The Nuts and Bolts of Networking with Business

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Why is this Important?

- High unemployment rate for people with disabilities! - still 66%-70%
- Business report they don't know how to find Rehabilitation programs!

Why is this Important?

- Businesses have needs which can be filled by Rehabilitation!
- Myths and fears regarding people with disabilities

Purpose of Rehabilitation Programs:
Serving the Customers

- Assist people with disabilities to gain access to work opportunities!
- Assist businesses with recruiting, hiring, and retaining workers with disabilities in employment!

Quote From a Business Customer

"To really market VR services to employers, VR first has to determine what employers need. focus on what VR can provide to the company and meet the need."
~ UNUM Provident representative

Quote From Business

"We have many needs, not always just filling positions. Often we need assistance with job retention for workers who become disabled on the job."
~ UNUM Provident representative

Networking:
Areas to Consider

- Identify Business Needs!
- Learn the Business Culture!
- Talk the Business Language
  - Not Rehabilitation Language!

Networking:
Areas to Consider

- Develop a Sense of Urgency!

- Establish a Business Value!

Changing Our Ways!

- No more one to one and social service mentality!
  - start thinking business!
- Focus on being business friendly!
- Focus on businesses as a primary customer!

Changing Our Ways!

- Identify strategies to meet business needs!

- BUILD YOUR NETWORKS AND RELATIONSHIPS!

Networking:
What Businesses Desire

- Single Point of Contact!
- Simplified Process
- Service After the Placement-Retention Services!

Networking:
What Businesses Desire

- Promote Successful Best Practices!

- Involvement from Rehabilitation!

Quote From a Business Customer

"A single point of contact makes
It so easy to develop partnerships with
VR and so easy To communicate what we need.
Too many agencies asking me about job
information create confusion and
misinformation."
   ~ Lockheed Martin representative

Five P's of Networking

- Prepare
          - Persistence
- Proactive
          - Priority
- Participate

Prepare

- Research the business community!

- Schedule business interviews!

Prepare

- Maintain business files

- Prepare attractive & pertinent marketing materials for businesses (example - fact sheets)

Proactive

- Seek out businesses/find out the needs!

- Educate businesses of your value!

Proactive

- Provide quality, customer responsive services!

- Seek feedback from businesses!

Participate

- Get involved with business groups (Join Chambers/SHRM)

- Join committee and offer to serve

Participate

- Offer to speak at events

- Host meetings

Persistence

- Be Patient - Don't expect success overnight!

- Find alternate ways to educate business!

Persistence

- Understand that business people are busy!

- Ask for business participation!

Priority

- See the employer as the customer!

- Make sure you always look to help the business with their bottom line!

Priority

- Commitment to spend time necessary to build partnerships!

- Keep a resource room which has lots of business materials!

Networking:
   Who is Responsible

   EVERYBODY!

Tips for Networking

- Prepare a speech & practice (over & over)

- Use your existing contacts (use your friends, neighbors and other work contacts)

Tips for Networking

- Target specific groups (select one or two groups to devote your time & energy)

Tips for Networking

- Build Relationships
  - you have to develop trust with the business

- Share Information
  - don't hide your contacts and job possibilities

Tips for Networking

- Follow Through & Thank You Messages
  - make sure you send a note

- Always Continue Networking
  - it is an on-going process

Quote From a
   Business Partner

   "Look to help our bottom line.
   Can you focus on our sales and our
   expenses, will you help us increase
   the former and decrease the latter?"
   ~ CVS Pharmacy representative

Customer Satisfaction

It doesn't matter how well we think we are doing - But it really matters as to how well our business customers think we are doing!

Developing Business Linkages

- VCU-RRTC Business Roundtable

- Companies who are working with us to explore and expand our workforce by hiring people with disabilities

Developing Business Linkages

- One Company - Home Depot

Business Advantages

- Increases Recruitment Pool in Employment Markets

- Tend to be Long-Term, Committed Associates with Good Attendance Records

Business Advantages

- Provides Disabled Shoppers with someone who Better understands Their Needs

- Tend to Motivate Work Groups and Increase Productivity

Business Advantages

Group	Buying Power
African American	$572 Billion
Hispanic	$452 Billion
Asian	$254 Billion
Female	$1.5 Trillion
Disabled	$796 Billion
Gay/Lesbian	$514 Billion
Gen X (23-24)	$125 Billion
Baby Boomer (35-55)	$1.4 Trillion
Caucasian	$5.4 Trillion

Source: University of Georgia, Selig Center for Economic Growth

Evolving Over the Next 25 Years

Focus on the Customer and Relate to Customers by:

- Speaking their language

- Creating an environment that is complimentary to their lifestyles

Evolving Over the Next 25 Years

Focus on the Customer and Relate to Customers by:

- Offering a wide-array of products and services

- Providing the best customer services

Our Associates

The Home Depot must be a talent magnet. It must:

- Have the ability to attract, engage and retain talent

- Champion the values of each individual's contribution

- Create a sense of belonging

Our Associates

The Home Depot must be a talent magnet. It must:

- Address issues that detract from an inclusive environment

- Encourage positive, open dialogue about differences in opinion and perspective

Community Partnerships

- Introduce yourself to the company, prior to asking them to consider employing one of your clients

- Understand the business and their needs

- Involve business leaders when designing training programs

Community Partnerships

- Use "out of the box thinking" to incent companies to want to partner with you

- Make sure your client has basic job readiness skills

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Community Partnerships

- Consider job retention rather than job placement learn to "live to fight another day"

- Ensure that the business understands the role of the "Job Coach" and how to work with him/her

Community Partnerships

- "Service after the sale."

Successful Case Studies
- Ken's Kids

- In 1998, Home Depot partnered with Ken's Kids, a private non-profit corporation that provided vocational training to young adults who are mildly mentally challenged

- Over the past 7 years 102 associates were placed in PA, NJ, NY, and DE

- Of the 102 associates placed, 84 are still employed

Successful Case Studies
- Ken's Kids

- Prior to Placement:
  - Spend time with managers and co-workers discussing strategies for working with people with disabilities

  - All Job Coaches attend Home Depot Orientation

Successful Case Studies
- Ken's Kids

- After Placement:
  - On-site training last 3 months with frequent follow-up

  - Three Attempts: If an employee is having trouble, they identify the problem and set up a strategy to help the employee

Successful Case Studies
- Deaf2Work

- April 2000, Home Depot began a paid work adjustment program with Deaf2Work, an Atlanta-based voc rehab program

- Designed to help individuals who are hearing impaired get on-the-job training and work exposure

Successful Case Studies
                      - Deaf2Work

- Associates receive extensive training, job coaching and interpreting services
  - 90 days evaluation
  - If performed well and is interested in working for Home Depot, employment is offered

Successful Case Studies
                      - Deaf2Work

- To date held 14 training programs
  - 42 people completed program
  - 28 still employed

A View from the Top

"Celebrating diversity and practicing inclusion are tied to our success and to our bottom line. They are as fundamental to our operations as staying in stock, selling innovative and distinctive merchandise, or providing product know-how and excellent customer service."
  ~ Bob Nardelli, Chairman, President & CEO