workplace; it is not, as sales approaches sometimes suggest, the charitable thing to do, or a matter of tricking employers.
Positioning the candidate for face-to-face interactions with the potential employer is job-one for employment specialists. The potential personal contribution of individuals with significant disabilities is difficult for employers, and professionals as well, to discern. Highlighting an individual’s skills, talents, and interests and making these visible to employers with similar attributes is key. Critical too, is the potential for profits, because without profit, there is no money for wages.

Resource Ownership and Beneficial Exploitation

Resource Ownership, an approach pioneered by Hammis and Griffin in the early-1990s, addresses this issue of workplace value generation and provides a substantial illustration of mutually beneficial relationship-building and job creation from a person/business-centered standpoint. Employers have known for a very long time that they should hire people with disabilities. That knowledge is the result of both the gentle legal coercion of most disability employment legislation and the result of various charity exhortations, such as ubiquitous “hire the handicapped” campaigns. The truth is that employers do not know how to hire people with disabilities. In essence, they worry that people with disabilities are unskilled, they do not communicate typically, they are fragile, and do not learn through typical training approaches. Employers, when faced with two candidates, one having a disability, choose the one without the disability simply because it is the easier choice.
Resource ownership is one strategy, that should be used sparingly, but which does hold one significant motivator for employers: the potential for profit. Resource ownership is basically the process of accumulating materials, equipment, or skills that, when matched to a job seeker’s interests and customer needs, generates profits for the employer. For instance, many people spend thousands of dollars for a college degree and that degree is a symbol of exploitable knowledge. Employers reason that they can profit from a graduate’s intellect, therefore people with advanced education get hired. In essence, the graduate gives the employer that degree in trade for wages. The same occurs when a mechanic who owns tools applies for a mechanics job. Most automotive, truck, or aviation repair businesses will not hire a mechanic who does not own her own tools. Without the tools, the mechanic faces unemployment, or a less satisfactory, lower-paying job. The point is that people must have exploitable resources to get good jobs, and by putting the means of production in the hands of people with disabilities, it makes them more employable. Certainly sales skills are involved, but the discovery of personal genius, coupled with job exploration and analysis, creates a logical path, again of mutual benefit, that reduces the traditional reliance on sales and the negative stereotypes associated with selling.

The point here is not to expand too deeply on Resource Ownership as a job development technique, but rather to emphasize that workers must bring value to the workplace, otherwise there is no revenue generated for wages. Recent Resource Ownership examples include:
1. Increasing hours for a long-time employee with a disability working at a dog kennel by having him purchase two new dog-proof therapeutic tread mills and offering this rehabilitative service to owners of older dogs that require gentle exercise, and to owners of dogs recuperating from surgeries such as hip replacements and joint fusions. The revenue increases cover the additional hours worked by the young employee.

2. Creating a job inside an automotive repair company by adding a commercial washer and drier. The employee with a disability works daily washing shop towels and mechanic’s coveralls.

3. Purchasing a custom cupcake cart for a part-time bakery employee who now works a couple extra hours per day, over lunch, selling gourmet pastries in the town square, down the street from the shop.

4. Investing in a certification program that accredits a computer technician with a disability. The company employing him can now offer warranty services to their customers, thereby increasing revenues and allowing for salary increases for the worker.

Exercise:

Part 1: Write down the exploitable skills you have that allowed you to get the jobs you’ve had over the years:

Part 2: List the exploitable skills will you need to advance to the next stage in your career:

The Abundance of Work and The Dream Job Problem
Customized job development strategy adopts an abundance philosophy. In other words, because there are no real limits on imagination, power or money in the world, the job market can expand through the sale of products and services that meet evolving needs or solve emerging problems for customers. Just as entrepreneurs find opportunities and create business, job developers find opportunities and create jobs.

Guided by the employment seeker’s profile, revealed through DPG, the ideal conditions of employment are targeted. Aligning the potential contributions of the job seeker with an ecologically relevant employment situation, without regard to existing job descriptions is, again, the key feature. The savvy employment specialist, or self-directed job seeker, is out to create employment, not react to what is available through the classified ads.

In the past, the seeming paucity of employment options offered by the job market resulted in settling for entry-level, stereotypical, and high turnover low-paying jobs for people with the most significant disabilities. The pro-active CE model replaces this passive, reactive approach, and corrects this situation by matching people’s individual talents and aspirations to relevant work environments. This effort requires knowledge and imagination; a re-tooling of how the job development process works.

Person-Centered Planning sought to reveal the “dreams” of people with disabilities. A consequence of this planning method was the pursuit of the “dream job.” Certainly, seeking a dream job is noble, but typically this pursuit failed. Dream jobs are actually problematic for a number of reasons.
1. Dream jobs are usually very unique and limited in number. For example, a young man dreams of being the coach of the Toronto Maple Leafs. There is no reason to think he cannot do this, however, only one such position exists and without experience and skills in hockey, management, and other related areas, it is quite unlikely that even exhaustive efforts will result in securing this job. Chances are the coach’s position was perhaps the most visible and desirable job to the individual, leading to this choice. But, by exploring this interest in hockey as one of the vocational themes, many tasks reveal themselves that may present opportunities to create employment related to hockey in particular, or in the sports field generally. In addition, by exploring what a hockey coach does, the power of being in charge might reveal itself as the motivating factor for the individual, thereby expanding exploration of management jobs in any number of fields. Finally, management positions may offer a symbolic escape from a life where control is typically not vested in the individual but rather in programs and professionals. The hockey (or sports) theme deserves exploration, and with the list of twenty places where the career makes sense and some imagination, many possibilities for a good job exist.

2. Dream jobs assume very limited vocational interests. Many people with complex disabilities have a paucity of life experience. DPG, coupled with various work experiences in school and perhaps as an adult, expands interests and choice making. Too often, family and staff close to the individual, and with the best intentions, suggest work based on their limited knowledge of the person. Because
some people with significant disabilities acquiesce to those in charge, or perhaps because the individual is prone to suggestion, the dream job identified is not a choice, but rather represents a decision to work or not to work. Dream job chases are often the result of thinking in terms of job descriptions rather than themes. Employment specialists should not be asking “what job would be best for this person?” they should instead be seeking out the myriad of environments where the person’s interests and skills best fit; and since the search is often for the first in a lifelong series of jobs, where interests can grow and skills are expanded and refined.

3. Dream jobs suggest a one-time career placement, instead of the growth and change expected from typical workers, who, in the western world, change jobs and careers multiple times.

4. The experience and talents of the professionals limit dream jobs. Stereotypical jobs for people with significant disabilities exist because the rehabilitation field has limited skills in teaching complex job tasks, and because our social and professional networks are typically limited to others in this or similar fields, and new ideas do not arise unless new people with unique experiences are engaged in the process. Most citizens have limited exposure to the wide world of industry and business, and therefore only have a passing knowledge of all the different jobs that exist. There are unlimited ways to make a living in the world.

5. Dream jobs reinforce the idea that people with significant disabilities are one-dimensional. Employment specialists need to recognize the complexity and potential of all human beings. Through life experience all people learn, adapt, and
expand their interests. Looking only at one work preference fails to acknowledge the appreciation of multiple, and perhaps unlimited, interests.

The CE process reveals that DPG and the use of very short work experiences reveal an array of employment opportunities in the community. The employment specialist using the lists of twenty to guide her to where the career makes sense, can locate or create job opportunities using inventive and imaginative strategies. Instead of making sales calls on random businesses, the employment specialist can decode a workplace by touring, arranging for time-limited work experiences, and getting past the ubiquitous entry-level positions to find the career opportunities often hidden from the view. These are the jobs behind the jobs.

Casual Job Development

Casual or naïve job development represents a subtle and effective means of creating employment. The process is individualized and highly variable, but follows a logical design. Typically during, and often following, DPG a series of informational interviews is arranged that both compliment and refine the information emerging as the employment specialist gets to know the job seeker. Mixing and matching the vocational themes sometimes results in a unique blend of skills and interests, and leads the job development quest into companies hidden from much of the community’s view. Information, and not a job, is being sought, thereby reducing the pressure on the individual, the employment specialist, and the employer. It is also perfectly acceptable to suggest to the employer that
while designing a career plan is the primary focus, finding a job would be a terrific opportunity as well. Below is a sample script for approaching an employer once a vocational interest has been uncovered. The employment specialist may call or stop by to see a particular employer, or arrange to be in attendance at a social or professional gathering where they can chat, and where the idea of an informational interview and tour can be broached.

For example, Ronny’s assessment process revealed that he had interests in the areas of old cars, mechanics, music, and art. He also enjoyed being around people and liked being busy. Ronny also liked working out and showing people how strong he was. Ronny lived in a medium sized city east of the Northern Rockies where no one seemed to be hiring, except for the oil companies and wheat farmers. The jobs they had seemed to all be based far from home and required some amount of isolation and distance from family; definitely not a match for Ronny’s ideal conditions of employment.

Combining two or more themes often results in unique prospecting clues, and tying art and old cars and mechanical interests together led to an informational interview with a chrome plating company. The employment specialist made an appointment to visit the manager at the local company and explained that she was a “career counselor” for the high school, and that Ronny was a hometown boy, set to graduate in the Spring, and that he was exploring various career options. She asked if it was possible to bring Ronny by for a brief thirty-minute discussion and maybe a tour of the business, simply to get some advice on choosing a career path in the restoration sector.
The employment specialist does not ask for a job or even a work experience; how could she when Ronny has not experienced the environmental match yet? She does not pressure the employer; she nor Ronny can ask for employment until they know if it matches his ideal conditions of employment, and if hiring Ronny would create profits for the company through the exploitation of his skills. Instead the employment specialist intuitively understands that employers care about their communities and their next generation of citizens. She also understands that most people enjoy giving advice to others; being a mentor and consultant; and being recognized for their experience, success, and knowledge. As such, the employer scheduled a time to talk with Ronny.

Over a decade of setting up experiences with this approach reveals a pattern that held true in Ronny’s case as well. Ronny was prepared by the employment specialist using a short role-playing exercise covering some key questions to ask about the chrome plating company, and both were prepared with several probing questions, including:

What does the future hold for the plating business?
Are other competitors challenging your market?
What technological advances are coming?
Do you have difficulty finding and training new employees?
Are there products or services that you are not providing, either because you cannot afford the investment in personnel or equipment, but that you believe your customers desire?
These queries are presented conversationally and interspersed with the probes from Ronny. Just as in DPG, the interview should not proceed as an interrogation, and employment specialists and job seekers alike should practice gathering information without the use of rapid-fire questioning. Using simple and leading statements generally elicits open-ended responses, rather than the yes or no answers one gets when going through a checklist.

For instance, the exchange may have resembled the following:

Ronny: “This looks like a busy place.”
Manager: “Well, yes it is. We have a dozen employees, and we handle plating from across the West. There are not many chrome plating companies left.”
Ronny: “I took auto-body class in high school and learned about taking dents out of bumpers. I’d like to learn more about it. It looks like you plate a lot of bumpers.”
Manager: “Yes, it’s a good part of our business. Plus we re-chrome all types of automotive trim, we chrome-plate pieces for a couple furniture companies, we work with a few artists who have sculptures plated. We have a growing business zinc and cadmium plating for the automotive and farm equipment industry, and we’ve expanded into powdercoating, which is a very different process.”

Employment Specialist: “Is there much competition in this business?”
Manager: “In the past there hasn’t been, in fact most companies have gone out of business leaving us most of the market in this part of the country. Reproduction parts and chrome plating is being done across China now where the environmental laws are not so
tough, but our product is superior and with the addition of powdercoating, we are doing well.”

Ronny: “I’ve never seen powdercoating, can you show it to us?”

Manager: “Sure. The preparation of the metal is similar to plating in that we have to sandblast off the old finish, or grind it off if needed. Then we put the piece in the spray room and spray the powder on. It’s held on through a static electrical charge, then baked in an oven at about 400 degrees. When it’s done, the finish is hard as rock. We do steel gates, metal picnic tables, lawn furniture, car frames and parts, office equipment, all kinds of stuff gets powder coated these days. The chrome plating is much more difficult because of the 3 chemical baths and the polishing and straightening that has to occur. Still, if you like to start with something plain or old and see it renewed or jazzed up with fun colors, then this is place to work.”

Employment Specialist: “Is it tough to find good employees?”

Manager: “Many of the kids we hire right out of high school, but they tend to move on. Our crew here is pretty experienced and most found this place when they were customers and eventually came to work here. It helps if you have a passion for art or cars or restoration, that kind of thing. It makes the quality matter to the worker because they know what it’s like to spend money on something that you want to look perfect.”

Ronny: “This looks like a lot to learn.”

As the tour proceeds new questions arise, and conversation continues. The employment specialist notices a host of small jobs and asks for some clarification of processes. The informational interview and tour are critical to getting a good sense of the hidden or
backroom operations of a business. In competitive employment the emphasis has been on responding to a job description, whereas in customized employment the detective work of uncovering the true operations of a company reveal job creation opportunities.

Both Ronny and the employment specialist made notes of the tasks Ronny found interesting. After a week, the employment specialist called the manager and asked for some additional advice:

“Thanks again for the tour and helping us clarify some of the questions Ronny and I had about your business. Ronny has been talking a lot about the tour and the insights you gave into the plating and powdercoating processes. I was hoping you could give me some recommendations on other businesses we could visit that would help us design his career plan, and if he might do a short internship with your company.”

After some further discussion about school-sponsored training, the lack of liability issues, and Ronny’s safety considering his use of crutches, the manager accepted the work experience proposal. Ronny fit in and was teamed up with senior workers who showed him how to use an air grinder to remove old chrome from crevices on bumpers and parts; and how to wipe down a piece about to be powdercoated with Prepsol in order to clean it for better pigment adherence. With just a bit of coaching Ronny became a part-time employee during his senior year.

No selling occurred; the process engaged the employer in conversation with someone with similar interests and allowed opportunities to evolve. Of course, the employment
specialist guided the initial interactions, pointed out opportunities to all parties as they arose, and gently pulled Ronny and the employer together by highlighting their mutual interests. Closing the deal is still a critical ingredient in the job development process.

Work Experience/Informal Internships

Work experiences and informal internships remain an important component of job development. Work experience should generally be paid at commensurate wages and should last long enough to for the individual to get a good sense of the tasks and the trade. Typically the pay derives form various training programs, or through day program funding or supported employment allocations to the rehabilitation agency. Employers do not generally pay the wages unless a formal internship is established. Depending upon the person, work experiences range from a few hours to multiple weeks.

The impact of wages during this assessment and showcasing of skills is important. Without pay, some job seekers see work as punishment or that work offers little benefit to them. The absence of pay is also stigmatizing. The argument that an individual may not “understand” money is eclipsed knowing that those around that person understand the importance of pay and see the absence of it as another indictor of the person’s lack of worth. Finally, the lack of pay suggests that the person is a volunteer. Most people volunteer after their financial responsibilities are met, and not before. There exists some folklore that volunteer work leads to employment, but there is only scattered anecdotal evidence to support this assertion, and in fact volunteering may actually weaken an
individual’s case for pay by providing free labor in the first place. If a job try-out is in a not-for-profit or government setting it may have some legitimacy, but for-profit businesses do not have volunteers.

There are some commonsense guidelines for establishing informal internships and work experiences. These include:

1. Do not displace regular employees of the company;
2. Maintain continued and direct supervision of the worker by either a representative of the rehabilitation agency or by employees of the business;
3. A formal (written) training plan that details the skills being taught should guide the placement;
4. The periods of time spent by the individual at any site or in any clearly distinguishable job classification are specifically detailed by the formal training plan.

Social Capital Accumulation and Networking

Social capital is defined as the goodwill and reciprocity inherent in relationships. Knowing others and sharing their interests, neighborhoods, cultures, ideals, and/or values is at the heart of social capital. It is the underlayment of networking; purposeful connection to others for mutual gain. Customized Employment rests on knowing the employer base before beginning a job search. But, since this is not always possible, methods of warming-up job development calls are utilized. Networking is the generally accepted strategy of introduction and a tremendous amount of information is available on
the topic through basic internet searches. Studies suggest that networking strategies are used by over 50% of successful job candidates, and that the more diverse the members of that network, the greater the options for employment.

Rehabilitation personnel and job seeker networks remain weak due to numerous factors including:

1. Rehabilitation is a charitable cause and not expected or typically encouraged to participate in the business activities of the community;
2. Employment specialists tend to be young and unsettled with few personal or professional resources available to them for engaging actively in civic clubs or even entertaining prospective employers over a meal or drinks;
3. Job seekers are disproportionately poor and lack the mobility needed to participate in many community activities;
4. Rehabilitation organizations, and therefore those served by them, are often isolated physically and psychologically from the mainstream community.

The good news is that ending this isolation, and creating social capital and healthy business networks is solvable. Active participation is the key. Passive attendance at the local Chamber of Commerce event does little to enlist the community in the cause of employment for people with disabilities. Agencies should hire, train, and support employment staff to engage community members in meaningful ways. Strategies that increase social capital and community networks include:
1. Giving employment specialists time and money to join service clubs (Kiwanis, Chamber of Commerce, Civitan, et al.) or participate in activities that match their interests and provide the potential for meeting local business owners;

2. Facilitating self-directed job seekers joining service clubs and participating in activities that match their interests and aspirations, for the same reasons as above;

3. Providing a small entertainment petty cash fund for employment specialists to use buying lunches for possible employers;

4. Refining agency goals and operations to foster employment and community building as the most significant outcome, and eliminating stereotypical messages about people with disabilities through such events as segregated sports and pity-based fundraising (e.g. “Jerry’s kids”).

One method for identifying and initiating the development of social capital and networking is relationship charting. Critical to DPG is the recognition of stakeholder relationships. For instance, each member of a DPG team, draws up a list of everyone known to them, from family to best friends, to employees of local businesses they patronize. Because the majority people in any community are employed, their careers or places of employment are listed. The team searches the list for job matches related to the job seeker’s themes, skills, preferences and talents. Matches are refined to determine if this person is appropriate for a job development call, or if that individual might know within their company, or supplier and customer chains, who, with an introduction, could be contacted for employment information. Generally networks are “mined” to reveal potential connections.
An important activity is having all employees of the rehabilitation agency or public school complete a relationship map and agree to use their social capital to develop introductions of job seekers and job developers. The potential for connections to employers is tremendous. In a recent situation, a young man was interested in doing police work of some kind, and he wanted to tour the local police training academy. However, efforts to get access were denied by the law enforcement administration. During the team meeting a staff member from another program happened by carrying a large box of hats she’d brought in to show day program consumers. The hats were part of her father’s collection from his travels around the world. Someone on the team asked about her father and she reported that after he retired, he decided to travel and collect hats. He had been a local police official for 35 years. There was the team’s access to the police academy, right there in front of them.

**Exercise: Relationship Mapping**

Provide each staff member and DPG team member with this chart. Suggest that Board of Directors and School Board members offer their relationships and social capital too as part of their governance and advocacy role. The sample relationship chart below provides for listing names, relationship, career, trade, or personal interest area, and the best means of contact. A database of relationship maps is maintained by the employment specialist and used to match job seekers to potential employers and citizens in the community with similar interests, for use in DPG activities.
Relationship Chart

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<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Relationship to me (e.g. friend, family, acquaintance, customer)</th>
<th>Career/Trade/Interest</th>
<th>Contact Information</th>
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Go Where the Career Makes Sense

Networking represents only one method of job prospecting, but it is quite effective. Where no connection to vocational interests is available through existing connections, go where the career makes sense. This is the foundation of informational interviewing; identifying people in a business matching those interests and asking them to advise the job seeker on steps to getting employed, gaining skills, or exploring related options further. As in any job development approach, an offer of employment is never guaranteed, but the career information gleaned forms the foundation of the job search.

One example of this technique involves Daniel, a middle-aged gentleman with limited work history who decided he wanted to start an urban vegetable farm. While the team debated the merits of the idea and found multiple reasons Daniel’s idea would not work, including his sensitivity to hot weather, his lack of acreage, a paucity of start-up capital, and limited access to markets, the employment specialist helped him outline his business model over a cup of coffee, then also discussed with him the task of making a list of twenty regarding food and agriculture. Acknowledging and accepting his career goals was a validating and critical first step in building a trusting relationship with a Daniel.

The quick bit of farming research revealed start-up costs well out of reach of Daniel’s resources and alternative approaches slowly evolved, including forming a co-operative of like-minded (not disabled) people, getting a community garden plot, or going to work on a farm to save for his own land. The team and Daniel made a list of twenty places where people with similar interests worked. They made appointments and began a series of
informational interviews to find out how others’ careers developed and also what they thought about the idea of an urban farm. Surprisingly, most people thought the idea was solid and that there was a market for such goods, but that affordable land would be hard to find. Daniel was not deterred and insisted that development work on his farm continue.

At this point the manager of a local grocery store was enlisted for an informational interview. As he led Daniel and the employment specialist through the produce preparation room in the bowels of the store, Daniel asked what it was like to work there. The manager explained the daily chores, the different types of jobs, and the rush work that accompanied special sales and Saturday mornings, and the packaging they did for their sister stores, since this central location served as a distribution center. Daniel explained his interest in organic vegetables and the manager noted that he himself had begun work at this very store as a high school student. At the end of the hour interview/tour, the manager asked Daniel if he might be interested in a part-time job in the produce section, unloading deliveries, waxing vegetables, and assisting with deliveries to the other stores in the area.

Daniels’ meetings with others, getting advice on how to start his business, and then being open to a related job of interest, led to employment working with vegetables. This was not farming; in fact, the danger of thinking in business models or job descriptions is that it shields candidates from the multiple options that exist and that may be as satisfying as their “dream”. And even when this method does not result in a job, the advice given is often crucial for the job seeker’s decision making, and in leading from one contact to
another. Again, the employment specialist, or the job seeker, is not looking for a specific job title or description, nor is this an attempt to detour employment seekers away from the complexity of business ownership or advanced careers. The goal is to explore many options and to match working conditions to the individual’s potential contribution to the business. Someone interested in raising dogs would prompt visits and informational interviews with veterinarians, pet stores, dog kennels, dog breeders, pet food manufacturers, et al. And each of these visits will reveal unseen back-office operations, as well as other related industry sectors not obvious at first.

Teams and employment specialists must be aware that many first time job seekers want jobs in specific companies due to limited exposure to worklife; they go with what they know, or believe. This is why DPG is crucial for serving individuals with little or no work or life experience. Some people want to work at hamburger or ice cream stands because they envision a friendly place where their favorite foods are available all through the shift; or they once had a brief work experience in such an establishment and were paid for the first time in their lives. In reality, these jobs are fast-paced, difficult, and often end in failure. This causes loss of motivation and status for the job seeker, and costs the rehabilitation agency thousands of dollars a year in placement support, as well as a damaged reputation with employers, funders, and consumers.

The point is not that people do not make their livings in these type of business, thousands do. The point is that ice cream and cheeseburgers were likely not the impetus for their career decision. Observing the operations of a large bakery reveals that indeed some
people work there because they do indeed love bread, but the truck drivers are probably there because they love to drive, and the Information technology people are there because they love computers, and the nutritionists are there because they excelled in chemistry. Going where the career makes sense refines and expands the interests of the job seeker, builds the network, and reveals the many operations performed even in the smallest companies.

Uncovering these back-office tasks is the core function in inventive job creation. Acknowledging someone’s interest in baking, or cheeseburgers, or grooming dogs is important and many good first jobs have been developed following these clues. However, many of these positions are high turnover, weak in the provision of consistent natural supports and co-workers, with little opportunity for career advancement. Since most people with complex disabilities only get a couple tries at a good job, strategic efforts should be made. The employment specialist must dig below surface expressions of interest in jobs involving animals, ice cream, meeting people, and music. These, and other similar characteristics, are human traits and almost everyone enjoys these same things. That does not mean we choose these as careers. Stereotypical jobs are rooted in the pursuit of these commonalities; the best jobs are more difficult to discern.

Rigorous on-site evaluation of the operations of a company often uncovers better and more interesting tasks that make up the jobs-behind-the-jobs. Most employment specialists, and customers too, see only the most visible work a company’s employees perform. This is the tip of the iceberg in job development; 80% of the jobs remain out of
sight. The jobs hidden from public view often provide a wealth of variety, require more sustained training, and provide better wages. Linking skills and interests to these hidden tasks and duties present lively options for job carving, creation, and profitable experimentation.

There are many tasks and many pieces of laborsaving equipment in even the simplest businesses that are beyond the view of the Human Resources office or the front door. Countless auto parts stores have paint shops in the back that serve local body shops; businesses of any size have computer rooms or at least numerous computer tasks that need to be performed; many businesses have data collection, inventory, and clerical departments; public recreation programs have equipment repair rooms and snack bars; super markets wax vegetables, butcher meat, and bake cakes out of sight of the customers. Social capital and networking, combined with going where the career makes sense, reveals these myriad tasks performed even in the most basic enterprises.

Skills and Tasks
Describing someone as “skilled” is crucial to developing meaningful work. Skills are actually accumulations of tasks a person has mastered. For instance, someone identified as a welder displays numerous task competencies including: the ability to discern metal types and alloys; the ability to determine the best welding method for the job at hand (e.g. oxy-acetylene; MIG, TIG, ARC); the ability to determine the type of weld required (e.g. stitch, butt, tack, spot); the ability to regulate the heat and penetration of the weld; the ability to perform the skill safely, etc. During DPG, skill sets are revealed and described
that are actually collections of tasks that have been mastered or that could likely be taught in the proper environments using appropriate instructional techniques and/or technology.

Job development requires the identification of individual task competencies that can be matched to tasks needing completion in businesses, regardless of whether they represent mastery of the skill they compose. In other words, someone who knows how to make toast can do that task without having to know how to cook eggs. A job carving or restructuring approach would be used to customize such a job in a restaurant, thereby maximizing use of the individual’s task competency without necessitating their having to achieve the skill of “breakfast preparation” before being ready for the job.

During job development, work is sought that matches the tasks and the skills of the individual. Having a thorough list of personal job seeker competencies allows the employment specialist to match the person to the particular job elements. A list of a 10 or 12 skills/tasks or so for each job seeker is the minimum recommended when job developing.

**Exercise: Personal skills and task abilities become second nature over time. Please make a list of your skills and the related tasks. If stuck, begin with turning you’re your alarm clock in the morning, and think through morning routine tasks including: showering, making breakfast, dressing your children for school, driving to work, etc. These are all high level skills that exhibit executive decision-making**
and diverse competencies, but are so routine they are often overlooked as the building blocks of employability and social belonging.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Skills</th>
<th>Associated Tasks</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Mowing the Lawn</td>
<td>a. recognize the lawn requires mowing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>b. get gas for mower</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>c. check oil</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>d. start mower</td>
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<td></td>
<td>e. mow in systematic fashion</td>
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<td></td>
<td>f. follow safe mowing practices</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>g. store mower when done</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>h. rake up grass clippings</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>i. etc</td>
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<td>3.</td>
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<th>6.</th>
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<th>7.</th>
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Sales Tactics and Materials

Customized Employment does not emphasize selling as the principal task in job development, but having basic sales skills is important. Utilizing interest-based
negotiation, listening and problem-solving strategies, handling objections, and personal management are essential. Representing one’s self, the job seeker, and organization as competent is clearly important. Job developers have a duty to present themselves in a manner that signifies competence and confidence; that assures employers of the ability to solve problems, to speak for the agency, and to represent the job seeker’s wishes.

What gets communicated during job development is important. Language free of human services jargon and sales spin is necessary. Clarity regarding the responsibilities of each party when developing work is critical to natural supports development, as well, and using direct language as in “your new employee” when describing the hiring of an individual makes the subtle point that the employment specialist’s role is to support both the employer and new hire in worksite assimilation. The employment specialist should also clearly point out that their role is to support the natural training and supervision process by providing additional and more powerful teaching strategies, as needed, but not to replace or radically modify typical worksite training, communication, or support. Using the term “your new employee” sends the clear message that the employer has responsibility for the individual’s success, and not the rehabilitation program; that this is a true investment in the business and the individual. And, this statement speeds fading from the job site, assuming too that a proper ecological match was made, and thereby driving down cost to the rehabilitation agency. Technical skills are critical to sales success and customer service; without these tools proper job match is difficult to achieve.

Refining Job Development Language
A common tool useful in developing team-consistent language for use in job development is the Features/Benefits chart. Completing this chart as a team brings consistency to the message everyone representing job seekers can use. The Features/Benefits exercise frames the message but it should not overshadow the individual; this is a customer service conversation improvement tool and not a sales tool for the CE program. The exercise is meant to refine the dialog with employers and screen out the ubiquitous jargon and acronyms of human services employees. Businesses do not hire programs, they hire individuals, and therefore the emphasis is placed on one individual at a time, matched to one distinct employer.

Completing the Features and Benefits chart is easy. Simply list the features of the CE service in one column and determine at least one benefit to the employer of that feature. Completion of the form provides each employment specialist with a script explaining their role in the process. The Features/Benefit chart below provides a typical example:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Feature</th>
<th>Benefit</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Job Match</td>
<td>Only qualified job seekers are presented for employment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Job Analysis</td>
<td>We analyze your processes in order to offer efficient training &amp; supervision assistance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Job Coaching</td>
<td>We assist you and your new employee with training and adaptations as needed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>On-Going Support</td>
<td>We stand ready to assist in the future as job duties are expanded</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High Quality</td>
<td>Local employers we work with include BC Light &amp; Power, Kelowna Tractor, Okanagan Wheat Co-Operative, Cranbrook SuperMarkets, Superfine Computers, Fernie Public Library, etc.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Feature/Benefits Exercise

Develop a Features/Benefits chart for your organization. When complete, craft a brief introduction for use in social and business situations, that captures the most critical features, to respond to the question: What do you do for a living?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Feature</th>
<th>Benefits</th>
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What do you do for a living?

My 30-second Introduction:

Now, when the employment specialist is explaining her job during a face-to-face meeting with an employer, at a civic club mixer, or other professional/social event, the rehearsed, but casual, conversation can succinctly capture the essence of the person and their job. The properly prepared employment specialist, faced with the standard, “What do you do for a living?” can answer that he is “a career counselor for CareerTrax. We match job
candidates to appropriate employers and utilize a systematic support strategy to assist employers as they orient and train their new employee. What do you do?”

Leave Behinds

Job development calls generally benefit from use of a leave-behind. These include business cards, maybe a brochure or fact sheet, and for specific job development would typically include a well-designed resume highlighting the contribution potential and the experience of the employment seeker. All language used in such tools should be people-first and respectful, and again be free of program language and jargon.

The use of brochures raises several issues. Quality brochures or pamphlets are expensive and time consuming to produce; they likely require several rounds of approval and may be outdated before they get used; agencies have to live with any mistakes or misrepresentations until the next budget allows for reprinting; and they may promote the organization and overlook the job seeker. Fact sheets are a flexible and efficient compromise for employment agencies.

A Fact Sheet (such as the one shown below) supports and reinforces job development efforts within the confines of tight budgets. A Fact Sheet is prepared with word processing software, utilizing large, stylish type, and printed on one side, using a high quality desktop printer or a professional print shop. Good quality, light colored paper is required to give the reader a solid tactile sensation. Only as many as are needed for the next few sales calls are printed; they are edited and reprinted as needed in order to meet
the needs of specific job seekers and employers. The Fact Sheet should appear clean by design with significant white-space, be easy to read and professional looking. Bullet-points help assure the material will be read.

Fact Sheets generally contain only a few brief statements regarding the agency’s approach to working with employers. Occasionally Fact Sheets are designed to address specific industries (computer repair; the healthcare industry; agriculture) when consumer interests align with these industries. The low production cost of a Fact Sheet makes updates and target-marketing possible.

The next section should list endorsements from local companies that the agency serves. When targeting a particular industry, list related businesses. The more specific the types of businesses and competitors listed, the more relevance an employer will see to her operation. For instance, if the agency has successfully supported individuals in a number of agriculture enterprises, a Fact Sheet accompanying a job seeker interested in agriculture, with a section listing half a dozen farms and ranches will impress a potential employer in that industry sector. Fact Sheets can also list a specific job seeker’s talents and experience, thereby making the Fact Sheet much more direct and personally focused. A personalized Fact Sheet matched to specific industries is a fine accompaniment to a resume or portfolio that uses pictures to represent a job seeker’s experience and talents.

Employer testimonials help sell the potential employee. Marketing research indicates that employers want to hear what others think of a product or service, and these endorsements
establish credibility in the marketplace, providing prospective employers some comfort in knowing that their competitors trust this approach to hiring people with disabilities.

The Fact Sheet also clearly lists the contact person, generally the employment specialist. The addition of a pager or home phone number illustrates a commitment to working with the employer and represents the reassurance a business owner needs when weighing their hiring options.

The Fact Sheet is no place to explain disability labels, service categories, or funding sources. This information detracts from the mission to put the employer and potential employee at the center of attention. Besides, no employer hires a program, they hire individuals.
Fast Facts From CareerTrax

CareerTrax is a local organization that matches qualified job seekers to positions in local businesses.

Our specialty is improving recruitment, training, productivity, and customer service in consultation with BC employers.

We support you in training your new employee their job and use your methods to guarantee achievement.

CareerTrax uses professional Employment Specialists that analyze job tasks and fill positions with skilled workers.

LOCAL BUSINESS PATRONS

3D Printing     Northern Grain Producers     Prism Web Designers
Olsen Concrete     ValleyWide Health Clinic
The Vancouver Times     Okanagan University     DogEase Kennels

"CareerTrax provided us with a great employee and first rate customer service".
   Sal Rutherford, Production Engineer
   Davis Architects

"A solid and reliable resource for small business".
   Mason Lowry, Owner
   DogEase Kennels

For Information on CareerTrax Employment Services Please contact:

Francis Salisbury    Phone: Office: (918) 951-1353
Employment Specialist    Home: (918) 951-6981
CareerTrax    Cellular: (918) 980-2727
12 South Brunswick, Kelowna, BC 80632    Email: FS@careertrax.com
Fact Sheet Exercise:

Design your own Fact Sheet; target a specific Industry group based on past employment successes and an industry sector match with a person on your job development rolls. Present your design/text to the class using a sheet of flipchart paper taped to the classroom wall. (Note to instructor: this can also be done as a homework assignment).

Digital Portfolios

The identification and collection of personal attributes accomplished in DPG, the job exploration process, and the writing of the personal descriptive narrative creates a summary of job experiences, preferred and mastered tasks, and discrete skills that can be captured in a digital portfolio typically displayed using a PowerPoint presentation. The portfolio is especially effective because it makes the employment seeker the focus of the process, and not the employment specialist. Portfolios are also designed with and for the consumer, highlighting the match to a particular field of interest or to a specific employer, they are readily updated or customized to reflect the nuances of a particular business or employer, and can be narrated for playback if the job seeker so desires due to the anticipation of nervousness or due to issues with verbal language.

Creating a digital portfolio is straightforward. During DPG, and any previous work experience or job, no opportunity to snap a few pictures with a digital camera should be missed. A portfolio is made up of a series of pictures of the individual at work, and is best capped with just a few images of the person being an active citizen (e.g. pictures of
volunteering or in a public meeting), a family member (e.g. pictures of cooking dinner or assisting a younger sibling), and as an individual with multiple interests and hobbies (e.g. a picture of bowling night or changing the oil in a car). Avoid pictures that feature others with disabilities and/or shots taken in a day program or at Special Olympics.

The best shows are active; they show engagement with others and they show tasks being performed. The images should illustrate that the individual interacts with co-workers, can safely operate equipment and tools, and otherwise highlights the individual’s competencies. Generally not much in the way of captions is needed other than a listing of career interests and skills on a slide; a listing of work history and experiences; and a slide perhaps discussing equipment they have mastered, personal hobbies, and civic engagement (i.e. “I belong to Rotary”). Some pictures of the prospective employee using a job modification or an assistive device may be a good way of answering the employer’s unformulated questions about how they might have to accommodate a worker with significant disabilities.

And answering these unformulated questions before they become rigidly set in the employers mind is the strength of any digital portfolio. Therefore, the pictures should emphasize competencies, action, normalcy, teamwork and independence both, and especially the skills the individual brings to the job. Pictures are worth a thousand words, so error on the side of action-oriented images and minimize text. In past portfolios the pictures that seemed to have the most impact were as follows:
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Image Composition</th>
<th>Reasoning</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A picture of a young man using a walkie talkie on a job site</td>
<td>Communication with employees with disabilities concerns employers. A picture of the individual communicating helps calm these fears, and also illustrates the use of technology, self-management, and concern for the company (“checking in with the boss” might be the picture caption if needed)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A picture of a young woman using crutches standing next to her car</td>
<td>Having a car signals a certain amount of reliability; illustrates her ability to use simple adaptations (crutches) to accomplish typical tasks such as driving; connotes safety and independence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A picture of a man running a drill press wearing eye protection</td>
<td>This communicates safety, skills, and productivity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A picture of a woman throwing hay to horses</td>
<td>Illustrates physical strength, passion for animals, and confidence being around strong animals</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A picture of a man sorting mail</td>
<td>Shows concentration, reading skills, proper dress for office work</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A picture of a woman entering data at a computer</td>
<td>Illustrates learning potential, the mastery of technology, academic skills</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A picture of a young man in full firefighter dress in front of a fire engine</td>
<td>Shows fearlessness, competence to have completed the training course, community involvement, teamwork</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Volunteer fire house</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The photos should be reviewed by the job seeker, and of course, all confidentiality issues discussed and documented prior to public disclosure. The digital portfolio is a visual resume that highlights the individual’s strengths. These images, along with discussion and narration by the job seeker, help employers visualize supervising and training an individual with disabilities, and provide concrete evidence of productivity and competence.

The portfolio is shown via laptop during the informational interview or when interviewing for a job, in order to solicit advice on next steps from the employer and to
sell oneself as a capable employee. Generally a portfolio consists of a dozen or so slides making it conversational and not overwhelmingly long.

The prospective employee with a rich job history may wish to showcase a few of their best talents, or the ones that best mesh with their current career goals and a specific employer or industry sector. If no pictures exist from previous jobs, stage some shots but make certain to point out during the job development call that these are recreations.

And, again, one important aspect of the digital portfolio is that the job seeker can use it to personally guide the employer through their resume. This creates a unique circumstance that is impressive in content and circumstance, and it allows the individual to detail and exhibit their competence at various tasks and with using a laptop computer too. If the job seeker needs support, the job developer might assist, but should never dominate the conversation.

**Exercise: Design a storyboard for a job seeker you are currently working with using this table to detail the pictures and captions.**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Image</th>
<th>Representation</th>
<th>Optional or Necessary Caption</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Example: Jim standing on a ladder painting a wall</td>
<td>Painting skills; implies safety</td>
<td>Employer: Working at Kamloops Interior Design</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>2.</td>
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<td>3.</td>
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<td>4.</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Handling Employer Concerns

The digital portfolio goes a long in assuaging issues, but some concerns will likely remain in the mind of the employer. And while the portfolio and the career planning/informational interview approach set forth in this chapter do mitigate the harsh realities of traditional sales approaches to job development, the employment specialist is still faced with the pain of rejection. For many companies, hiring someone with a significant disability still represents a risk, and risks can result in revenue losses, and these losses mean their market position is weakened. All job developers must remember that hiring anyone is a tough decision, and that hiring a person with a disability demands careful consideration in any company.

It is crucial that employment specialists do not consider objections or hesitations as employer disparagement of people with disabilities. In fact, the private sector donates
considerable time and money to charities and community projects for those considered disadvantaged. Good employment specialists understand that “no” is only no for today and that objections are actually a symptom of the need for more clarity and information.

There are two very helpful approaches, among many, to address the common concerns of employers. The first tool is the Left-Hand/Right Hand analysis developed by Harvard Business School professor Chris Argyris. The tool is very effective and useful in framing a role-play with the job seeker or other members of the employment team. Using the Left Hand/Right Hand analysis involves dividing a piece of paper, or a computer screen, into two columns. In the left column the key phrases of the pending job development discussion are listed, and for each point, in the right hand column the employment specialist writes out the anticipated employer objections. This exercise makes the job developer practice, anticipate objections, and construct a draft script that anticipates concerns before they have had time to form solidly in the employer’s mind. Preparation is critical, and this tool provides a simple-to-use framework for anticipating objections and composing effective responses. Below is a job carving example for a young man starting out as a “carpenter’s assistant” for a large construction company:
**Left Hand/Right Hand Analysis**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Left Hand Analysis</th>
<th>Right Hand Analysis</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. What did you think of the job carving proposal for Jeffrey?</td>
<td>1. I liked it. I think he’d be good at it.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Perhaps I could provide you with some samples of other job carves we’ve done in other companies to show them? I would also be happy to sketch out a new job description using your format.</td>
<td>2. I am concerned that Human Resources will not accept another modification to a job description.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. I understand your concern about the safety. Actually the safety record of people with disabilities exceeds other workers, but again, I’d be happy to put something in writing for HR and show that insurance rates will not go up, nor will other workers be in jeopardy. I can also detail the coaching we’ll provide to your new employee and your team as they orient Jeffrey to his job tasks. Since he’s already has several work experiences doing construction, the initial training should go quickly.</td>
<td>3. Sounds good. I’ll get with HR and iron this out.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. How about we aim for a start date of</td>
<td>4. If Management approves.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>5. Sounds good.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Monday the 7th?

5. I’ll call you Thursday and see how your meeting went, and if you’d like me to be there, I’ll be happy to attend.

The second tool is: Feel, Felt, Found. The strength of Feel, Felt, Found is in its acknowledgement of the employer’s viewpoint. Feel, Felt, Found calmly provides a reasoned response. For instance, suppose an employer complains that liability insurance will increase if an employee with a disability is hired, as was hinted at in the previous example. One response might be:

“I understand how you feel. No one would want harm to come to anyone and we would not recommend Jeffrey for the job if we felt there were major safety concerns. Still, when I started working with companies, helping solve their recruitment and training problems, I felt these concerns needed investigation and serious consideration. What I, and our many customers, found is that insurance premiums do not increase. In fact, safety records for people with disabilities, according to several studies conducted by companies such as the DuPont Corporation, are actually as good as or better than those for people without disabilities.”

While no approach fits all circumstances, having a few problem-solving negotiation tools helps the employment specialist organize her thoughts, remain composed, and present a
calm and logical response to commonplace objections. Job development involves finding common ground between the stakeholders and logically addressing concerns with honesty and the facts.

**Top Dozen Personal Job Development Skills**

Customized employment rests on creating relationships. These tips provide general guidelines for employment specialists:

1. Be Prepared. Employment specialists must know the job seeker’s ideal conditions of employment and be able to match these with specific employers.

2. Job Development is personal. Customers want to know you care about their business. Don’t be too quick to solve problems; respect the complexity of running a business.

3. Hiring is personal. Remember that a connection between the employer and the applicant over common interests and enthusiasm for the work often leads to employment success. Emphasize common bonds.

4. Listening is more important than talking. Unless the employment specialist is hearing what the customers need, the wrong placement scenario may be developed, injuring the opportunity for a lasting relationship.
5. First impressions can make or break job development. Employment specialists should be aware of interfering. “Cold calls” made without prior contact are seldom appreciated. Use a “warm call” approach. A call is warmed up through the use of one’s connections or social capital, sending out a letter of introduction, meeting a prospect at a professional or social gathering and following up with a phone call later.

6. Handle objections professionally. Companies unfamiliar with hiring people with disabilities may doubt their viability. Listen respectfully, but anticipate concerns and respond professionally.

7. Accept that sometimes employers need to say no. Sometimes business is just business. Remain respectful and polite; remember that no is just no for today. By walking away promising to be in touch later, the customer is relieved from making a decision they wish to avoid, and they may remember the employment specialist’s graciousness later.

8. Stay in touch. If an employer or job seeker asks questions the employment specialist does not know the answers to, make certain to find out and get back in touch with that customer. Maintain the relationship.

9. Be succinct. Be conversational, but don’t over do it. Comment on a picture in the office or ask about the employer’s family, but keep it short and sweet. Employers are busy people, and employment specialists should respect that.
10. Get a referral. Whether a job is secured or not, ask the employer for the name of someone else in a similar business or someone they believe might be interested in knowing about the individual job seeker. During DPG and initial job development planning, this adds substance to the themes and the lists of twenty.

11. Manage yourself. Fight delays; Keep appointments; write up job analyses immediately; manage time, and do not miss deadlines.

12. Offer high quality customer service. Keep your promises; honor appointments and call ahead if you are going to be late; job site training occurs as negotiated; and support is conveniently accessed by employer and employment seeker alike. Make certain people answering the phones at agency headquarters are informed and courteous; make certain you can be reached in an emergency. Do not promise what your agency cannot deliver.

Conclusion

Recent studies of employment specialists revealed that less than 20% of their time is actually spent on job development tasks. Customized employment re-directs the professional’s attention away from the emphasis on job site training and instead focuses it on finding the best ecological fit between worker, her skills, and the worksite. This shift away from a job-coaching function is evidenced by a less-invasive and more consultative role aimed at engaging the natural trainers and co-workers. Job development and matching the ideal conditions of employment are more critical than in past practice.
because when job seekers are effectively matched with work and business-cultures that enhance their contribution and personal genius, the need for long-term job coaching is significantly reduced.
Informational Interview Template

Informational interviewing is a great way to develop work experiences, build a job placement network, to discover new tasks and jobs of interest to the employment seeker, to introduce yourself and your organization to employers, and to build the database that all of us rely on for employment ideas when beginning a job search with someone.

Special note: Informational interviews are a critical element during Discovering Personal Genius (DPG) when information for the vocational profile and not a job, is being sought. This is when it should be made clear to the host employer that the mission is truly to gather information about the business, its related tasks, and its relevance to the employment seeker. Once job development commences, the employment specialist using informational interviews to go where the career makes sense, uses the interview in the same way (i.e. looking for a vocational match of interests, tasks, and skills). However, upon recognizing that a company does indeed match the individual’s vocational profile, the employment specialist should state clearly that while this began as an exploration, there does seem to be a job match. Then, a job can be pursued without it seeming that the employer was tricked into the conversation. Generally, the realization of a match comes after several informational interviews in a variety of companies, and so the follow up is usually straightforward, with a call or a scheduled meeting with the employer to discuss interest in hiring.

The Process

Getting an appointment for an informational interview is usually much easier than setting up a job development meeting. A casual conversation with a prospective employer at the monthly Chamber of Commerce “Business After Hours” social or at a service club meeting (e.g. Kiwanis, Rotary, Lions, et al.) can lead to a probe such as, “I’ve never seen your operation before, would you mind if I called you to set up a time for a tour and a bit of a chat? I am working on a career plan with a young woman right now who has an interest in your industry, perhaps you could give her some career advice and suggest her next steps?” Most folks love to talk about their business and since you are not pressing them, a tour is considered low-risk. Make sure to follow-up soon, before the conversation is forgotten, and to illustrate your commitment.

Generally a request for fifteen to thirty minutes works well because it signals respect for the person’s time, and it indicates that you are busy as well. Experience shows that fifteen minutes always becomes thirty to sixty minutes once the discussion and tour begins.

On-site, the employment specialist and job seeker are seeking information about the company, its hiring practices, what opportunities exist to create or carve jobs, and getting insights into the company culture. The general format of an informational interview is:
1. Brief Discussion prompted by the employment specialist asking something to effect of: “Before we tour, can you tell us a bit about the history of the business, the products and services, and how the business is evolving?” And, “Tell us how you got into this line of work.” People want to know that you care, so give them a chance to talk about themselves.

2. Tour, with questions asked by the job seeker and the employment specialist at appropriate times and of various people performing the many tasks along the way.

3. Wrap-up by thanking the person for their time, and ask for any advice they have for the career plan, other businesses they that should be visited (ask for a referral!), etc. Make your exit and promise to stay in touch.

Throughout the process, opportunities to ask questions conversationally exist. Since this is not a job development visit, do not press someone for a job. That comes later in the relationship. For now, the tour is answering questions about the varying tasks and duties people perform, the values and culture of the company, and needs the business has that your organization or workers can address.

The tour provides an opportunity to witness, for instance, the level of natural support that may be available to the job seeker if hired. Keen observation reveals whether co-workers and supervisors help each other out during a typical day; it reveals who does the training and how an employment specialist might structure the initiation period so that the employer takes significant responsibility for supervision and training right from the start; it reveals what is valued on the worksite, such as muscle, brains, humor, attendance, speed, quality or other worker traits. These are important considerations, of course, when designing a job match that minimizes on-site training and consultation.

The interviewing process, as well, reveals opportunities or issues if the place of employment does not provide a good working environment. Some standard questions for an informational interview, again, asked in a conversational and not an interrogative tone, include:

1. Where do you find or recruit employees? (This is asked to create an opportunity to discuss the service you provide).

2. How are people trained in their jobs? (This gives information about natural training means and methods that can be integrated into a job match and training plan, especially one that recognizes that in most cases business already trains its employees and that the support you offer is customizing their training, not replacing it).

3. What are the prerequisites for working here? (This points out the various qualifications, certifications, etc., that might be needed).
4. How or where do your employees gain the experience required to work here? (Another question that gets at qualifications and that seeks the advice of the “expert.” This also gives the employment specialist and job seeker a list of other similar companies).

5. What personal characteristics do you look for in employees? (This gives insight into the kind of candidate the employer seeks; provides information on what to highlight in a resume or interview; and gives a glimpse inside the culture of the company regarding the most valued skills and attributes).

6. When employees leave, what other industries or businesses do they go to? (This starts getting at issues of staff turnover, which might be an indicator of a great place to work in the case where no one leaves, to an indication of poor management in the case where there is high turnover. It also provides the job developer with information on related industries and possible opportunities for someone interested in similar work).

7. What are the pay and benefit rates?

8. What are the work hours? Is there shift work? Does the company allow for flex time or other job accommodations? (This gives the employment specialist insight into the flexibility of management and the company’s policies on work hours and expected work effort).

9. What impact is technology having on the industry? (This is a common concern for most businesses today and provides an opportunity to explore using Resource Ownership strategies to propose a job for someone who can use or bring with them a piece of essential technology).

10. What are the current forces for change in this industry? (This question often leads to a lively discussion of how the market is changing, how personnel preparation and training is evolving, and how the competitive market is adapting).

All these questions and their answers breed additional questions and discussion points that provide opportunities to solve labor problems or to innovate in the face of emerging trends in hiring. Informational interviews are a low-tech, high-touch option that provides insight into the inner workings of business. Knowing what goes on inside a company gives the employment specialist and the job seeker an added advantage when creating employment or responding to an employer need.
Introduction

Since the first efforts were made to support individuals with disabilities in securing community employment, certain assumptions about the type and nature of work in which people with disabilities could be successful have emerged. Left unchallenged, these assumptions all too often serve as the only guide for the job development process. Most of us are aware of them, although we may not be aware that we are aware of them. Rather, we simply accept them at such a foundational level that we never even consider them (or their influence on us) at all. These assumptions can be grouped into several categories:

1. **Type** of jobs/duties, e.g.: bagging groceries, stocking shelves, sorting items, shredding paper, wiping tables, greeting customers, etc.

2. **Nature** of tasks, e.g.: repetitive, predictable, limited number of steps, etc.

3. **Duration** of work/tasks, e.g.: short sequences (1-5 steps), part-time hours
This list is by no means exhaustive, yet most involved in employment services will recognize at least some of these at play in their own experiences. When we consider these as a whole, certain themes begin to emerge about what we believe is necessary for individuals with disabilities to succeed in the workforce, e.g.:

- Work tasks must be clear, easy to teach, and repetitive
- Variation is bad
- Jobs/work environments that require flexibility or adaptability should be avoided

In short, based on these assumptions, it would appear that individuals with disabilities are best suited for entry-level, part-time, repetitive-task jobs. While this may be the case for some individuals with (and without) disabilities, it certainly is not the case for all.

**Digging Deep: Exploring Beneath the Stereotype**

Admittedly, the “stereotypical” jobs which have frequently been cited as good fits for individuals with disabilities match these characteristics. What needs to be questioned, however, is *why* this is the case. Were individuals with disabilities matched with these jobs because they were a good fit? Or were individuals placed in these jobs because they were relatively easy to secure and teach?

*At the most fundamental level, are these jobs generally a better reflection of the needs of the job-seeker or are they more indicative of the skills and comfort-level of the employment specialist?*

A quick exercise should help get to the bottom of these questions.
Exercise: Taking An “Insider’s Look” at Bagging Groceries

Individually or in small groups take a few minutes to describe the basic process and requirements for bagging groceries. Consider the following: job pace, standard tasks, task variations that may be required, work-flow, structure of day/schedule, etc.

Based on your description, determine how this job compares to the assumptions listed above? How does it fare against the “repetitive”, “minimal variation”, and “predictable” standards?

When we look closely, what we realize is that the drive to find “simple”, repetitive-task jobs reflects more the needs of the teacher (the employment specialist) than the learner (the job-seeker). And interestingly enough, as the previous exercise revealed, some of the most common jobs secured for individuals with disabilities don’t even meet these conditions!

Systematic Instruction

Systematic instruction provides the methodology for:

1. Analyzing and breaking-down complex tasks into their component parts, and

2. Identifying specific strategies for teaching them efficiently and effectively
The underlying belief is that given the right instruction and support, individuals with
disabilities have the capacity to learn increasingly complex tasks. This, in turn, can help
open the door to a wider variety of job possibilities. Generally speaking, as task
complexity increases so too do wages and job security. Consider, for example, an auto-
mechanics vs. the parts-stocker at an auto shop. If business were to hit a downturn,
which employee would be more likely to hold on to his/her job?

So the question becomes not whether individuals with disabilities can learn new skills
(they can) or if it is in their best interest to do so (it is), but how we, the employment
specialists, can best teach them to do so.

**Identifying “What” to Teach: The Content**

One of the first and most crucial elements in developing effective teaching strategies is
the proactive and intentional identification of what specifically needs to be taught. This
seems counterintuitive, and yet frequently employment specialists utilize a more seat of
the pants approach, e.g., “the job starts tomorrow, I’ll be there with her, we’ll figure it out
as we go!” Occasionally this approach may work, but in the vast majority of cases it
results in over-dependence on the employment specialist and isolation from co-workers at
best and an inability to learn the job and dismissal at worst.

The goal instead is to apply a more systematic approach to analyzing the job tasks, the
company culture, and the learning style of the new employee. Doing so ensures that the
level of support and strategies for teaching are specifically tailored to the individual employee and the particular job site/tasks. In this way independence and integration assume the highest priority and the opportunity for success is maximized from the start.

The best method for job analysis is to schedule time with the company for more in-depth observations of the job prior to the start date. During these observations, it is critical to understand that the whole of a “job” rarely equals the sum of its individual component tasks. One of the major pitfalls for employment specialists can be the faulty assumption that the only things that need to be taught are the specific job tasks. Other key factors, such as company culture, co-worker interactions, the pace and structure of the day, etc. may in fact be even more important in supporting “goodness of fit” than proficiency on any one specific job task (Callahan & Garner, 1997). When these factors are overlooked or considered irrelevant to the teaching process, critical components are missed and opportunities for long-term company integration and success are inadvertently undermined.

**Exercise: Your Employment History**

*Take a few moments to think about your employment history. What was (were) your favorite job(s)? What made them the best job(s)? The job task itself? Co-workers? Company environment? Have you ever had a job where the tasks themselves were the right fit but the company/co-workers were not?*

*How about the reverse- the job tasks themselves were not as interesting, but the company/co-workers/supervisor was great? Which were you more likely to stick with? Have you ever worked with a co-worker who excelled at the job itself but did not fit with the rest of the company? Or a co-worker who struggled more with the job itself but was a great fit? Who was more likely to last in the long-term?*

*Take a few moments to think through the questions. Then debrief with the person sitting next to you for 5 minutes. Any interesting insights or conclusions?*
**Company Culture & Gary: An Opportunity Lost**

Gary began work as an administrative assistant for a local paper company. He was responsible for compiling basic reports, data entry, and processing reimbursement requests. Based on Discovery, Gary’s employment specialist believed that with enough time and the right instruction these were all tasks Gary could learn and perform well. She consulted with the company to support their training processes, and Gary mastered all of the tasks.

Every Friday, a different employee would bring in doughnuts for the rest of the team. There was no official schedule for who would be responsible for buying the doughnuts on any given Friday; the ritual was handled informally, with someone calling out “I’ve got tomorrow” towards the end of the day on Thursday. Since there were only 10 individuals working in the group, a dozen doughnuts were sufficient. Because this was an informal ritual, completely unrelated to work tasks, no one thought to discuss this with Gary. This unfortunately resulted in several problems.

First, Gary loved doughnuts, and in his family, it was appropriate to grab as many as you wanted. He typically took 3-4 doughnuts as a result, which prevented some of his coworkers from getting one. Second, he did not ever contribute the doughnuts himself. Although this was a small factor that did not impact his ability to do his job, it significantly damaged his relationship with his co-workers and caused them to view him more negatively overall. Had the employment specialist realized how important this “casual” ritual was, the situation could easily have been avoided.
The Job Analysis Report (JAR)

One of the best strategies for ensuring that consideration is given to all aspects of what to teach is to *write it down*. The Job Analysis Record (JAR) provides a template for capturing the most critical information related to job tasks, quality measures, performance considerations, and natural instruction/supervision as well as the more intangible aspects of company culture (Griffin, Hammis, & Geary, 2007). Because the JAR is used to support the customized employment process that typically involves carving or creating positions, it is centered around projects— the discrete jobs within a job— not a job description as a whole. During the customized employment process, the JAR can be used for two distinct, yet inter-related, purposes:

1. It can serve as the foundation for negotiating a job
2. It becomes the starting point for assessing what specifically needs to be taught

**Job Negotiation**

Initially, during the process of exploring the “List of Twenty”, certain businesses will begin to stand out as interesting possibilities for employment. Follow-up meetings and more in-depth observations should be scheduled to continue the exploration and learning process. At this point, the employment specialist and job-seeker are beginning to identify specific tasks within companies that can serve as the foundation for the customized job. Information related to these tasks should be observed and captured in the JAR. By focusing on specific tasks occurring within a company, employment specialists can avoid
the trap of comparing only existing job descriptions to the ideal conditions for employment identified through the Discovery process. Tasks that seem to be of particular interest can be recorded on the JAR and then presented to the employer as a negotiated job description.

**The importance of identifying, negotiating, and securing a good job match cannot be overstated. A quality job match that meets the individual needs and interests of the employee as well as the needs of the employer is the heart and soul of the Customized Employment process. It is essential to understand that developing a better understanding of how to teach (SI) does not undercut the importance of “goodness of fit” in terms of the job itself. The best, most effective instruction in the world will not be sufficient to overcome a bad job fit. What SI can do, however, is allow for the possibility of learning more complex tasks once the right fit has been identified.**

**Assessing What Needs to be Taught**

Information captured on the initial JAR generally is sufficient for analyzing “goodness of fit” and negotiating the customized job. Once the specific job tasks have been agreed upon, however, it is likely that the employment specialist (ES) will need to schedule time to do an even more in-depth observation. This provides the ES with the opportunity not only to confirm information related to job tasks but also to begin the process of establishing relationships with co-workers and developing more of an insider’s perspective on the company culture.
During this time, the ES should not only be observing the job tasks but exploring other factors such as: who the natural trainers are, who the “go-to” people are (if questions arise), how the co-workers interact, what the unofficial routines/rituals of the workplace are, etc. The tasks and other considerations detailed on the updated JAR become the starting point for analyzing what specifically needs to be taught and how best this might be accomplished.

Information detailed on the JAR starts with a project description and then details the following: task steps, quality measures, tools required, speed and accuracy considerations, natural instructors/supervisors, task duration, and task acquisition concerns.

For example, if Jerome, a job-seeker interested in wood-working, began a job at a local furniture company, his JAR for refinishing furniture might look like the one below.

Sample Job Analysis Report (JAR)

Project three description: Stripping and staining furniture. All furniture to be stripped and stained is kept in the back room. Sam will meet with Jerome at the start of each day to go over which pieces need to be stripped. Could include tables, chairs, dressers, desks. All materials located in back room.

Task Steps:
Put on gloves and goggles.
Gather all materials (stripper, putty knife, rags, coarse- and fine-grade sandpaper, stain, sealer, and sealer brush).
Apply chemical stripper in even motions and let it soak-in for 1-3 minutes.
Use putty knife with rounded edges to scrape off the old paint or finish.
Wet rag with water and use to wipe-off the remaining stripper.
Sand going with coarse-grade sandpaper- going **with the grain**.
Wipe off with clean dry rag.

Sand with fine-grit sandpaper- going **with the grain**.
Use clean rag to apply sanding sealer. Let dry for 10 minutes.

Apply 2-3 coats of stain with rag (Sam will confirm the amount of stain for each item).
Let dry for 30-60 minutes.
Apply finish sealer with brush.

**Quality Measures:** Stain is applied to match color and depth requests; finish appears smooth and even to the eye.

**Tools required:** No real tools- just basic items: sandpaper, putty knife, rags.

**Speed and accuracy considerations:** Generally expect 2-3 pieces to be finished each day but will depend on the size of the furniture. Quality of finish is most critical component.

**Natural instructors/supervision:** Sam (owner) will provide input; Collin is back-room supervisor and will provide initial training and daily oversight. Job coach will provide input and support to Collin as necessary.

**Task duration:** Task duration is impacted by size of furniture as well as drying time required. It is anticipated that Jerome will be moving between 2-3 pieces of furniture each day. Approximately 80% of his time will be dedicated to stripping and staining furniture.

**Task acquisition concerns:** Going with the grain is critical on some steps but not on others- must ensure this is differentiated. May need to detail strategies for helping him know where he is in the process with the different pieces of furniture.

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**Notes and recommendations for onsite trainer, resource ownership, universal/assistive technology, further job modification, etc.:**

Goal is to start with the natural teaching strategies, e.g. Collin as trainer utilizing standard training program and protocol. Employment specialist (ES) will initially be on-site to consult if more intensive teaching strategies or instructional assists are necessary.
Accessibility is not anticipated to be an issue at this time. All efforts will be made to support the natural teaching process and to minimize the impact of the presence of the ES. Sam and Collin have been reassured that they are the experts but that the ES is available if additional input is needed.

Information is captured in the JAR in written form. In some instances it can be beneficial to supplement the written JAR with a videotape of the project being performed. Doing so allows the ES, the new employee, and family members the opportunity to repeatedly review the tape to brainstorm strategies. Additionally, videotapes can provide a glimpse of the worksite culture.

The JAR should be completed to reflect all possible work routines, including:

- **Core routines** (Callahan & Garner, 1997): routines that have repeating cycles and are performed most frequently throughout the workday. Completing the final step indicates that it is time start the process over by “cycling” back to the first task and performing it again. If Jerome stripped and refinished furniture throughout the day, for example, it would be a core routine. The application of the finish sealer would signify that it was time to begin stripping another piece of furniture. Core routines tend to be the easiest to master. Since they occur most frequently throughout the day, the employee has significant opportunity to perform and learn.

- **Episodic routines** (Callahan & Garner, 1997): routines that have cycles (e.g., specific steps) but are performed less regularly throughout the day or week. If
Jerome only stripped and refinished furniture 1-2 times/week, it would be an episodic routine. Episodic routines tend to be more difficult to learn because they are not performed as frequently.

- **Job-related routines** (Callahan & Garner, 1997): routines not related to a particular job project or task but critical to success nonetheless. The “break-time” routine would be one example. Job-related routines are as important to identify and teach as either episodic or core routines; however, they are most often overlooked entirely by Employment Specialists.

**Task Steps**

Once the information has been captured in the JAR, it can be confirmed with the co-workers and/or supervisors. One of the first questions frequently asked is “what level of detail should be covered in the task steps”? When it is learned that the task steps will serve as the initial task analysis, the usual tendency is to step up the level of detail. We have all seen the 24-step task analyses for making a peanut butter sandwich, haven’t we?!

Most of us learned that the goal on a task analysis was to be detailed, thorough, and obsessive in accuracy. While this may work okay in a classroom setting, it rarely meshes well with a work environment. Asking a supervisor to review a task description that includes a 10-step process for how to turn on a computer, such as: 1) look under the desk, 2) locate the CPU, 3) find the round black button in the middle of the CPU, 4) touch the button with your left pointer finger, etc., can result in skepticism and doubt before the job even begins. This is not to suggest that some employees might not need additional detail
or support in their task analyses- many will. So the question remains- how detailed should the initial task description be?

The answer is: **the initial task description should match the level of detail or instruction that would be given to any other new employee** (Callahan & Garner, 1997). As the ES is learning the job task through observation, videotaping, and/or performing it directly with instruction, s/he should be making notes of the number of steps the natural instructor uses to teach it. Ideally, the JAR will not only mirror the number of steps, but also the language used by the natural trainer. For example, one task step listed in the JAR above says “apply chemical stripper in even motions.” Chances are good that this is the actual instruction the natural trainer would provide (or at least very close to it).

**Criterion**

While developing the JAR, the ES should also be identifying the criterion for correct performance. No employee performs every step of every job perfectly every time. An employee with a disability will be no exception to this. It is important to link the standards for correct performance to the company standards. In Jerome’s case, it would be necessary to get an idea of exactly how much of the old finish should be removed with the chemical stripper. In order to be considered “stripped” for example, does the wood need to be 100% free of all former finish and color, or could some color remain? If so, how much color would be acceptable? Additionally, although Jerome’s JAR indicates that the quality and color of the finish is the most critical component and provides a
general time-frame for finishing a piece, the ES would need to have a rough estimate of how long the different steps such as stripping, sanding, sealing, etc. should take. If Jerome finished the furniture to standard (e.g., to the satisfaction of the employer) but it took him 3 hours to apply the stripper, this may not be considered correct performance of the task.

There are two primary ways to measure whether a task has been performed correctly or not: functionally or topographically.

1) **Functional correctness**

Functional correctness occurs when the desired outcome is met, but the task was performed atypically (Callahan & Garner, 1997). For example, sometimes it is possible to reach the desired outcome in spite of skipping steps or not performing each step accurately. If Jerome did not leave the chemical stripper on the furniture for a few minutes before scraping it off with a putty knife, he might be able to still meet the outcome of “stripping” the old finish. However, chances are good that at some point this might catch up with him—especially since it would likely increase the time required to complete the stripping process. Additionally a task that has been modified would meet the criteria of functional correctness as well.

For example, Keith worked for a mortgage broker. Part of his job description was to copy thick mortgage files. However, Keith did not have a strong enough grip to be able to pick up the stack of papers and get them to the copier. A simple clip was built so that he could pick up the stack with the clip and transport it to the
copier as one unit. Ultimately Keith did get the papers copied. However, his method for doing so varied from that of the other employees, so technically this task was functionally correct.

2) **Topographical Correctness:**

Topographical correctness occurs when all steps of the task are performed correctly as taught and the quality is acceptable (Callahan & Garner, 1997). Generally speaking, it is better to assess on the basis of topographical correctness than functional correctness. In Keith’s case, however, functional correctness was acceptable.

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**Exercise: How to Fold a T-shirt in 2 Seconds**

Divide into groups of three. Assign one person to be the natural trainer (or current employee), one person to be the Employment Specialist, and one to be the new employee.

Watch the Video: *How to Fold a T-shirt in 2 Seconds*. Based on this, the ES will develop a task analysis based on the steps provided in the video and:

- Confirm this with the natural trainer; ask the natural trainer to perform or let you perform it while s/he watches and provides feedback
- Get feedback from the natural trainer on what the most important component is: speed, accuracy, etc.
- Determine if functional or topographical correctness will be the criterion for successful performance
- Save this task analysis… you will use it later!

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=An0mFZ3enhM
The Seven-Phase Sequence

As Employment Specialists, we have a natural and understandable desire to do whatever we can to ensure that all new employees we support succeed in their jobs. As such, there is a tendency to take a little too much control, to establish stringent and specific teaching mechanisms and to interject ourselves firmly into the training process to the greatest degree possible. While the rationale is understandable, this rarely works because the processes and supports we create usually do not match the company’s natural training processes. Additionally, by interjecting ourselves into the process, we unintentionally prevent the natural trainers, co-workers, and supervisor(s) from developing their own relationships with the new employee and from learning how to most effectively teach him or her. As a result, odds are that it will all fall apart when the ES leaves the scene.

The goal of systematic instruction far exceeds that of the new employee successfully learning how to do the specific job tasks in the customized (negotiated) position. Rather, the goal becomes to support the employee to become an integral, independent, and valued member of the workplace. In order to do so, the new employee must have the opportunity to form relationships with co-workers and managers and to establish natural supports within the workplace.

Not surprisingly then, much of the “how” to teach encompasses how to teach (or force!) ourselves to support the natural trainer only as necessary without impeding the natural training process as a whole. To facilitate this, Employment Specialists should follow the Seven-Phase Sequence (Callahan & Garner, 1997). Doing so not only allows us to analyze how to incorporate more powerful teaching strategies when the natural process is
not enough but also- and equally as importantly- guarantees that we will stay out of the way it is!

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*(Callahan & Garner, 1997)*
Phases 1-4: The Natural Ways

In the 7-Phase Sequence, the first four phases are considered to be “the natural ways”. The first three should be completed during the job development and job analysis phases—e.g., before the first day of work! Development of the JAR facilitates the collection of all information necessary for Phases 1-3.

Phase 1: Communicate Natural Ways (Callahan & Garner, 1997)

In the first phase, the ES should be conducting a thorough job analysis on-site. This time can be used to learn more about the company culture as well as about the specific job projects and related tasks. At this point the ES could be observing the specific tasks, asking to perform the tasks directly under the guide of the natural trainer, and videotaping and/or recording relevant information. As specific task steps are identified and recorded, they can be confirmed with the natural trainer and/or supervisors. From the very initial stages, it is critical to establish that the company employees, not the ES, are the experts and leaders in the training process.

Phase 2: Promote Natural Means (Callahan & Garner, 1997)

Throughout the job analysis process, the ES should also be keeping an eye out to observe and learn more about the natural training processes that occur in the worksite. If possible, it can be extremely helpful to schedule time to observe the training of another new employee. By watching the training of another employee, the ES can develop a
sense of the training style of the natural trainer and begin to analyze how this will match with the learning style of the new employee.

Beyond the specific training style of the natural trainer, the ES should also be paying attention to the informal training that occurs naturally in the setting as well. For example, many times the natural trainer will demonstrate a task to a new employee once or twice and then leave the new employee to do a few on his/her own. Frequently new employees will be reluctant to go straight back to the trainer or supervisor if they forget something or have questions and will instead appeal to a co-worker to help. There may even be co-workers will check in and offer assistance on their own. Employment Specialists should make note of who these informal “go-to” people are.

Phase 3: Utilize Natural People  (Callahan & Garner, 1997)

As has been repeatedly stated throughout this discussion, the goal is to utilize the natural training personnel and mechanisms to the greatest extent possible. However, this does not mean that supporting the natural training process might not feel awkward or intrusive to the company trainers. Prior to the start of the job, it can be extremely beneficial to sit down with the trainers, discuss the role of the ES, and brainstorm ways to most effectively support them.

During the job analysis, the ES may have identified certain task steps that have a high likelihood of requiring modification. In this case, the ES should brainstorm how to address this with the trainers and co-workers instead of simply creating a modification or altering the training procedure independently. For example, one of the tasks for the new
employee was to fold a t-shirt in 2 seconds using the method detailed in the video tape. However, the ES knows that the new employee’s disability precludes him from being able to “pinch” the t-shirt in the manner required. There might be alternative ways to grab the t-shirt, or a simple tool such as a clip that would allow him to grip the t-shirt might exist. Working in conjunction with the other company employees will likely result in a wider-range of possible alternatives than the ES could generate alone as well as facilitate a sense of ownership and investment for all involved.

Phase 4: Facilitate Successful Performance (Callahan & Garner, 1997)

On the first day on the job, the ES should be pulling all of the information gathered during the first 3 phases together to effectively support the natural trainer as s/he begins teaching the new employee. During this phase, the natural trainer takes the lead on teaching the new employee, but the ES is close at hand to provide feedback and support as necessary.

At this point, the process will be dynamic and fluid and can vary from task to task. On some tasks, the natural trainer may be acting independently, the ES could be providing feedback while the natural trainer takes the lead, or the ES could be stepping in and modeling an alternative method and then stepping back out again. The goal is to support the natural trainer to build capacity. The default always should be to the natural trainer acting independently; additional supports are provided only as necessary.
Phases 5-7: The “Back-Up Ways”

Callahan & Garner, 1997, recommend that utilization of the back-up methods should only occur when and if the natural ways have not proven successful or if the ES begins to sense frustration (or doubt) from either the natural trainer(s) or the new employee. Augmenting the training process with a back-up method, however, does not mean that the ES should take over the training entirely. Rather, the ES should be available to guide, step-in, and/or brainstorm alternative teaching strategies for the particular tasks or task steps that are causing continued difficulty.

Phase 5: Support, Assist, Substitute for Natural People (Callahan & Garner, 1997)

If the ES senses that the trainer is becoming frustrated or if the natural training strategies are not resulting in efficient task acquisition (e.g., the new employee continues to make mistakes or not learn certain steps), it is time to intervene and provide more direct assistance. There are several methods for doing so- the best method in any given situation will be the one that best suits the trainer, the learner, and the task at hand. In some situations, simply providing verbal feedback or offering suggestions to the trainer could be sufficient. Other times it might be beneficial for the ES to step-in and model or demonstrate a different way to teach the task. If either the natural trainer or the new employee exhibits signs of above average stress, it may be time for the ES to actually substitute for the trainer for a period of time.
The key during this phase is to remember that the ES should be acting only as a resource to the natural trainer, not as a replacement. The goal is to provide extra assistance with minimal intrusion only to the level necessary on the tasks where it is warranted. The natural trainer should remain the lead trainer throughout this phase.

Phase 6: Reconsider Natural Means (Callahan & Garner, 1997)

If errors continue and the training process still is proving ineffective in spite of the supports offered in Phase 5, more intensive intervention should be considered. Once again, there are several options available at this point. In order to determine how best to move forward, the ES should evaluate the training process as a whole. Have there been some tasks which the employee learned with little difficulty? What kind of teaching strategies were used to teach these tasks? Do some of the natural trainers have a style or approach that seems more effective?

Exploring questions such as these can help pinpoint possible strategies. If certain natural trainers or co-workers have been more effective, perhaps they could take the lead in training the harder to learn tasks. Strategies that were particularly helpful for teaching other tasks might be used to teach the more difficult tasks as well.

Formulating a plan for addressing the challenges should be facilitated- but not owned- by the ES. It is critical seek the input of the trainers, supervisors, and co-workers as well. Including them in the process of identifying solutions can not only lead to an increase in the range of options but also support the other employees to maintain a sense ownership in the process.
Phase 7: Adapt, Modify, Change Natural Ways (Callahan & Garner, 1997)

If the new employee continues to have difficulty with mastering certain tasks or task components, it may be time to look beyond the teaching mechanisms to altering the tasks themselves. Certain portions of the task may need to be modified or the job description may need to be renegotiated to eliminate the task altogether.

Although this is the last “phase” and should not be implemented until all other strategies have proven unsuccessful, this does not mean that task modification is always a complex thing. Rather, the process simply ensures that the ES does not jump to modification too quickly based on assumptions instead of actual performance. Susie’s job, as this example will show, required modification in two ways: one simple, one more significant and complex.

Susie accepted a job working in the primate center at her local zoo. All efforts were made to support Susie to blend into her new environment as seamlessly and efficiently as possible.

Over the course of the day, Susie was responsible for feeding all of the animals. This involved giving each monkey one scoop of monkey chow. Although this was a relatively straightforward task (and certainly less complex than many of the other tasks she mastered with little to no difficulty), Susie struggled with it. In her orientation materials, she read that each monkey should be given 15-18 pieces of monkey chow. However, the natural trainer taught her to give each monkey ¾ of a scoop. This was challenging for Susie for two reasons: 1) she wasn’t sure exactly what ¾ of a scoop was, and 2) she was concerned that ¾ of a scoop might not actually be 15-18 pieces. Despite reassurances from co-workers that just giving the monkeys a scoop of food was fine, Susie continued to struggle with the task.

Initially her co-workers “solved” the dilemma by allowing Susie to count out 16 pieces of food and put them in the scoop before feeding the monkeys. Although this relieved Susie’s tension, it did not actually resolve anything. Not surprisingly, it was soon noticed that was taking Susie far too long to feed the monkeys. Ultimately, the task was modified by drawing a line across the mid-portion of the scoop. Susie was taught to fill the scoop to the line. With this visual guide, she was able to comfortably and confidently complete
The second modification was more complex. The primate center was divided into 6 primary areas or zones. Typically one worker would be assigned to one zone each day. During the training process, Susie worked closely with the natural trainers and was ultimately able to master all of the tasks. When she became responsible for her own zone, however, she struggled. After observation and conversation with Susie’s co-workers, it became apparent that Susie performed better when another co-worker was in the same zone with her. Susie’s ES brainstormed how best to address this with her co-workers, supervisors, and other professionals at her employment agency. The supervisor suggested assigning two people to two zones each day so that they could work the zones in pairs. The other co-workers liked this idea as well, and all workers began working the zones in pairs. Although Susie still performed the majority of her job independently, knowing that there was another co-worker in the zone with her if she had questions seemed to increase her comfort and confidence and her performance quickly rebounded.

As this example illustrates, not all task modification necessarily means significant changes or interventions are necessary. Relatively minor adjustments can sometimes have substantial impact. Nor does following the 7-Phase Sequence mean that a specific amount of time must be spent in each phase before progressing to the next. Susie’s challenge with the food scoop was evident early in the training process. The ES supported the natural trainer to try a few strategies to address this, but there was no rationale for allowing Susie or the trainer to struggle and become frustrated for a period of weeks to “prove” that the natural ways were insufficient. The commitment is simply to allow the new employee to start with the natural ways first, and then provide back-up assistance when and if it is needed.

Working through the 7-Phases should be a fluid, dynamic process. There frequently is a somewhat intuitive element to knowing when and how to provide additional support.
However, with practice it becomes almost second nature- and the benefits it provides are well worth the effort.

SI Teaching Strategies: What to do When The Natural Ways Weren’t Enough

Teachable Steps

As detailed previously, one of the starting points for job analysis is to write down the component steps for all job-projects. The initial task list should mirror the number of steps and the language that the natural trainer would use to teach the job. In Jerome’s case, if Collin, the natural trainer, teaches “how to refinish furniture” in 8-steps, for example, the initial task analysis would include those eight steps.

One of the first strategies for facilitating learning of a more challenging job task is to further break it down, i.e., increase the level of detail in the task analysis. So if Jerome was demonstrating difficulty with the step: “apply stain with rag” because he was having difficulty getting the correct amount of stain on the rag and applying it in the direction of the grain, this step could be further broken down into: “place the rag into the stain for 3 seconds”, “pull out and let drip for 5 seconds”, “wipe rag over wood in back and forth motion”. The number of additional steps and the specific instructions and cues for teaching the steps should be based on the Jerome’s needs, strengths, and learning style. For example, “place the rag into the stain for 3 seconds” might work well for Jerome while “give the rag three quick dips” might work better for someone else.
Only the particular components causing difficulty should be included. For instance, if Jerome was having difficulty only with spreading the stain in the correct direction, no additional instruction related to how to dip the rag would be necessary. Determining the specific area of difficulty is based on observation and data. Guesswork at this point can wind up undermining the learning process as a whole.

Steps that have already been mastered should be left alone!

**Exercise: Teach How to Fold a T-shirt**

Move back into your group of 3.
Assume your roles as natural trainer, new employee, and Employment Specialist.

Have the natural trainer begin teaching the new employee how to fold the t-shirt. The new employee should demonstrate difficulty with one step. The ES should act as a specialist to support the natural trainer when this occurs. After trying this for a few minutes, sit down as a group to identify how you could further break down the problem step into smaller teachable steps.

Debrief: Discuss how it felt to be in these roles. Did it feel natural or awkward to act as a specialist to the natural trainer? Was it disconcerting to have someone watching you teach someone else? What does your new task analysis look like? Did you only include the problem step?
Errorless Learning

We’ve all heard the old adage that “mistakes are the best teachers” and there certainly is some truth to it. Most of us would be living very different lives if we hadn’t made some mistakes along the way. However, the reality is that this may not always be the case. Have you ever made the wrong turn when going someplace the first time and then found yourself repeating that same error the next time you went? Somehow the incorrect turn got stuck in your brain as a part of how to get to the place. Or think about adults who take their first swim lessons later in life. Most have taught themselves how to swim functionally, but not efficiently or correctly. Trying to learn how to perform the strokes correctly is made that much more difficult because of the accompanying need to unlearn what they have been doing up to that point.

When teaching tasks that are inherently more challenging to learn, it is important to bear in mind that having to unlearn mistakes while simultaneously trying to perform the task correctly can significantly impede the learning process. Beyond this, continually making mistakes can be frustrating for the employee and raise concerns on the part of the trainer or employer (Callahan & Garner, 1997). Much of the time, it is preferable to prevent the learner from making the mistake altogether. This is called “errorless learning”.

Errorless learning requires intervening and providing some sort of a cue prior to the learner making the mistake. In the example provided above, where Jerome was having difficulty with applying stain in the correct direction, the trainer or ES might give a verbal reminder or model the correct direction to move the cloth BEFORE he started to apply the stain.
One of the biggest challenges with errorless learning is determining when to provide the cue. The only way to tell if Jerome is learning the task is to give him the opportunity to perform it. If the ES provides the cue as soon as he reaches towards the table with the stain rag, there is no way to know if he was going to do it correctly on his own. Additionally, he may become dependent upon the ES providing the cue - which is never a good thing!

The best way to proceed is to wait to offer the correction until the employee has given some indicator that s/he is about to make the mistake (Callahan & Garner, 1997). For example, as soon as Jerome’s hand starts moving towards the wrong side of the table, the ES should provide the cue. If his hand continues to move in the correct direction, you need not say or do anything at all. If the ES does not catch it in time and the mistake is made, the ES should apologize to the employee, reset the task, and start again.

**Time Delay**

The use of time delay can be another very powerful teaching strategy. Time delay is based on the amount of time between the delivery of an instruction or the presentation of the natural cue and the actual performance of the step. Employment Specialists, as trainers, tend to be uncomfortable with time delay. To the ES, delay in the actual performance of the task signifies a problem, and problems signify danger with maintaining employment. As such, the ES is prone to jumping in and providing a prompt at the first pause in performance. While the intent may be good, this unfortunately can significantly inhibit the learning process.
The typical time delay between steps for familiar tasks is minimal—generally 1 or 2 seconds—and can appear instantaneous. An employee finishes typing an e-mail and clicks “send” in one, fluid motion. Another enters one accounting charge into the database and moves right on to entering the next charge. However, when tasks are new, moving from one step to the next frequently takes longer. It may take a few seconds to search the screen and locate the send button or to even remember that clicking “send” is the next step. Jumping in too quickly to provide a verbal prompt or point to the screen serves only to interrupt the natural learning process.

Employment Specialists must train themselves to tolerate increased time between consecutive steps. This does not mean standing around for 20 minutes and watching while no work is getting done. Rather, the increase can be small but dramatic. Generally speaking, instead of allowing 1-2 seconds before intervening, the ES should allow a count of 5. It is frequently amazing what will happen just by allowing the employee that extra 3 seconds. Initially, these seconds may feel like an eternity to the ES. With practice though, comfort emerges. Additionally, the process typically reinforces itself fairly quickly. When the ES witnesses employees performing steps independently simply because they were given a few extra seconds, it becomes second nature to allow this time as part of the teaching process.

How much time to allow can be gauged by what the employee is doing. If the employee gives a sign that she is still actively involved in the task and trying to determine the next step, wait it out. When the employee gives a sign either that 1) she has made the wrong choice, or 2) the process has halted (e.g., the employee is not going to move forward on her own), the ES should intervene.
Prompting

Prompting is a critical, powerful, and important teaching strategy that is rarely understood and frequently misused. When utilized correctly, prompts can greatly facilitate the learning and independent performance of new (and complex) tasks. When utilized incorrectly, prompting can actually inhibit natural learning and facilitate over-dependence upon the trainer or ES. It is possible for an employee to become “prompt dependent”. Feedback such as the statement, “he does a great job if someone is standing there with him, but not if he’s alone”, can be a possible indicator of prompt dependence.

Prompting Hierarchy

Most Employment Specialists are familiar with prompts and the types of prompts it is possible to use, such as:

- **Verbal prompts**: providing a verbal instruction or reminder, e.g., “when you finish typing, you click the ‘send’ button”

- **Gestural prompts**: using a simple gesture to indicate the next step, e.g., pointing to the send button

- **Modeling prompts**: demonstrating or showing how to do the next step, e.g., the EC or trainer themselves uses the mouse to click “send” button

- **Physical prompts**: providing some type of physical assistance to perform the step, e.g., the ES or trainer puts their hand over the employees hand to move the mouse and click “send”
What is less commonly understood is that prompts are seen to exist in a hierarchy based on the “intrusiveness” of the prompt. The goal is to use prompts in a systematic fashion beginning with the least intrusive and progressing through the hierarchy only if the employee demonstrates continued difficulty.

The prompting hierarchy detailed in the table above progresses from the least intrusive, the natural cue, to the most intrusive, a physical assist. The basic methodology for providing prompts is outlined below

1) Begin with the least intrusive and proceed to the next level only if step is not performed
2) Wait 3-5 seconds before moving to the next prompting strategy or until the employee gives an indicator that s/he is about to make an error- if this occurs, provide prompt before error is made

3) Only provide one prompt at a time

4) Prompts can be faded by reversing the process

Following the prompting hierarchy correctly should assist the ES and/or natural trainer to avoid prompting unnecessarily or fostering dependence upon the trainer. Steps that have been mastered require no prompting whatsoever. Since the hierarchy begins with the “natural cue”, no initial prompt should be provided. The ES or trainer should then wait 3-5 seconds before issuing an indirect verbal prompt, e.g. “what’s the next step” or “what do you think you need to do now” and then wait another 3-5 seconds. If the step still isn’t performed, a direct verbal prompt should be issued, e.g., “click the ‘send’ button”. The ES should then wait another 3-5 seconds before providing a gestural prompt, e.g., pointing to the “send” button. The process then continues through the remainder of the hierarchy. Generally speaking, physical prompts are to be avoided unless no other strategy has proven successful or there is a compelling rationale for using them based on the individual learning style of the new employee.

One of the most important things to consider is point #3 above: only provide one prompt at a time. This rule is almost universally violated by Employment Specialists, trainers, and all other teachers alike! We like to talk. We like to assist. We like to provide so much assistance that the new employee cannot help but get the step right. So we talk.
We provide the verbal prompt initially, even when it may not be necessary. We continue to provide verbal prompts during wait time. We provide verbal prompts multiple times and continue to provide while simultaneously offering gestural prompts. In the wise words of Run DMC, “[we] talk too much, [we] never shut up”!

The idea behind following the hierarchy is this: if a verbal prompt was not sufficient to result in correct performance the first time it was issued, there is no point in providing it again. A more intensive level of prompt is required. Continuing to provide verbal prompts only confuses the situation and increases the likelihood of prompt dependence.

**Fading Prompts**

Following the hierarchy also provides a very natural framework for fading the prompts. For example, Andy, who is learning to send e-mails, initially required a gestural prompt to click the “send” button after typing the e-mail. The question then arises, what should the ES do the next time Andy reaches the “send” step? Should she start over with the prompt hierarchy? Or immediately provide a gestural prompt?

The answer is neither. Once the initial level of prompting has been identified, the focus switches to how to fade the prompt as efficiently and as effectively as possible. When fading prompts, the rule of thumb is to offer a prompt one step down in the hierarchy instead. In Andy’s case, this would mean that his ES would wait the 4 seconds. If he did not click the “send” button on his own, she would offer a direct verbal prompt, which is one step lower than the gestural prompt on the hierarchy. If Andy did not perform based
on the direct verbal, she would offer a gestural again. If he did perform on the direct verbal, her next step would be to try to fade to an indirect verbal prompt.

**Instructional Assists**

What if, despite the best, most cleanly-delivered prompting strategies, the prompt cannot be faded? What if Andy is unable to master the skill of clicking the “send” button without a verbal prompt? The first step is always to evaluate the prompting and teaching strategies used. However, even if good strategies have been used correctly, some employees may continue to need guidance. In these instances, development of an “instructional assist” can be extremely beneficial.

Instructional assists are essentially any type of permanent product that can be used to prompt the employee for the next step. Common instructional assists include checklists, photos, written or visual schedules, etc. In Andy’s case, his ES might develop a simple list for “how to send an e-mail”. Or a post-it note with an arrow pointing to the “send” button on the screen might be attached to the top of Andy’s computer. Instructional assists range from the very simple, e.g., a post-it reminder affixed to Andy’s computer, to the more sophisticated, e.g., a voice recognition system that sends e-mails on command. The goal, however, remains the same: creating something that provides the employee the cue necessary to complete the task independently.

Once the instructional assist has been created, the ES and/or natural trainer can then adjust the prompting strategy to incorporate the assist. In Andy’s case, if the ES had created a written list for “how to send an e-mail”, she would prompt Andy to look at the list rather than providing the direct prompt for sending the e-mail. She would then fade
the prompt cueing Andy to follow the list in the same manner as any other prompt is faded.

**Systematic Instruction: Steps to Teaching**

- Before beginning, Explain the Task and Demonstrate
- Use Time Delay
- Allow for Self-Correction
- Intervene after a decision is made but before the learner acts
- Apologize for Mistakes!

*(Gold, 1980); (Callahan & Garner, 1997)*

**Exercise: Practice Teaching**

Get back into your groups of three. Work as a group to identify the methods for teaching the problematic task. Have the Natural trainer begin teaching, supported by the ES. Follow the steps outlined in the chart above. Try to provide prompts systematically and to fade as quickly as possible. Work this way for 5 minutes, then switch and repeat. Continue until all team members have been in each role.

Debrief: How did you do? Could you prompt while following the hierarchy? Were you able to catch errors before they happened?
Reinforcement

Another critical and powerful teaching strategy involves the use of reinforcement. As was the case with prompting outlined earlier, difficulties and misunderstanding abound when it comes to identifying and utilizing reinforcers effectively.

Technically, an item or an action is a reinforcer if, and only if, it serves to increase the desired behavior. Consider, for example, the ES who is attempting to teach Andy to send the e-mail (the desired behavior). Andy sends the e-mail, and the ES praises him profusely and enthusiastically. When it comes time for Andy to send the next e-mail, however, he balks and puts his hands in his lap. Was her praise a reinforcer? Based on the definition of reinforcement, it was not. This very simplistic example illustrates several misconceptions about reinforcement.

1) If it is a good or desirable thing, it is a reinforcer.

This, however, is not always the case. In the example above, praise was provided, which is typically considered to be a positive or good thing. However, since it did not result in an increase in the desired behavior, praise was not a reinforcer for Andy. If Andy were allowed to go on break after sending the e-mail and he returned to quickly send another e-mail so he could go on break again, the ES would know that a break was a reinforcer for Andy.

Reinforcers vary from person to person. There is a tendency to think that certain things, such as praise, are always reinforcers, but in reality this is not the case. In order to capture the potential power of reinforcers, it is critical that they be
assessed and identified based on the individual preferences of the particular employee.

2) The most powerful reinforcer possible should always result in correct performance of the task

In the example above, the ES praised Andy following the correct sending of an e-mail. However, he failed to “send” the next e-mail. Was this a question of lack of motivation, which can be addressed through reinforcement, or insufficient skills, e.g., Andy still does not know how to send the e-mail? Reinforcement deals with motivation to perform skills that have already been acquired. If the skill has not been acquired yet, it does not matter how reinforcing the particular item or even is, it will not be enough to produce performance.

**Food for Thought**

In the movie Good Will Hunting, a physics professor writes an extremely long and complex problem on the chalkboard for his physics students to attempt to solve over the course of the semester. What would it take for you to be able to solve this problem? If someone were to offer you a pizza to solve the problem and you LOVE pizza, and were very motivated to try to earn the pizza, would this enable you to solve the problem? Is there any reinforcer that could be offered that would help you solve it?
One of the most fundamental concerns is to clearly discern motivation issues from skill acquisition issues. If Andy knows how to send the e-mail but for some reason is not interested in doing so (a motivation issue), breaking down the task into teachable steps and providing prompts will not solve the problem. On the other hand, if Andy does not know how to send the e-mail, offering him his favorite reinforcer- or even a million dollars- will not resolve the issue. Reinforcement influences motivation; teaching strategies influence skill acquisition.

**Natural Reinforcers**

Reinforces occur naturally in the workplace in a variety of ways. The most obvious of these is the paycheck- all workers receive them (hopefully!). If paychecks were to cease, so would the motivation to continue working for that company. Recognition in a staff meeting, awards, bonuses, appreciation and acknowledgement from co-workers, good reviews, etc. are all possible examples of naturally-occurring reinforcers. Relationships with co-workers can be reinforcing as well; being able to hang out with people whose company you enjoy on big assignments or even on daily breaks can result in continued motivation to work for the company (Griffin, 1997). Last but not least, the job itself can be reinforcing. Many human service professionals, for example, do what they do because they enjoy the work and believe it has meaning- not for the money itself!

Following the Customized Employment process should go a long way to maximizing the naturally occurring reinforcers in the workplace and in the job itself. Ideal conditions for employment seek to capture the components most essential for “fitting” the individual job-seeker, and all potential work and work-places are evaluated against this list. No job-
seeker should ever be led into a job involving tasks that do not interest her or an environment that is not a good “fit”. This point cannot be overstated. Natural reinforcers can be increased and/or artificial reinforcers utilized to maximize motivation when the learning curve is steep. None will be sufficient, however, to override the intrinsic lack of motivation resulting from an inherently poor job match.

**Increasing the Reinforcement Schedule**

To the greatest extent possible, natural reinforcers should be utilized in the workplace. However, in the early stages of learning complex tasks when frustration may be at its peak, the paycheck that comes in two weeks may not be sufficient to entice the new employee through the challenge at hand. Additionally, talking with co-workers may legitimately be more interesting than performing a given work task. If this is the case, it can be helpful to make adjustments that increase the rate and opportunity for reinforcement (Callahan & Garner, 1997). As was the case with prompting however, reinforcement should be increased only if necessary. If motivation does not appear to be a problem, there is no need to step-up the reinforcement schedule.

Numerous strategies for increasing the rate of reinforcement exist. These could include allowing a new employee more frequent breaks, creating additional opportunities for co-workers or supervisors to offer positive feedback and praise, or adjusting the schedule so that a difficult job task is followed by an easier or more enjoyable one. The actual options for increasing reinforcement must be determined based on: 1) what is reinforcing for the employee, and 2) what fits the workplace.
No News is Good News (Callahan & Garner, 1997)

Somewhere along the way, the role of ES managed to morph itself to include cheerleader. In the same way that most are prone to over-prompting, they also have a strong tendency to provide praise (reinforcement) when none is necessary. The ES is frequently like the little “good angel” standing on the shoulder of the new employee, whispering “good job”, and giving him a smile, thumbs-up, or pat on the back each and every time he does anything correctly. This level of feedback is completely unnecessary! Worse than that, it is damaging. Frequently, the ES inadvertently teaches an employee like Andy to become dependent on this feedback, and unable to perform independently in its absence. In the words of Marc Gold, “No News is Good News” when supporting employees to learn their jobs (videos available at the Minnesota Developmental Disability Council’s website: http://www.mnddc.org/extra/marc-gold1.html). If a step is performed correctly and no motivation issue has been identified, no feedback at all is necessary. The successful completion of the job task itself should be its own reward!

Fading Reinforcers

The plan for utilizing and for fading reinforcement should be just as systematic as for prompting. The ultimate goal should be to get the reinforcement back to its natural schedule. For example, if Andy also had to enter accounting data, a task that he finds somewhat taxing, he might initially need to take more frequent breaks. The daily accounting data entry takes about 1 hour. At the end of the hour, Andy moves on to mail delivery, a task he particularly enjoys. The ES and natural trainer decided to break the accounting data-entry into 3, 20-minute sessions. After working for 20 minutes, Andy
has the option of going to the break-room for a few minutes to clear his head. Once Andy begins working steadily for 20 minutes at a time, the time could be increased to 25 minutes before a break, and then 30 and so on until he is working through the hour. Finishing the task to move on to mail delivery now becomes its own reward.

*Million-dollar reinforcement question: Should the ES or natural trainer be standing with Andy during his 20 minute sessions praising him for continuing to work? Of course not! They would do so only if Andy has demonstrated that he needs more frequent feedback during these sessions to continue working. Even then, the schedule for how or when to offer this praise would be based upon his performance pattern. Since the scenario above did not give an indicator that this was necessary, the ES should embody the golden rule of reinforcement: No News is Good News!

**Exercise: Incorporate Reinforcement into Your Teaching Plan**

Get back into your group of three. Outline a plan for including reinforcement in your teaching strategies. Identify reinforcers based on the task itself and the preferences of the employee. Have the Natural trainer begin teaching, supported by the ES. Try to provide offer reinforcement only when necessary and to fade as quickly as possible. Work this way for 5 minutes, then switch and repeat. Continue until all team members have been in each role.

Debrief: How did you do? Were you quiet?
In summary, Systematic Instruction offers a comprehensive process for supporting new employees to master tasks with greater complexity while supporting their full integration into the workplace. The key components and guiding principles of SI are summarized in the table below.

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<th>Guiding Principles When Teaching</th>
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<tr>
<td>➢ Teach with a minimum of Conversation</td>
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<td>➢ Save Verbals for Reward</td>
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<tr>
<td>➢ The Task is the Reward</td>
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<tr>
<td>➢ Teachers Use Powerful Informing Strategies</td>
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<td>➢ Mistakes indicate a teaching error</td>
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<td>➢ Try Another Way</td>
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(Gold, 1980); (Callahan & Garner, 1997)
Exercise: Incorporate Reinforcement into Your Teaching Plan

Get back into your group of three. Outline a plan for including reinforcement in your teaching strategies. Identify reinforcers based on the task itself and the preferences of the employee. Have the Natural trainer begin teaching, supported by the ES. Try to provide offer reinforcement only when necessary and to fade as quickly as possible. Work this way for 5 minutes, then switch and repeat. Continue until all team members have been in each role.

Debrief: How did you do? Were you quiet?

Note: Please see the end of Chapter One for references.
Introduction

Exercise:
Pair up. One person makes a fist and holds it tightly. Instructions to other person: get your partner’s hand open; do not cause pain or harm, but do try hard. (Instructor: after a moment of folks struggling, ask one person to join you with a clenched fist. Ask them politely: “Please open your hand”).

This exercise demonstrates the power of asking for what you want; approaching people as reasonable and willing to work with you. Too often in disability services, the public is seen as intolerant or disinterested. Clearly, we must negotiate what we want, and negotiation is not a battle to see who gets the best advantage. Negotiation in Customized Employment must be mutually beneficial, and this is why an interest-based negotiation style is employed.

Customized Employment is defined by the negotiation of worksite tasks and elements of employment that benefit both worker and employer. Negotiating a job increases the potential of conflict arising from the adaptation of a work environment that better suits the employee’s
personnel attributes. Therefore, the interactions must be managed through thoughtful use of negotiation and communication minimizing conflict.

Competitive employment approaches often work for job seekers without significant support needs. Traditional vitae, professional networking, and rehearsed interviews and role-plays are often effective for more typical applicants. Individuals with complex lives, however, do not often succeed using this comparative model of hiring, justifying the use of a negotiated approach to job carving and creation.

**Interest-Based Negotiation**

Competitive employment uses a positional approach to recruitment and hiring. Applicants showcase their skills and talents to employers and the candidates are compared to one another, as well as the stated duties and requirements of the job description. Each party negotiates within the established formal framework of the job, again represented by the job description and related corporate policies. When applicants are compared to one another and filtered through this sieve of hiring processes, the candidate most closely matching these criteria is hired.

People with disabilities are rapidly culled through this comparative process, making a negotiation, voluntary on the part of the employer, necessary for increasing the opportunity of a fruitful meeting with the employer’s hiring designee. Creating the opportunity to illuminate mutual interests is one of the first steps in staging job creation negotiations. The use of short internships or work experiences, on-the-job training, and going-where-the-career-makes-sense, are strategies for gaining proximity to employers demonstrate the potential contributions
particular job seeker and set this stage for negotiation.

The biggest lie one hears when job developing is an employer saying, “I’m sorry, we’re not hiring.” The fact is that employers are always hiring. They are hiring people with the potential to create wealth and profit. The applicant may need to fit the worksite culture and values, and have recognized skills or resources, but that potential to advance the business creates employment. People with disabilities are not instantly recognizable as exploitable, making negotiation necessary.

Interest-based negotiation is a win/win, mutually inclusive undertaking, resting on the facts that: employers need workers; people with disabilities want to work. Common ground is obvious, but creating that unique job description for an individual necessitates a planful approach. This is why networking is so vital during job development. The respected-others known both to us and to employers act as bridges to developing rapport. Business people, individuals with significant disabilities, and employment specialists seldom find themselves in circumstances where they are able to explore the commonalities of thought and experience. Negotiation essentially requires that we communicate with someone different from us. Such a circumstance naturally leads both parties to believe that what we each want is different, when in fact employers regularly mention in conversation that their most important accomplishments include the creation of jobs in their community. Starting with this basic common ground of creating employment relieves anxiety and breaks the ice.

Positional negotiation assumes that when two parties from different societal sectors, in this case
the private versus the public, negotiate, the one pulling hardest eventually tugs the other toward their way of thinking. The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), to some degree, is positional legislation that has fundamentally changed the United States, but has had little impact on employment success for people with disabilities. The ADA suggests that employers think in new ways. The problem with most legislation of this type is that it requires changing hiring practices, but does not necessarily assist people with changing. Employers know they need to change; they do not know how to change. But, interest-based job negotiation, and proper job development techniques, demonstrates that mutual gain is possible.

Listening as Communication

Exercise:

Pair the class participants up. Have one person on each team leave the room. Instruct those remaining to prepare a three-minute discussion of one of their hobbies or passions, the more extreme the better (e.g. skydiving, scuba diving, running marathons). Less extreme experiences are also fine (e.g. gardening, photography). The point is to get the listener to join them this weekend to engage in the activity together.

The instructor goes to the others outside the room and instructs them as listeners to agree with what the speaker will say; give them lots of positive regard and reinforcement, and agree to join them. This should be done with very little conversation; smiles and “yes” or other short verbal reinforcers are all that is necessary. Listeners are to give the speakers their undivided attention.
Bring the teams together and let them chat for three minutes. End the conversation and ask about the activities they discussed and how the speakers did selling their ideas.

Now reverse the positions asking the talkers to now be listeners and retire outside the room for a few moments. Explain to the new talkers that their assignment, like the last time, is to prepare a three-minute persuasive argument for engaging the listener in their hobby, and that they must get their agreement to join them in the near future. Leave the room and tell the listeners that they are to give lots of positive regard for the first minute, and then be distracted: look away from the speaker, check their cell phones for messages, thumb through their papers, etc.

Bring the teams back together and have them start. If done correctly, the anxiety will be obvious. Shut down the conversation after a couple minutes and explain that the listener, and not the talker, is actually in charge during a conversation. Remind them of how giving someone the silent treatment feels and why it is effective as a manipulative tool. Reinforce the idea that listening is more important than talking in a negotiation.

Sales, job development, and negotiation traditionally emphasizes talking more than listening. Employment specialists and employment seekers should be most consumed by information gathering. Talking negates listening and learning. Skilled negotiators manage the job development process in a manner conducive to conversation, not sales pitches. The digital portfolio, informational interviews, workplace tours, and other activities create conversational environments gently but firmly making the case for hiring based on the potential for mutual gain.
This environment also turns the competitive employment cold-call into a customized warm-call.

Talking should never be confused with communicating. Excessive speech is not an effective means of negotiation. Studies show that over 50% of what others hear us say is a direct result of what we communicate visually through our dress, body language, posture, facial expressions, and eye contact. Fully 40% of the messages we send derive from the sound of communication including our rate of speech, tone, and volume. Less than 10% of our meaning is conveyed by the actual words we use. Effective communication matches the expectations of the other party regarding dress and similar language; maintaining appropriate eye contact and showing true interest in their situation; talking less and observing more. The skilled employment specialist relinquishes the traditional sales approach typified by the smooth-talker and becomes the more refined and interested smooth-listener.

Communication and understanding happens on numerous levels of consciousness. As a conversation proceeds, the negotiator shapes the choice of words using reinforcing language that best matches the learning style of the employer. For instance, if during a tour of the enterprise the business owner’s office has numerous pictures on the walls, and she uses the phrases “I’d like to see this work” and “From my point of view…” chances are she is a visual learner/communicator. The digital portfolio and fact sheet may be the best leave-behinds for this situation, coupled with follow-up e-mail messages. If though, the employer notes that she “hears what you’re saying” and “this proposal sounds good to my ears” then the job seeker may wish to narrate their portfolio or the employment specialist may wish to maintain verbal conversation with this auditory learner, and schedule a follow-up telephone call. And, if the individual notes
that “this just doesn’t feel right” or “I have a firm grip on this” chances are this is a kinesthetic learner who will peruse a hard copy resume, a CD copy of the portfolio or some snap shots, and written employer testimonials.

Communication breaks down when the two or more parties involved have divergent expectations. Easing into a prepared negotiation using work experiences, informational interviews, and preparing job analyses to show the employer your thoughts about a possible job match and training approach, minimize the surprises that accompany job development. Still, communication gaps will occur, so anticipating and structuring conversations in anticipation of possible objections, provides some anxiety-lessening cushion.

Many job development situations go wrong from the start. For example, the employment specialist shows up right on time, but the employer has forgotten the meeting, and though distracted by other events, decides to see this interruption through. Obviously the employer sees this event as a benevolent obligation and chances are this visit will not be productive. The employment specialist, at this point, focuses on damage control while maintaining the relationship, better known as salvaging “the shadow of the future.” The AEIOU approach is recommended:

Assume the other person means well;

Express your reasons for the importance of this meeting;
Identify what you would like to have happen;

Outcomes you expect should be clearly stated;

Understanding should be reached on a mutual level.

This tactic will not address the conflict of this situation, but it will augment maintenance of the relationship, anticipate problem areas, and identify where more information or support is needed.

The conversation, using the above framework, might go as follows:

Employer: Sorry, I forgot we were meeting this morning. It’s been very busy today.

Employment Specialist: I totally understand. Perhaps we should reschedule for tomorrow?

(Assume)

Employer: No, that’s alright, I can squeeze you in.

Employment Specialist: As you’ll recall, I wanted to come in for a tour just to see your operations and see if we might work together in the future. As a career counselor I am working with several folks who have expressed an interest in your line of work. (Express)

Employer: As you know, good employees are hard to find, so we are always looking for skilled candidates.

Employment Specialist: Our approach is to conduct a thorough job match by performing a job analysis. Perhaps we should just go ahead and schedule a time when I can come back and observe your operations. I am particularly interested in observing the tool and die department. (Identify)
Employer: When would work best for you?

Employment Specialist: I will be working with Peterson’s Plumbing just down the street Thursday morning. Perhaps that afternoon, say 1 pm? I’ll come observe the workers during production if that’s ok. Is there someone I should set this up with in that department? (Outcomes)

Employer: That should work. You’ll need to check in with Lance, the manager. I’m headed back there now, I’ll let him know to expect you.

Employment Specialist: Terrific. I’ll give Lance a call tomorrow to confirm. (Outcomes)

Employer: Thanks for understanding. Again, sorry for the rush today.

Employment Specialist: No problem; glad we could work this out. Thanks. (Understanding)

This scenario, of course, probably does not tell the entire story. The employer may have staged this event because he did not want to appear unconcerned for people with disabilities, and was hoping the employment specialist might be discouraged and go away. Giving the benefit of the doubt, however, is a requirement of good negotiation strategy. Had avoidance been the employer’s motivation, it is unlikely the next appointment would be confirmed. Using this approach clarified the reason for the meeting or tour, and gave the employer an opportunity to gently back out. Negotiating with someone who sees no purpose in doing so never works, and knowing that there are millions of other employers in the country means that abandoning one, for now, is not the end of job development.

Suppose that the job developer returned and performed the job analysis in the tool and die department and discovered a potential job carve for a young woman interested in working for the company. The negotiation of the job carve might go something like this:
Employment Specialist: Thanks for seeing Rachel and me this morning.

Employer: My pleasure. Lance, the Manager, tells me you have an employment proposal you’d like to run by me. Of course you know we are not hiring right now.

Employment Specialist: As you know, Rachel has been doing a work try-out in the back for about a week now. (Assume)

Rachel: I have been scanning bills of lading, tagging pallets, and packaging the smaller shipments.

Employment Specialist: Lance suggested that these were all jobs that he pulls other workers off jobs to complete. If these tasks were combined into a new job description, it might result in a 30 hour a week job that pays for itself in efficiency savings. (Express)

Employer: Lance told me about this and seems to think it’ll improve his operation, though he wasn’t sure it’d save him any money.

Employment Specialist: Rachel and I drew up a sample job description for your review. Perhaps you and Lance could review it. (Identify)

Rachel: I have another job I am trying out next week at Jake’s Welding, but I’d like to work here.

Employer: Have you done this type of work before Rachel?

Rachel: Here’s a copy of my resume. Yes, sort of. At school I worked in the office and had to prepare the mail and boxes for shipping. I also worked in the school district warehouse. In my portfolio there’s a picture of me wrapping a pallet of books. I also had to enter inventory numbers from each pallet into the computer, and of course I had to lift lots of boxes. It’s hard work, but I like it.
Employment Specialist: I know there’s not really a position open right now, but we’ve used this kind of approach in several other companies, such as Burnaby Hardware, Public Container Company, and the Provincial Administrative offices, and I am sure they’d give you a good reference concerning this process. I can have one of them call you if you’d like. (Outcomes)

Employer: Yes, that might be good. This way I can have some examples to take to the owner. Let me talk with Lance this afternoon and I’ll get back to you tomorrow.

Employment Specialist: Great. I’ll have Jeff Marker from Public Container Company give you a call since we created a similar job for their woodshop operation. I’ll follow-up with you on Wednesday. (Understanding)

Employer: Sounds good.

Rachel: Thanks. I hope this works out.

Here, the employment specialist and Rachel work as a team to explain the process concisely, set their expectations, and identify a reference, showing their willingness to put more effort into the relationship, and also not allowing the employer to stall for time. The employment specialist and Rachel also made sure they had the support of Lance, before scheduling this meeting. Of course, other approaches would work just as well. Having Lance sell this idea to the boss would work; having Lance in the meeting would work too. Think through the process and choose the most logical approach to suit the boss’ interest and temperament.

**Negotiating the Essentials**

Another key area of negotiation is focused on various components of the job and the support strategies needed for employee stabilization and long-term job retention. Employment specialists
and new employees should enter into any negotiation with an “I win and the employer wins too” attitude. The negotiation process is less cumbersome when the DPG processes are followed and job matches are not forced fits. The naïve job development approach cuts actual negotiation time, but some details of the job are likely left unresolved as the first day of work approaches. Paying close attention to the use of natural supports, including transferring the direct training and supervision to the proper personnel, means that the transition from job coaching may need negotiating. The fact that the actual responsibility remains with the employer should not come as surprise to anyone on the worksite.

Commonly negotiated items in a new job include supports related to:

- Responsibilities regarding particular tools and equipment;
- Resource Ownership details;
- Safety;
- Co-Worker support and quality checks;
- Supervision, correction, and quality improvement;
- Productivity increases and improvement;
- Equipment modifications;
- Worksite accommodations and accessibility;
- Toileting and Eating assistance;
- Transportation, et al.

Many of these work-related components are faced by every employee and should be handled in as natural a manner as possible. Transportation is generally a personal responsibility, but
company or co-worker organized car pools are common even in small companies. An employment specialist, job developer, or new employee, may negotiate with co-workers to share rides with a non-driving employee, or work hours may require a negotiated modification to accommodate public transportation schedules.

Production templates are commonly employed throughout the manufacturing sector, but a truly unique adaptation may be required for some workers. Negotiating with the employer, or perhaps the plant’s engineering staff, may occur. And the expense involved may lead to a further negotiation with the employer, the job seeker, and the rehabilitation agency for additional tooling support.

Using the most typical methods and people in these circumstances stays true to the intent of natural supports theory, and engages the employer in the success of their new worker. Asking for too much though, is a concern, and a position that must be so heavily modified that it stigmatizes the new employee is probably a sign that the job does not enhance competence or match the ideal conditions of employment. Experience and practical application of DPG and job analysis techniques guides the placement and the appropriate level of job accommodation negotiations.

In the early implementation of Supported Employment, employment specialists (then known as job coaches) often offered to complete the work of an employee who was not reaching the industry production standard, and also to substitute for the worker in event of illness. This is highly unusual and not recommended as a negotiable. Instead, the employee should have the same workplace considerations as others regarding absences, and be afforded proper training and
job accommodations to attain necessary productivity. If productivity is a key requirement of the job, aligning the ideal conditions of employment will screen out bad matches. Still, many potential workers have medical or self-care concerns that, at least until they are accepted into the culture of a company, sometimes require supports beyond the ability of the employer to provide. Support strategies and problem solving should be considered before a placement is initiated.

The employment process is pulled together through a series of negotiations. When barriers are encountered, reframing the negotiation uncovers other options. Reframing takes practice but is a skill necessary for creative solutions. A most obvious example of reframing involves the paucity of transportation for people with disabilities in Vancouver trying to get to work. Actually, anyone driving in Vancouver at rush hour knows there is too much transportation. This simple reframing sets the stage for problem solving by casting a new light on the issue. In this case, there indeed may be a surplus of cars, but a lack of social capital. One solution involves getting to know drivers and asking to share a ride to work.

In the employment realm, for instance, a co-worker complains that the new employee is not working fast enough and quality is also off. The employment specialist can offer more powerful training techniques, ask for assistance with diagnosing the problem, suggest an adaptation, or perhaps research the cost of automated equipment that improves production. The important point in reframing is accepting the complaint or oppositional position, thereby validating the shared concern, then offering options for resolution. Instead of blaming the person, refocus, or reframe, the problem on other solutions. The tradition in the company may well have been to fire slow workers, whereas the reframing suggests other less drastic, but less traditional, solutions.
Ancillary Negotiations

The major concern for any employment seeker or employment specialist is securing a proper job and negotiating the terms of employment. However, there are typically ancillary negotiations attached to the situation that are important to generating success. Employer negotiations are largely uncluttered events, but ancillary negotiations can be a tangle of policy, politics, trust, safety, and money. One placement may represent concerns from various parties, such as:

The Family: Concerns over the health and safety as the individual moves from a day or school program to the community.

Developmental Disability/Mental Health/Local School: Concerns over funding required for equipment and tools, job coaching, and on-going supports.

Day Program Administrators: Concern over providing one-to-one community supports; concern that day program may become irrelevant for families and consumers; concerns over managing a decentralized staff.

Case Management: Concern over health and safety of the individual moving from protected settings to community settings.

Residential Service Providers: Concern over individualizing staff coverage for residents working varied hours; concern over providing work-related supports including packing a lunch, assuring proper dress, and arranging for transportation.

This long list of concerns is typical, especially for adults receiving services through the
developmental disability or mental health systems. These circumstances also provide many areas of overlap in responsibility, policy, and funding, launching a common job scenario into a slipstream of competing interests, concerns, rules, and opinions. These situations respond to systematic approaches for collaboration among the varied stakeholders, but also foster anger, confusion, and politics if not dealt with strategically.

Managing complex ancillary job development negotiations remains tied to the application of proper methods and accurate communication. Conflict will always arise as diverse points-of-view and policies clash. Understanding the causes of conflict is vital to preparation for the negotiation.

**Causes of Conflict**

There are five major causes of conflict. In diagnosing a job development conflict, understanding these descriptors aid in communication with stakeholders and in formulation of interventions.

1. **Relationship Conflicts.** Characterized by strong emotions, misperceptions and stereotypes; poor communication based on personality conflict; negative or misunderstood behavior; and a history of mistrust.

2. **Values Conflicts.** These are defined as conflicting spiritual values and conflicting beliefs regarding superiority of one person over another, or one idea/value/ethic over another.

3. **Structural Conflicts.** These are identified by confusion regarding roles and responsibilities between parties, disagreement regarding levels of authority, and issues of time or monetary resources, especially when an individual or team feels overworked or over-pressured to perform.
4. **Data Issues**. These are characterized by people lacking data, using the wrong data, or getting incorrect data necessary for the successful completion of their work. Poor data collection methods and instruments, and improper data analysis leading people or teams to take incorrect action based on the inaccurate work of others compound this circumstance.

5. **Competing Interest Issues**. These are defined as competing interests (i.e. politics), perceptions that resource allocation is inequitable, and unclear procedural policies that contribute to confusion or delay.

These root causes can combine with each other to create complex situations. The job seeker and employment specialist, however, can diagnose and potentially anticipate conflict by giving some thought to planning team membership, communication strategies, and resource availability prior to engaging in the job search. And when planning fails to achieve a smooth transition to work, acknowledging the existence of a cause for conflict establishes common ground from which to negotiate. This is the first step in deconstructing conflict and then developing a plan for resolving or managing the situation.

**Communication and Conflict Management Planning**

Conflict is natural, unavoidable, and less unsettling when proper management approaches are applied. Accepting that episodic conflict is not a sign of weakness or failure, but rather a part of the change and growth cycle relieves anxiety, making it more likely communication remains clear while the following conflict management techniques are applied:

1. **Anticipate Reactions**. Discuss the circumstance with others in confidence; learn from past
situations; devise a few workable scenarios that address the issue. This action creates positive and hopeful conversation resulting in an array of possible solutions.

2. **Identify and anticipate the Greatest Point of Resistance.** There exists a key leverage issue for most conflicts. It may be related to other causes or hidden agendas. Identify the most critical point and address it without becoming distracted by the minor points. In other words, choose the most serious contributing factor in a conflict and solving it generally disperses or neutralizes the ancillary issues.

3. **Determine the Best Time and Place.** Environment and timing are important. If the individual(s) representing the main point of contention respects power, hold the meeting in a place symbolic of authority, such as the Board room, the family home, or agency headquarters. If the threat of authority generates hostility, choose a neutral location. Consider the time of day, week, or month to address the issue, and do not wait so long to address the issue that it germinates and grows into an incomprehensible mess. If the conflict is with a family member it is better not to schedule the meeting during their work hours. Be smart and accommodating. The goal is to minimize conflict, not to wield power. Schedule meetings when stress levels are lowest and when attention to the issue can be focused.

4. **What’s in it for Them?** Consider if indeed the other party’s needs can reasonably be accommodated. Are their needs or motivations clear? Consider what the target behavior is communicating and what unmet needs reinforce this conflict. Consider what the leverage points are and anticipate that a solution to the current demands may be unattainable. **Remember that**
one cannot negotiate when the other side does not want the problem solved. Try reframing, but have a Plan B.

5. Outline Key Points. Plan your engagement and the language to be used. While problem solving and communication benefit from a bit of spontaneity, using precise words and well-crafted language usually results in more meaningful negotiations. Not everyone thinks wisely during the high anxiety of conflict; practicing a few key points and phrases can reduce the negotiator’s stress and defuse meandering arguments.

Active Listening & Communication

Another tool to utilize in negotiation and in conflict management circumstances is active listening. Applying the following points assumes a commitment to equitable resolution. Negotiators must be sincere and not simply use these tools to appear empathetic or impartial. Insincerity is lying, and when stakeholders recognize efforts as disingenuous, the conflict is bound to rage.

1. Avoid Destructive Criticism
2. Do not act or react while angry.
3. Focus on the behavior in the conflict, not the personalities.
4. Use neutral language. Do not generalize with phrases such as “You always....”
5. Indicate a commitment to resolution and give hope for a positive outcome.
6. Plan as much of the conversation and the salient points as possible beforehand.
Exercise: A low level conflict is brewing with a Human Resources manager. His boss has asked him to sit down with you, the employment specialist, and determine a way they can hire one or two people with significant disabilities. The HR manager is not in favor of this suggestion, but does as his boss asks. All the same, when meeting with you, he is not going to make job development an easy task.

During a conversation about job match, he interrupts you and says: “So, it seems that the people you represent might be unemployed because they are too choosy. When I was out to get my first job, it didn’t matter what it was, as long as I made some money to help my family. This process of yours makes the employer seem like the last priority and not the first. I don’t understand this anyway; I pay taxes to support your program. Now we have to pay taxes and hire these people too?”

In a team of 3 or 4 classmates, devise a negotiation strategy to answer his concerns and to move the job development process ahead. Present the strategies to the class.

Communicating to Manage Conflict

Conflict arises any time there is change. Most conflict is short-lived and mild. Occasionally it becomes substantial. The simple tools below represent a framework of intervention useful in minimizing mixed messages. Good negotiators and problem-solvers must first control their own behavior in order to model the behavior desired from others. In preparation for a challenging negotiation, consider these elements of problem solving and communication.

1. Realize that when in conflict, communication may be misinterpreted; the more precise your words, the better. Use examples, be specific, chose words carefully.
2. Understand that the more people involved in a negotiation, the more likely there will be misunderstanding. Attempt communication one-to-one or in small groups first.

3. Never assume that everyone involved in the situation agrees with the facts as presented. Ask for questions and points of clarification as the issue is discussed.

4. Ask participants what other sources or types of information they need in order to address the issue. As negotiator do not attempt to be the one and only expert; if anything goes wrong, you will then have to also take the blame.

5. Do not assume that written communication is clear, accurate, or complete.

6. Keep discussions brief and to the point, but allow for relevant discussion. Ask that folks not make speeches, and make certain the facilitator or leader does not make speeches either.

7. Make discussion interactive by asking non-threatening questions to clarify the issues. Ask people directly to comment and remind them that there are no silent leaders.

8. Assume that there are many sides to every story; and perhaps a hidden side.

9. Separate fact from opinion and feelings; act on the facts and acknowledge the feelings.

While there are many methods of negotiation, CE is focused on the game theory model: the way we win is to help others win. In other words, we aim for a Win/Win. This strategy has become a cliché of sorts, but for those negotiators who practice it, it creates countless opportunities.

Collaboration is the essence of the modern organization. It is the foundation of healthy relationships, companies, and communities. It is the result of interdependence. Collaboration is used to:

**Preserve Critical Relationships.** Collaboration takes time and practice, but working together makes for strong and successful alliances. Many companies have strong working relationships
even though they could as easily compete with one another for business. Both succeed by sharing customers, such as when airlines sell code shares, allowing two or more airlines to split up a passenger’s travel on routes none of the airlines totally control.

**Do More with Less.** There is strength in numbers and there is profit in sharing resources. By working together, less work falls on each, and costs are spread across various entities. People are taught as children to compete; collaborative strategy, however, de-emphasizes individual success while glorifying the team. Reducing competition reduces conflict.

**Do More with More.** Collaboration means sharing resources. Operating on common ground reduces politics and arguments. It also neutralizes those not contributing to the development of positive outcomes. By working together in a job development situation, for instance, each contributor saves money and time because the effort is spread across several partners such as the job seeker, the family, the provincial DD or Mental Health system, and/or the local community rehabilitation agency. Working together increases the intellect applied to the situation as well, and sharing success generates excitement and security thereby fostering possible future projects.

**Managing the Impact of Change**

People love change, but they hate *being* changed. Asking employers to hire people with disabilities is greeted reluctantly because it is an imposed change. Interest-based negotiation minimizes the anxiety accompanying change, and welcomes the creation of new circumstances through the potential for mutual benefit. Unfortunately, if the change process is not carefully managed by the job seeker or the employment specialist, pending benefits are not realized.
Managing change and conflict well is critical in customized employment negotiation.

Understanding the change process allows for shaping communication to support all stakeholders, deflecting the language of aggression, and negotiating each point strategically to safely transition through the process. Managing the process helps quell reactions to change that actually compare to the grieving process. The skilled negotiator works to support the loss some participants feel or fear, while also making the new realities understandable and clear. A model representing the stages of the change process appears below and is helpful in managing the changes that the employment of people with significant disabilities represents to the many stakeholders, especially to reluctant families and unfamiliar employers.
The CE negotiation process involves many stakeholders, and the process impacts each differently. Managing both the individual reactions to change, and the group’s combined behavior, is as critical as it is challenging. Following the cycle’s flow, the process begins with a stakeholder in a state of relative contentment: life is the way it was the day before. A new idea or situation enters the picture pushing the person, or team, into a state of denial or disbelief. Anger results if the change is seriously threatening. Luckily, for the negotiator, anger takes a lot of energy to sustain, so movement to the depressive stage is usually quick. Depression is tiring as well, so the stakeholder(s) moves, with support from the negotiator, into confusion. The human brain seeks solutions when confused, therefore this stage is signaled by acceptance that things will not remain as they have, and the realization that the individual or team is not equipped with the tools or strategies needed to adapt. Confusion actually signals a reluctant acceptance and willingness to learn new approaches. Telltale phrases from stakeholders, including “What do we do now?” or “How to we move forward?” indicate the threshold of resolution and the need for new skills that will help them move on. Eventually, the novelty of the change wears off and becomes the “way we do things around here.” Some share excitement about the new circumstances, but eventually contentment returns, and life goes on until the next change.

Employers who have no experience hiring people with disabilities move through this change pattern when approached by an applicant or employment specialist. A first meeting between a job seeker, employment specialist, and an employer might yield the following conversation (the change stages of the employer appear in parentheses):

Job Seeker: Thank you for meeting with us.

Employer: My pleasure. What can I do for you two? (Contentment)
Job Seeker: As I mentioned on the phone, I am looking for a job in aviation, and I brought along my career counselor to explain her role in the process.

Employment Specialist: Briefly, my job is to match qualified workers with employers. Since Phillip is interested in aviation and helicopters in particular, we naturally thought that Coventry Aviation would be a great place to begin our analysis of employment possibilities.

Employer: I see. I can tell you that our organization believes strongly in diversity. We have a diverse and cohesive team here. We hire many people from ethnic minorities and women, too. (Contentment)

Employment Specialist: Great. As Phillip mentioned, he is interested in working with the mechanics and with flight services. Perhaps we could start with a brief tour and see if we can get some ideas. Of course, we’re not sure this is the right match for either you or Phillip; it’s just a starting point to research the field of aviation.

Employer: Well, right now we don’t have any jobs open for people with disabilities. If we did, we would have been seeking out applicants from one of the local agencies. We regularly donate, you know. And, this is a very high-stress operation; our work quality has to be very high; one slip-up could be a matter of life and death, so we have very high standards for all employees. (Denial)

Job Seeker: I was mostly interested in running the parts washer and learning some of the other tasks, like in the laundry and assisting with aircraft maintenance.

Employer: Well, like I said, I am afraid the liability of hiring someone with a disability prevents us from considering it right now. (Denial)

Employment Specialist: A lot of the employers we’ve worked with felt this way at first, but they found that there is rarely a liability issue, and with our assistance we can streamline work
processes and actually improve operations. We’ve worked with over 100 local employers, creating or modifying positions that benefited their companies.

Employer: As I said, we have a diverse workforce. We are in full compliance with all hiring laws. Our plant is completely accessible. Since you use crutches, Phillip, I’ll bet you’d find it easy to get around throughout our building. Still, we just don’t have any jobs open right now.

(Anger)

Employment Specialist: I certainly understand that. And we’re not asking for a job. I should have been clearer. We’d just like a tour to get some career planning ideas.

Employer: I understand. You have to understand my boss doesn’t like surprises; I am not at liberty to just create jobs and hire people simply because it might feel good to do so.

(Depression)

Job Seeker: I wouldn’t want you to hire me unless there is real work to be done.

Employer: Well, tell me how the process works. (Confusion)

Employment Specialist: Basically, we do an analysis of the tasks people are performing that hold an interest for Phillip. We look for bottlenecks, missed opportunities that might enhance customer service, and we look for opportunities to introduce new tasks or equipment that improve profitability or internal operations. I have some examples here on this fact sheet I’ll leave with you.

Employer: Well, I am pretty busy today, (Renewal).

Job Seeker: Perhaps we can schedule time for a tour next week?

Employer: Certainly. (Renewal).

Avoiding disputes at several junctures by gently pulling the employer through the stages allowed
the employment specialist and job seeker to move the negotiation along. Following this formula allows the negotiator to offer support to the other parties, and also provides a check on her own behavior. The process flow serves as a reminder not to react negatively to the natural stages of denial and anger that often derail tough conversations.

This process can be used with all stakeholders, including funders, policy makers, case management staff, residential providers, family members, school principals, transportation vendors, co-workers, et al. The power of the process is in its predictability; offering solid milestones along any negotiation’s meandering path. Of course, as with any technique, practice and modification are essential to managing human interactions. This process, because of its harness on predictability, reduces stress, provides direction, and injects a little predictability to even the most difficult situations.

**Exercise:**

Individually think about a change you want to make in your life. Think through each step needed to make the change. Draw a picture of each stage and label your probable behavior from contentment through anger, depression back up to contentment.

Now, think about someone you know who will be most affected by your change. Identify their reactions through the stages of change, and the words or actions you might use to help them move to the next stage, back to contentment. Report to the class.

**Conclusion**

The hallmark of CE is the voluntary, mutually beneficial negotiation. The tools herein make the
process a bit more manageable when used with proper preparation and care. There is no magical formula for negotiation success, but proper self-management skills, clear values, open communication, a focus on hope and outcomes, and a commitment for honesty fosters effective problem-solving, and better job development outcomes.