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Supported Employment: A Customer-Driven Approach

A relatively short time ago, there was a pervasive perception that individuals with significant disabilities were incapable of competitive employment. The predominant philosophy during this period suggested that individuals with significant disabilities needed to be “fixed”, “cured”, “prevocationally trained”, or “habilitated” before they could have a legitimate work life. Over the past 15 years, this perception has been drastically altered. Supported employment has played a major role in changing these perceptions.

One of the greatest strengths of supported employment is the sheer simplicity of its concept: to assist persons with severe or significant disabilities in obtaining and maintaining community integrated competitive employment through specifically planned supports. The philosophy completely turns the old service delivery paradigm aside and puts the focus on the consumer or **customer** of the service. Yet, the field has been fraught with confusion, even from the very early years of supported employment. Evidence of this con-fusion can be found in the original Job Coach Training Manual published by VCU-RRTC in the early 1980's. The glossary of terms defined the similarities and differences between the supported work model of competitive employment, supported competitive employment, job coach model, individual placement model, supported jobs, competitive employment, bench work model, mobile work crews, and transitional employment. Many national supported employment experts have attributed the loss of focus and intensity in supported employment implementation efforts to the confusion about the basic premise of supported employment and a lack of understanding of best practices and technology. This chapter will attempt to remedy this issue by sharing historical information, current best practices, as well as a new customer-driven approach to supported employment.



EMPLOYMENT PRACTICES & PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES

In the middle of the 20th century, most adults with significant disabilities were viewed as unemployable, and/or unable to compete in the nation's competitive labor force. Typically, most individuals lived with their families or in large segregated institutions. For the most part, people with disabilities were not seen as contributing members of society; rather, they were viewed as wards of

the state who needed care and protection.

The 1960's brought a decade of change that focused on the civil rights of all American citizens. Although the Civil Rights Act did not focus specifically on persons with disabilities, it did become a piece of corner-stone legislation, prohibiting discrimination on the basis of race and national origin. In addition, deinstitutionalization was beginning to occur for persons with disabilities. Primarily, this was for individuals residing in mental health centers.

The 1970's were an important decade for people with disabilities. Several significant events occurred during this period that altered society's image of people with disabilities. Primary among these events was the beginning of a strong and organized disability movement. The table on this page provides a brief chron-ology of key events that would play a major role in shaping the future philosophical frame-work for supported employment.

SUPPORTED EMPLOYMENT VALUES

Supported employment demonstration projects emerged during the late 1970's and early 1980's. Generally, these demonstration projects were small and typically were tied to university-based programs. Prior to the availability of supported employment as a service option, the values inherent in traditional sheltered employment programs, sometimes referred to as affirmative industry, can be traced back to a time when community-oriented services for people with disabilities did not exist and a facility-based solution seemed to fit the need. Facility-based programs offered families security, consistency, and safety.

KEY EVENTS THAT SHAPED THE FRAMEWORK FOR SUPPORTED EMPLOYMENT

1972: Principle of Normalization

Wolf Wolfensburg calls for a new service delivery paradigm which moves services for people with disabilities away from segregated programs into the mainstream of society. The principle of normalization became imbedded in federal law and community services for people with disabilities became increasingly available.

1972: Try Another Way

Marc Gold and Associates develops a new vocational training technology which demonstrates that people with significant cognitive disabilities can learn complex vocational tasks.

1973: Centers for Independent Living

For the first time, the government re-cognizes independent living as a viable concept and Centers for Independent Living are funded and opened around the country.

1975: Public Law 94-142

The Education for All Handicapped Children Act mandates a free and appropriate public education for all children in the least restrictive environment.

1. **Security:** The facility-based program assured people with disabilities and their family members that they would have an adult day program/service as an alternative to staying at home.
2. **Consistency:** The facility offered a program that was built around a routine.
3. **Safety:** The facility provided for a safe and well-supervised environment.

The advent of supported employment led many people with disabilities, family members, service providers, and other citizens to examine their values and approach to rehabilitation. Over time, people with disabilities, families, advocates, and professionals began to criticize and openly disapprove of sheltered employment facilities. This general dissatisfaction occurred as a natural evolution of the philosophical mind-shift that emerged during the 1970's and 1980's. With the national publication of successful supported employment demonstration projects, there emerged a new rehabilitation model. Employment was seen, by many, as the means by which people with disabilities could obtain community membership.

From its inception, in the early 1980's supported employment services have required rehabilitation service providers, employers, families, and legislatures to examine their values regarding an individual's right to work. These discussions included such issues as severity and type of disability, type of employment, number of hours worked, benefits, earnings, and environmental setting. Supported employment has always been about real community jobs for all people, specifically those individuals with significant disabilities. This means physical and social participation of supported employment participants in the business setting with equal pay for equal work; in fact, the higher the earnings the better. By the end of the 1980's, many historical events had occurred that led to the establishment of supported employment as a viable rehabilitation service option.

- # The Office of Special Education and Rehabilitation Services funded a number of states to create supported employment systems change.
- # The Rehabilitation Act was amended in 1986 to include: 1) definition of supported employment; 2) provisions for exclusive funds for supported employment (Title VI-C); and 3) authorization of case service dollars for individuals traditionally served by vocational rehabilitation (Title I).
- # New interagency collaborations at both the state and local levels of government were established to achieve supported employment outcomes for people with significant disabilities.
- # The concepts of "employability" and "readiness" gained national attention as out-of-date concepts.
- # Supported employment was established as an alternative service option with a presumption of employment for all individuals, in a competitive job that is related to the person's interests and abilities.

The 1980's ended with a new array of vocational services for persons with significant disabilities. Essentially, the old practices of the 1970's continued while the new rehabilitation model called supported employment was added onto the traditional rehabilitation services options. People with severe disabilities could now choose from a variety of vocational alternatives. These alternatives ranged from day treatment services which are facility-based and generally non-vocational in design; to supported employment, which includes real jobs in the local labor market with assistance and support in obtaining and maintaining community integrated competitive employment. The following table lists nine values that have guided supported employment efforts from the early 1980's and provides a brief description of each.

Supported Employment Values	
Values	Values Clarification
Presumption of Employment	A conviction that everyone, regardless of the level or the type of disability, has the capability and right to a job.
Competitive Employment	A conviction that employment occurs within the local labor market in regular community businesses.
Control	A conviction that when people with disabilities choose and regulate their own employment supports and services, career satisfaction will result.
Commensurate Wages & Benefits	A conviction that people with disabilities should earn wages and benefits equal to that of coworkers performing the same or similar jobs.
Focus on Capacity & Capabilities	A conviction that people with disabilities should be viewed in terms of their abilities, strengths, and interests rather than their disabilities.
Importance of Relationships	A conviction that community relationships both at, and away from, work leads to mutual respect and acceptance.
Power of Supports	A conviction that people with disabilities need to determine their personal goals and receive assistance in assembling the supports necessary to achieve their ambitions.
Systems Change	A conviction that traditional systems must be changed to ensure customer control which is vital to the integrity of supported employment.
Importance of Community	A conviction that people need to be connected to the formal and informal networks of a community for acceptance, growth, and development.

From its inception, supported employment has been characterized by individual placement or group option arrangements. Initially, four distinct models for supported employment implementation were introduced and defined. It was thought by many professionals that many new models would evolve over time. However, over the last several years the models of supported employment have remained largely intact with the exception of an additional group option that was introduced in the early 1990's.

Individual Placement Model of Competitive Employment -- This model is considered by many to be the least restrictive and most normalizing of all the rehabilitation service delivery models (Rehab Brief, 1986). This model is characterized by one employment specialist working with one person to obtain and maintain the community integrated competitive employment position of choice (Moon, Goodall, Barcus & Brooke, 1985; Wehman, 1981).

Group Options

Enclave -- An enclave can be defined as a group of individuals, usually three to eight, who work together in a group with the assistance of a permanent full-time supervisor. Employment occurs within a regular, community-based industry called the host company with participants' earnings based upon production rate results. (Rhodes & Valenta, 1985a).

Mobile Work Crew -- A mobile work crew usually includes between three to eight employees with significant disabilities and one or two supervisors. Typically, a mobile work crew travels through a community performing specialized contract services. This model is different from enclaves, because mobile crews typically operate several different contracts and move regularly from one business to another. Crew supervisors are often responsible for providing daily supervision and coaching of crew employees, while performing on-going contract procurement activities. For this reason, a mobile work crew can be a complex business to operate (Jacobs, 1974; Bourbeau, 1985).

Dispersed Group or Cluster Option -- The dispersed group or cluster option of supported employment is similar to the other group options, in that the agency provides a full-time supervisor to provide training to the employees. Yet, the cluster option has several significant differences to include: 1) all supported employment participants are hired by the business, and 2) wage earnings are commensurate with co-workers performing the same/similar duties. This model of supported employment is characterized by the business hiring up to eight individuals, all of whom work in different positions but in close proximity to the on-site supervisor (Moon, Inge, Wehman, Brooke, & Barcus, 1990; Nietupski, 1993).

Entrepreneurial Model -- The entrepreneurial or small business option of supported employment has changed a great deal in the last few years. For many years, this model was characterized by manufacturing services design or subcontract operation arrangements, that hired eight or fewer persons with significant disabilities, as well as employees without disabilities. The most

notable of the early entrepreneurial model programs was the benchwork model which involved a benchwork of small electronic assembly businesses across the country (Boles, Bellamy, Horner, & Mank, 1985; O'Brian, 1985).

In the past, the entrepreneurial model was operated with the "system" in control of the business or sub-contract arrangement. Today the entrepreneurial model of supported employment looks very different. People with significant disabilities are joining their friends and families and are owning and operating their own businesses. The success of these small businesses will depend on the ability to attract customers or, in some cases, contracts.

It is important to note that in the last several years supported employment has seen a sharp decline in the number of persons participating in group options and a growth in individual placement models. This manual will address the development and implementation of the individual placement model of competitive employment. However, best practices, strategies, and outcomes that will be presented will apply to all supported employment options.

Over the years, supported employment has continued to grow and progress. This progress has resulted in a new way of doing business. This vision of supported employment is characterized by a **"customer-driven approach"** to supported employment. This approach includes several critical best practices which are described in the following section.



CUSTOMER-DRIVEN APPROACH TO SUPPORTED EMPLOYMENT

Many individuals with disabilities have characterized their typical relationships with human service and/or rehabilitation professionals as paternalistic or as a "professionals know best" attitude. This general air of condescension toward individuals with disabilities has many negative and far reaching implications which ultimately affect the ability for them to direct their own lives and become fully integrated into their communities. When professionals view persons with disabilities as "helpless," employers, family members, and the general public accept this same attitude. The result is the continuation of negative attitudes and stereotypical images of persons with disabilities throughout the general public. This same paternalistic attitude exists in the field of supported employment. Many rehabilitation counselors, case managers, job coaches, and program managers have been delivering supported employment services and engaging in practices that directly or indirectly transmit a message to persons with disabilities that "we, the professionals, are in charge."

Nationally, such complaints as "he just doesn't appreciate the job that I got him" or "if only I didn't have to deal with her family" are common statements made by professionals. All too often, these professionals are making decisions for consumers. Professionals who engage in this type of behavior are imposing their values or the agency's values on the people receiving services. When this occurs, the rights of people with disabilities are violated. Fortunately, this method of "doing business" is coming to an end. People with disabilities are speaking out, taking control of their lives,

and seeking to direct the services they need. This current movement of people with disabilities asserting choice and control over their destinies is having a major impact on supported employment services and has led to a "**customer-driven approach**" to supported employment.

BEST PRACTICES

There are nine best practices that are encompassed in this approach to supported employment. Central to the concept is the idea that the customer is in control of the process. The role of the employment specialist is to assist the customer in reaching his or her career goals. The best practices form the foundation for the customer-driven approach to supported employment. High quality supported employment service providers will incorporate these practices into their daily activities of implementing supported employment services.

BEST PRACTICES IN A CUSTOMER-DRIVEN APPROACH TO SUPPORTED EMPLOYMENT

- 1. Choice**
- 2. Control**
- 3. Careers**
- 4. Full Inclusion**
- 5. Long term Supports**
- 6. Community & Business Supports**
- 7. Total Quality Management**
- 8. Assistive Technology**
- 9. Person-Centered Planning**

Choice. The opportunity to make choices concerning employment, living arrangements, and recreation has been limited or nonexistent for many individuals with disabilities. It has become increasingly evident that the powerlessness and lack of direction frequently felt by people with disabilities are related to the attitudes and practices of service providers, care givers, funding agencies, and society in general rather than any true limitation as a result of an individual's disability. For example, some individuals have never had an opportunity to make choices. Decision-making skills have not been taught or encouraged, or adequate information about alternatives has not been available. Many people with disabilities have voiced their concerns that all too frequently decisions are made by professionals who feel that they know best and that self-assertion is often ignored,

under-estimated, or seen as a “challenging behavior.”

Customer choice frequently has been restricted by other external forces such as agency regulations, lack of accessible information, inadequate supports, or stereotypical attitudes. For example, an individual may be forced to choose between attending the sheltered workshop or a job that he or she does not like, because the agency requires that all residents who live in the group home have eight hours of day activity.

Choice in a customer-driven model of supported employment would dictate that all supported employment customers are presented with a variety of experiences, options, and supports to achieve career goals of their choice. If individuals are to experience personal satisfaction and quality of life, regardless of the level or type of disability, they must be given the opportunity and support to express preferences. Supported employment customers need to be directing the process by choosing the service provider, the subsequent employment specialist, and the specific support services that they may need to obtain and maintain employment. State vocational rehabilitation programs can assist customers with this process by sharing supported employment agency summary data for the identification and selection of a service provider.

Control. The concept of control expands the above definition of choice to a broader concept of exerting control and ultimately self-determination. Customers of supported employment must be in a position to not only choose their service provider and employment specialist but to have a measure of control over the services that they seek. Federal legislation has begun to recognize the importance of this concept and the rights of persons with disabilities to have control over their lives.

Control, as a concept in a customer-driven approach, is used to refer to an individual’s ability to access supported employment services and to freely act upon his or her choices and decisions without fear of reprisal. Supported employment customers must be free to participate in supported employment services by choosing a service provider or employment specialist, by accepting or declining a specific job, or by electing to resign or continue employment with a particular company.

Careers. Career development is an important consideration for any adult seeking employment. However, many supported employment service providers gauge success by the length of time an individual remains in the same employment position. In addition, service providers often put too much emphasis on the number of placements that they make rather than on customer satisfaction with an employment situation. These practices continue to occur for a number of reasons including inaccurate interpretation of federal and/or state rehabilitation policies that results in failure to use funds for job advancement; and limited employment expectations for people with disabilities among service providers, which directs customers into dead-end positions.

The customer-driven approach to supported employment places an increased emphasis on the initial time that a direct service provider spends with the customer to assist with the identification of career goals. High quality service providers must be skilled in working closely with their customers to develop strategies for marketing their service, establishing a rapport with the business community, interviewing employers, and conducting in-depth job analysis of specific employment settings. Completing this process will yield an extensive amount of information for the customer to determine if the wages, benefits, conditions, supports, and corporate culture are sufficient for long term career development.

Full Community Inclusion. The concept of full community inclusion calls for a vision of society in which all persons are viewed in terms of their abilities and are welcomed into the mainstream of community life. The whole notion of community inclusion stresses relationships both formal and informal, as well as, business and social. Yet, a segment of the general public has the impression that people with disabilities are better served when they are with other people with similar disabilities. This faulty notion persists, in part, due to the creation of “special” services for people with disabilities and by not adequately representing or connecting people with disabilities to the formal and informal social structures.

In a customer-driven approach, the customers of supported employment services work with service providers in the marketing of the employment service. Developing a marketing approach and materials with the customers of the service will help to ensure that people with disabilities are represented in a positive manner to the business community. In addition, the employment specialist needs to actively assist customers in developing networks that are based on his or her desires, wants and, needs. Too often, employment specialists have personally provided critical employment supports rather than taking additional time to find a family, friend, or community source for the same support.

Relationship building at the business site will be vital to building full community inclusion and achieving employment satisfaction. For example, working age adults spend, on average, 40 hours a week at their place of employment. The office or business setting is where many social relationships are formed. This same principle holds true for people with disabilities. However, because some people are still uncertain of how to approach someone with a disability, the employment specialist can assist by breaking down these artificial barriers from the first day of work. Assisting individuals with disabilities to obtain full inclusion in the work setting will facilitate a new vision of community where all members are valued.

Long Term Supports. Supported employment provides for the necessary supports to assist an individual with long term employment retention. By federal definition, supported employment

includes at least two monthly contacts at the job site unless the customer requests otherwise. The long term support component is an extremely unique feature among rehabilitation services. Unlike other services, the entire notion of service termination is never addressed. The intention behind this feature of supported employment is the realization that individuals, as well as businesses, are fluid. Individuals do not simply get a job in a local business and then stay there for the rest of their lives. While the likelihood of remaining in the same occupation has remained constant, staying with the same employer or even in the same industry has declined significantly over the last ten years (National Alliance of Business, 1996).

Despite the importance of long term supports, it is the area of supported employment that has received the least amount of attention. Generally, service providers are very concerned with options for funding of this component of supported employment. Yet, the entire notion of type and level of support has been left open for individual interpretation.

In a customer-driven approach, the long term supports should be designed to assist the customer in the identification and provision of supports and extended services which maintain and enhance the person's position as a valued member of the work force. It is vital to note that many of the issues and concerns that are presented in the long term support stage began prior to employment or during the initial weeks of employment. There is a strong connection between the employment match process and long term employment success. Retention and employment satisfaction must be planned for from the beginning. Customers actively participating in all employment decisions, from the beginning including type and level of supports and interventions, will help to ensure satisfaction. Employment specialists must move away from the notion of stabilization and focus on long term success. Co-worker support, assistive technology, wages, co-worker relationships, friendships, changes in work routine, and employee and employer satisfaction are the key issues that must be addressed in an extended services plan. Supported employment customers, employers, and direct service providers need to determine individualized strategies for providing support that will assist in career advancement and, ultimately, facilitate long term job satisfaction for the customer and the employer.

Community & Business Supports. As stated earlier, the whole notion of support has been vital to the national expansion of supported employment. The individualized nature of supported employment in the delivery of needed assistance in conjunction with an employment specialist is the major reason why supported employment is widely accepted and promoted by people with disabilities. As the customer-driven approach evolves, the employment specialist must develop the necessary skills to ensure that the customers of the service are directing the process.

Natural supports as originally introduced includes supports to be provided by individuals, such

as co-workers and employers, who are not hired by a human services organization. In a customer-driven approach, these supports include a full range of supports that can be found both at the employee's place of business and in the community. They are designed to assist an individual with employment and community participation. An employment specialist must be prepared and have the necessary knowledge to develop community and business supports, facilitate informed choice, assist in assessing preferred choice, provide a variety of individualized supports, coordinate and monitor all types of assistance and respond to changes over time. The direct service providers of supported employment should be spending less time actually engaged in delivering a support and more time engaged in assessing a situation with a customer, sharing information about possible support options, assisting the customer in accessing the support option, and evaluating the effectiveness of the strategy.

Continuous Quality Improvement. The concept of continuous quality improvement is known by many different terms and variations to include: Total Quality Control, Total Quality Improvement, Total Quality, and Managing for Quality. There are striking similarities between these terms that generally refer to an approach that can be used by a service delivery provider to constantly reevaluate quality. Continuous quality improvement calls for service providers to focus their time and energy on improving the process, the product, and the service. The key to continuous improvement is driven and defined by the customer.

In a customer-driven approach to supported employment services, providers must listen to the wishes and desires of persons with significant disabilities to determine the agency's mission, goals and objectives. People with disabilities who are participating in supported employment or who are actively seeking services should be assisting in developing and evaluating services. In addition, employment specialists should play an active role in assisting the agency with continuous quality improvement. Having job coaches, job developers, and customers working together will give the agency the necessary data to drive the quality improvement.

Assistive Technology. Since the early 1970's, assistive technology or rehabilitation technology has emerged and opened unlimited employment opportunities for persons with disabilities. Individuals who at one time faced enormous barriers concerning accessibility, communication, and mobility can now optimize their intellectual and physical capabilities. With the use of voice synthesizers, people are able to express their wants and desires. Computers can be operated by a human voice or a simple gaze of an eye. This new technology is unlocking doors and providing opportunities for a greater number of people to obtain and maintain employment.

Person-Centered Planning. Supported employment has always been about assisting one person at a time in achieving employment satisfaction. Yet, over time, some people continue to be

excluded from supported employment. Person-centered planning seeks to support the contributions of each person in his or her local community by building a support group around the individual. This support group or community network functions together to assist the focus person in obtaining his or her goals and aspirations. Group members commit to regular get-together designed to solve problems, develop strategies, and make commitments to act on behalf of the focus person with a disability.

In a customer-driven approach to supported employment, person-centered planning provides an excellent tool for the customer to direct the career process. Family, friends, and paid care givers meet together to assist the individual in obtaining and maintaining community integrated competitive employment. The support group continues to meet even after a job is found to assist the individual in maintaining career satisfaction and other goals for full community inclusion.

CUSTOMER, NOT CONSUMER

The most significant change is how people with disabilities perceive themselves, and what they want from their relationships with professionals. The “customer’s” concept represents a change in thinking and is part of the evolutionary process occurring nationally. Today, people with disabilities seeking community integrated competitive employment are referring to themselves as customers. They are still saying that they want and need the assistance of a professional to obtain and maintain competitive employment. However, what they are demanding is for supported employment services to be developed, marketed, and delivered based upon what would best fit the customer’s needs, rather than what is convenient to the existing service system.

SERVICE PROVIDER

In the 1980’s, service providers never discussed how people with disabilities could select a supported employment program. Today, most communities have multiple supported employment service providers. Customers must interview each program to determine which organization receives their business. Some of the best examples of this practice can be found in communities that are using a voucher system to pay for supported employment services. Rehabilitation customers with vouchers are exercising their rights to purchase supported employment services from friends, human service organizations, or community employment agencies.

One of the key factors related to employment retention is the rapport that is established between the direct service provider and the new employee. Therefore, once a customer has selected

the supported employment service provider, he or she should interview the direct service staff of the organization to determine which individual would be best suited to deliver his or her service needs. The following table presents a series of questions that customers can use when preparing to interview supported employment service providers and to make a subsequent decision regarding employment supports.

CUSTOMER'S SELECTING A SUPPORTED EMPLOYMENT SERVICE PROVIDER	
Before the Interview	
#	Call and schedule an appointment.
#	Make a list of interview questions.
#	Identify priority questions.
#	Invite a support person or note taker to accompany you to the interview.
After the Interview	
#	Organize information following the interview and compare results.
#	Decide which provider will best meet your needs.
#	Call the provider and let them know why you selected their service.
#	Write a note to the programs that you didn't select and let them know why they lost your business.
Interview Questions	
#	Does your program have a written vision?
#	What types of services does your agency offer?
#	Do you have experience serving customers with different types of disabilities?
#	How would you describe the role of the customer in supported employment?
#	Have you excluded people with disabilities from your program? If so why?
#	Describe how you present your program to a prospective employer?
#	May I see a copy of your marketing materials?
#	How many employment specialists does your agency employ?
#	What is the average length of employment for your employment specialists?
#	Do the majority of your customers have part-time or full-time employment?
#	What is the average weekly earnings of your customers?
#	What types of jobs have you assisted customers in finding?
#	Does your program assist customers with Social Security issues?
#	Do customers choose their employment specialists?
#	How do you fund extended services?
#	How do you assess customer satisfaction? Do you have any data?
#	Do you have any program references from customers, employers, and family members?

Brooke, Wehman, Inge & Parent, 1995

ROLE OF THE EMPLOYMENT SPECIALIST

The most exciting feature that is consistent throughout the customer-driven approach to supported employment is the clear shift of control from the service provider to the customer. Historically, this individual has had many titles such as: trainer advocate, job trainer, job coach,

supported employment training specialist, and employment specialist. For purposes of this manual, the direct service position in supported employment will be referred to as the employment specialist or job coach.

Within a customer-driven approach to supported employment, the employment specialist's job functions are linked to major components of the support service to include the following: 1) customer profile; 2) career development; 3) employment match; 4) job-site training and supports and; 5) long-term supports/extended services. However, the specific activities that the employment specialist actually performs within these categories will vary depending upon the needs of the individual requesting services. To adequately perform each of these functions, the employment specialist must move comfortably in and out of a variety of roles. There are five distinct roles that supported employment direct service personnel perform within each of the functions associated with a customer-driven approach to supported employment.

The five roles described in this section are not weighted, and therefore share the same level of importance. A good employment specialist would not, for example, focus solely on the "consultant role" or the "planner role" to the exclusion of the other areas. Rather, a well-trained employment specialist must be prepared to serve in many different capacities to effectively meet the needs of individuals with significant disabilities who seek supported employment services. It is important to remember that the employment specialist must work closely with the customer, employer, co-workers, family, and others, providing as little or as much assistance as the individual needs to accomplish her or his identified goals. The following section will review the activities associated with each of these distinct roles.

Planner Role

An employment specialist acting in the planner role would analyze the services that a supported employment customer was seeking and then assist him or her in the development of a plan to achieve the identified goals. The planner role involves the development of a customer profile in which desirable career options and community supports are identified. Mapping out activities, identifying potential supports, scheduling meetings with organizations, and identifying resources to be utilized would be important functions of the planner role. Setting up and conducting a situational assessment is one example of a desirable activity for the planner. This service would be provided to those customers who were seeking clarity in choosing a career path, distinguishing interests, or identifying critical support needs.

Consultant Role

An employment specialist must be prepared to enter into a consultant relationship with customers of supported employment services. As with any consultant relationship, the expectations related to this role would be to provide recommendations based upon the consultant's knowledge and

expertise. The supported employment customer would be free to then accept or reject the consultant's advice and to contract for additional services as needed. A specific example of the consultant role would be to provide recommendations to the customer in regards to employment selection, job site organization, use of compensatory strategies, technology, and potential support that would assist in getting and keeping a job.

Head Hunter Role

The head hunter role represents an important area of job responsibilities for the employment specialist. Acting in this role, the employment specialist engages in a variety of marketing activities ranging from the development and dissemination of promotional information about supported employment services to the identification of strategies for an individual to market him or herself to a prospective employer. A “high power” head hunter would remain current with community labor market and local economic development opportunities and include such job responsibilities as tracking data on primary and secondary labor markets within a community, conducting labor market surveys, participating in business advisory boards, keeping files on community employers, and making cold calls to businesses with the intent of seeking position openings or potential need to hire. Essentially, the head hunter spends time developing strong relationships with the entire employment community.

Technician Role

An employment specialist will be required to perform in the role of a technician, requiring many technical skills and abilities. She or he must be well versed in the latest high and low rehabilitation technologies that would assist an individual to enter the world of work, to maintain a current employment position, or obtain a career advancement. The technician’s role also requires the employment specialist to be able to identify appropriate strategies to teach needed skills, provide training as needs arise, and to fade assistance in a systematic process that ensures acquisition and maintenance of a skill. A typical example of the technician’s role performed by an employment specialist is providing instruction to a customer on how to ride public transportation. The customer assists the technician in identifying a desirable training option and possible supports. The desired choice would then be implemented by a family member, a person riding the bus, or the employment specialist. It is the technician's responsibility to set up the training procedure and ensure that it is implemented as the customer requested.

Community Resource Role

The community resource role requires the employment specialist to have a thorough knowledge of the community. This knowledge can be obtained by conducting regular community analysis activities that investigate potential support resources. These resource areas are not limited

to the business community, but rather covers the entire range of community supports to include transportation, recreation, social, housing, and independent living, organizations and agencies. Acting in this community resource role, the employment specialist continually identifies information that will be used to assist an individual in determining preferences for possible supports. This role is vital in helping to ensure that customers are not only achieving a measure of economic success but also social success.

IMPLEMENTING THE CUSTOMER-DRIVEN APPROACH

As discussed earlier in this chapter, techniques for implementing a customer-driven approach to supported employment require the individual with the significant disability to direct the process. Decisions from selecting the community service provider and job coach to identifying the type and level of long-term supports must be made by the supported employment customer. The following section provides a brief description of the major components of a customer-driven approach to supported employment with techniques for implementation.

Organizational Marketing and Job Development

In the past, when supported employment programs conducted organizational marketing it was done in isolation of people with disabilities. With a customer-driven approach the individual with a significant disability and his or her family members become active participants in the process. While organizational marketing has very different goals and objectives than career development, good marketing techniques naturally blend into the job development phase of supported employment.

Career development is an important consideration for any adult seeking employment. However, many supported employment service providers gage success by the length of time an individual remains in the same employment position. In addition, service providers often put too much emphasis on the number of placements made rather than on customer satisfaction with an employment situation. While these practices continue to occur for a number of reasons, service delivery can improve through increased knowledge of federal and/or state regulations and increased employment expectations for people with disabilities.

The customer-driven approach to supported employment places new emphasis on relationship building with customers and employers for careers. High quality service providers must be skilled in working closely with customers and together develop strategies for marketing their service, establishing a rapport with the business community, inter-viewing employers, and conducting in-depth job analysis of specific employment settings. Completing this process will allow the service provider

to gather an extensive amount of information for the customer to determine if the wages, benefits, conditions, supports, and corporate culture are sufficient for long term career development. The following table presents a list of customer-driven practices associated with organizational marketing and job development.

ORGANIZATIONAL MARKETING AND JOB DEVELOPMENT: THE PATH TO CAREERS	
#	Customer works with the organization and moves about the business community using competitive, business oriented language.
#	Customer and employment specialist develop marketing materials.
#	Customer manages the job search with support from the employment specialist.
#	Customer conducts informational inter-viewing with business community.
#	Customer and employment specialist develop employment resume for specific job searches.
#	Customer is aware of how service provider represents him/her and ADA to the business community

Customer Profile

The intent of supported employment has always been to provide a vocational alternative for individuals who were screened out of traditional rehabilitation models. Yet, over the years, supported employment service providers continued to use information gained during assessment to determine whether an individual was "ready" for competitive employment. The customer-driven approach moves away from the term assessment and resulting concepts that exclude individuals from employment.

Instead, service providers need to obtain a "snapshot" or profile of the customer and what he or she wants to achieve through supported employment. A person's age and past experiences will provide a guide to obtain the information necessary to gather during this process. In all cases, it is critical for the service provider to spend time with the customer and his or her family members to determine personal strengths, concerns, desires, and anticipated employment outcomes. Short situational assessments in real work environments, person-centered planning, and the identification of possible community and business supports will assist supported employment service providers in assuring high quality outcomes and customer satisfaction. The following table will provide techniques for a customer-driven approach to customer profile.

CUSTOMER PROFILE

- # Customer is assisted in developing an employment vision.
- # Customer and family members spend time getting to know service provider.
- # Customer is assisted in identifying significant people who are interested in employment outcome.
- # Customer is encouraged to share wants, likes, and needs.
- # Customer participates in situational assessment.
- # Customer is assisted in developing potential list of support needs.

Employment Selection

Compiling and analyzing the information gathered during the customer profile phase with the information collected on the business is the only way to ensure a successful employment start. Typically, months elapse between the time the service provider completes the customer profile and subsequently performs a detailed job analysis on a prospective employment position. When a job opening occurs, service providers may not carefully analyze the unique features related specifically to the business and the individual. Rushing to fill job openings causes service providers to exclude the customer in the employment match process. Customers often are not contacted by service providers until it is time for a job interview. When an individual is left out of the process, he or she will not be vested in the job that the agency locates.

Implementing a customer-driven approach calls for the service provider to be concerned with long-term employment success by assisting the customer in organizing and achieving a desirable plan for the future. Service providers must involve customers in every aspect of the employment match process. For instance, jobs often are found through family and friends. Customers of supported employment programs need to use their networks and contacts as the service provider assists with coordinating and implementing support strategies. In addition, customers are beginning to assist in the job analysis process to learn information about the business. Regardless of whether the customer, family member, friend, or direct service provider finds the job, it is critical to complete a job analysis to ensure that the employment situation matches the customer's career plans. Further, the customer-driven approach requires that the customer, not the service provider, choose the employment opportunities using the information gathered from the employment site and customer profile. Customer-driven employment selection practices are listed in the following table.

EMPLOYMENT SELECTION

- # Customer is notified of all job openings as program becomes aware.
- # Customer assists employment specialist in analyzing personal strengths and interests with specific employer demands and business culture.
- # Customer determines if salary and benefit package are satisfactory.
- # Customer determines if interested in pursuing job opening.

Job-Site Training and Support

Detailed job duty analysis, identification and use of community and workplace supports, systematic instruction, compensatory strategies, orientation training, and workplace accommodations have always been the cornerstones of well-developed job-site training and support plans. Loss of employment during this supported employment phase reflects a deficit in the instructional procedure or job match process rather than the individual's ability to work competitively. However, over the years, as individuals lost jobs, many service providers labeled these persons as, "not job ready." This notion of job readiness goes against the founding philosophy of supported employment.

If supported employment programs are going to serve persons with the most significant disabilities, direct service providers must use the existing technology and best practices described extensively in the literature. When using a customer-driven approach to supported employment, the customer is involved in all decisions regarding his or her training. Customers should assist in the development of the job duty analysis and task analysis, selection of instructional procedures, design and purchase of assistive devices, and identification and design of compensatory strategies to ensure that customers are directing their own careers. Strategies for customer-driven job-site training and support are listed below.

JOB-SITE TRAINING AND SUPPORT

- # Customer works with the employment specialist to determine training and support needs.
- # Customer selects training and support options.
- # Customer works with the employment specialist to develop all plans and/or contracts.
- # Customer works with the employment specialist to determine fading schedule.
- # Customer is in regular contact with employer.
- # Customer is in regular contact and develops relationships with co-workers from the first day of employment.

Long Term Support

Over the years, some customers of supported employment services have voiced their concerns about the follow-along visits from the employment specialist. Typically, these issues centered around the intrusive practices used by some employment specialists to monitor customer progress, which were stigmatizing in the business setting. The intended goal of long term supports is to assist the customer in the identification and provision of supports and extended services necessary to maintain and enhance the person's position as a valued member of the work force. Supported employment customers, employers, and direct service providers need to determine individualized strategies for providing support that will assist in career advancement and ultimately facilitate long term job satisfaction for the customer and the employer. The following table presents a list of customer-driven practices for long-term supports.

LONG-TERM SUPPORTS

- # Customer and the employment specialist assess employment stability.
- # Customer and employment specialist assess employment satisfaction.
- # Customer and employment specialist address career advancement options.
- # Customer and employment specialist analyze long term support issues.
- # Customer and employment specialist analyze long term funding issues and options



SUMMARY

Over the last decade, a great deal has occurred affirming supported employment as the option

of choice to traditional segregated day programs. This has developed thanks to the work of thousands of individuals with disabilities and advocates from across the country. Yet, it is clear that many people with significant disabilities are still unable to access community integrated competitive employment. People with disabilities are beginning to speak out and are suggesting change in response to the current practices among supported employment service providers. This manual has been designed to assist supported employment customers, service providers, and employers as we work together to assist greater numbers of people with disabilities to obtain their careers of choice. The remaining sections of this manual will cover techniques and strategies for entering into real partnerships with customers as we work together to implement the components of supported employment and obtain employment success.



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