

# Expanding Employment Opportunities for Youth using Customized Employment

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3



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4



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5



## About your Host



Mission Statement: Improving lives of people with disabilities through meaningful work and community inclusion.

6



# Expanding Employment Opportunities for Youth using Customized Employment

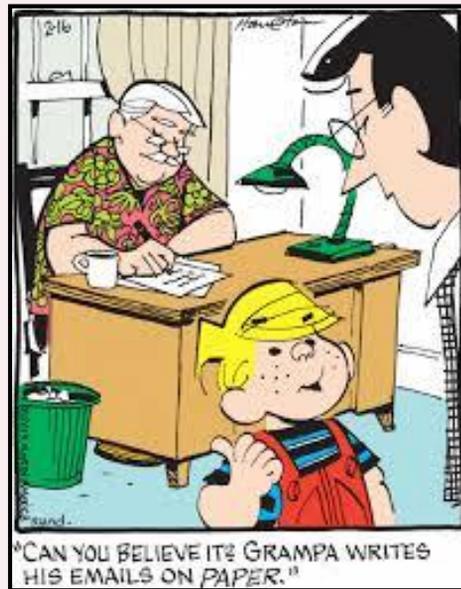


Laura Owens  
President  
TransCen, Inc.



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Times are  
changing...



## What We Did (and why it didn't work)

- “Job Readiness”
- Focus on jobs, not careers
- Low expectations (“realistic”)
  - “People with disabilities should be spared the soft bigotry of low expectations”, Dr. Roy Grizzard, First Assistant Secretary of ODEP
- Focus on job placement (versus job development)

9



## Employment should be the *Expectation* not the *Exception*



“If people are treated as capable, they often surprise everyone and live up to expectations.”

~Ken Steele “The Day the Voices Stopped.”

10





## Employment First: Raising Expectations

Competitive integrated employment should be the **first and preferred service option** for individuals with disabilities, including those with more support needs

11



## Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA)

The days of students with disabilities leaving school poorly educated, with no employment experience, no job prospects, living lives of poverty, and too often ending up in segregated programs need to come to an end.



12



## WIOA: Pre-Employment Transition Services

1. Job exploration counseling
2. Work-based learning experiences
3. Counseling on postsecondary education options
4. Workplace readiness (preparation) training
5. Instruction in self-advocacy

13



## Implications for Services

- ✓ Competitive integrated employment **as a priority**
- ✓ Meaningful community inclusion/engagement **as an imperative**
- ✓ Change the way we operate **is inevitable**

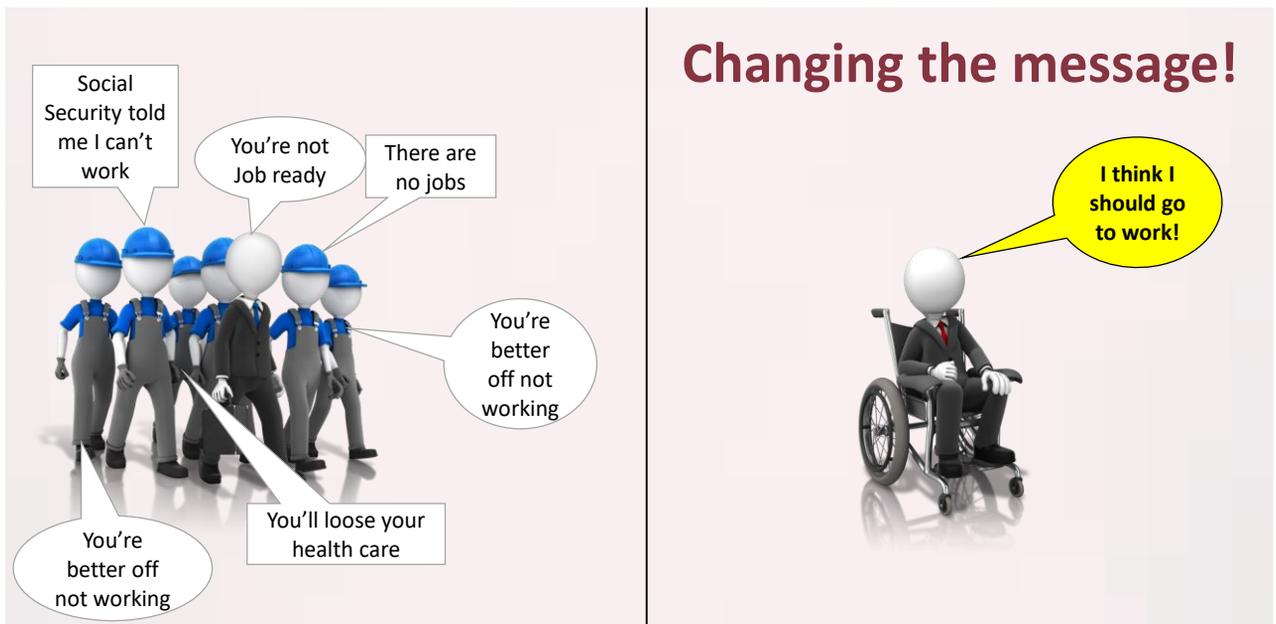
14



## What we are doing (and how it's working!)

- ✓ Presumption of employment – all means all
- ✓ Services versus programs
- ✓ No more asking “Do you want to work?” but instead “Where do you want to work?”
- ✓ Opportunity - Job shadowing, internships, volunteering, community involvement
- ✓ Working is the norm – not the exception

15



16



## Simple yet powerful message...



- People with disabilities want to work, deserve to work and are great for business!

#IWantToWork

17



## Killer Concepts



☹️ Readiness

☹️ Realistic

18



# Customized Employment

“Customized employment is based on individual’s match between the strengths, conditions and interests of the job candidates and the identified business needs of an employer” (ODEP, 2012)

19



## Customized Employment



- Old model of *Train and Place* uses sheltered workshops to get people “ready” for work
- *Place and Train* Model quickly became “Place and Pray”
- New approach...***Discover, Connect and Support***

20



## Employment “Readiness” Myth

Employers are expecting perfect employees



21



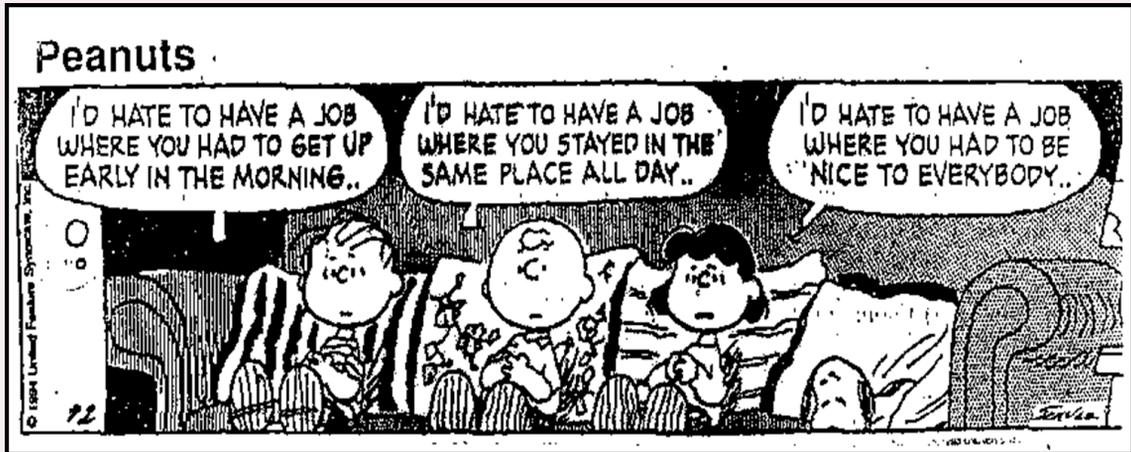
## Have you ever worked with anyone who...

- Couldn't get along with others?
- Acted inappropriately?
- Had behavioral outbursts?
- Was chronically late?
- Complained about everything?
- Didn't communicate well?
- Didn't work very fast?
- Got distracted easily?
- Couldn't follow directions?
- Acted impulsively without thinking?
- Refused to take public transportation?
- Had a messy office?
- Wasn't organized?
- Wasn't always professional?
- Was rude?
- Couldn't take criticism?
- Was lazy?
- Wasn't very good at their job – but managed to still keep it?

22



## Preferences Are Important



23



## Discover the Possibilities!

- Listen to your student/job seeker
- Focus on skills – not deficits
- No prerequisites
- Everyone is “job ready”
- Look for “rays of light”
- Ask: “What value will the student/job seeker bring to a business?”

24



## Building a Positive Personal Profile

- Dreams and goals
- Talents
- Skills and knowledge
- Learning styles
- Interests
- Personality traits (quirks included)
- Temperament
- Values
- Environmental preferences
- Dislikes
- Work experiences
- Support system
- Challenges
- Solutions (accommodations)

25



## How Can you Find This Information?

- **Interviews:** Person, family, friends, stakeholders
- **Observations:** School, agency, home, community, worksite
- **Career Assessments:** Formal, informal, printed, computerized, situational
- **Experiences:** Opportunities in “real” settings

26



**Most valuable  
discovery/assessment  
strategy...**

**Spending time with  
the job seeker in a  
variety of settings**

27



## Meet Mattie

### What her file told us:

- Developmentally disabled; deaf and blind
- Lived in an institution most of her life
- “Failed” at several work placements
- Nonverbal
- “Behavior outbursts”
- Moves slowly
- Stubborn

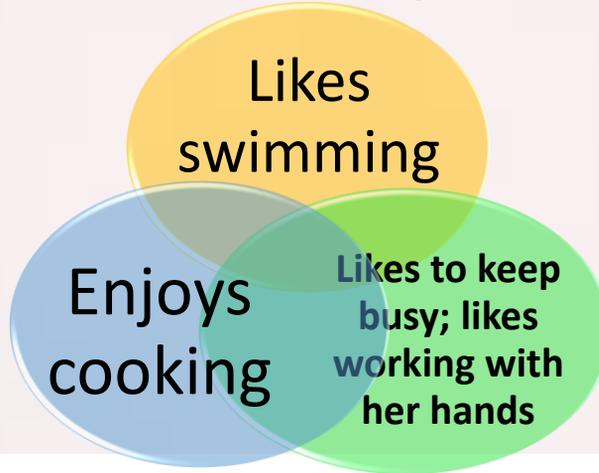
### What we “discovered”:

- Very curious
- Loves variety and learning new things (including tactile communication)
- Likes working with her hands
- Always smiling
- Enjoys cooking (smelling the food, stirring, pouring)
- Loves swimming (especially sitting in the whirlpool)

28



# What are good jobs for Mattie? What would an employer value in her?



29



## 18 years at Pizza Hut



## 6 years at Menomonee Falls School District

30



## Customized Employment is...

Employment where job tasks are **reassigned** from an existing job, **restructured** from one or more existing jobs, or **created** to match the skills and accommodation needs of the job seeker and...

31



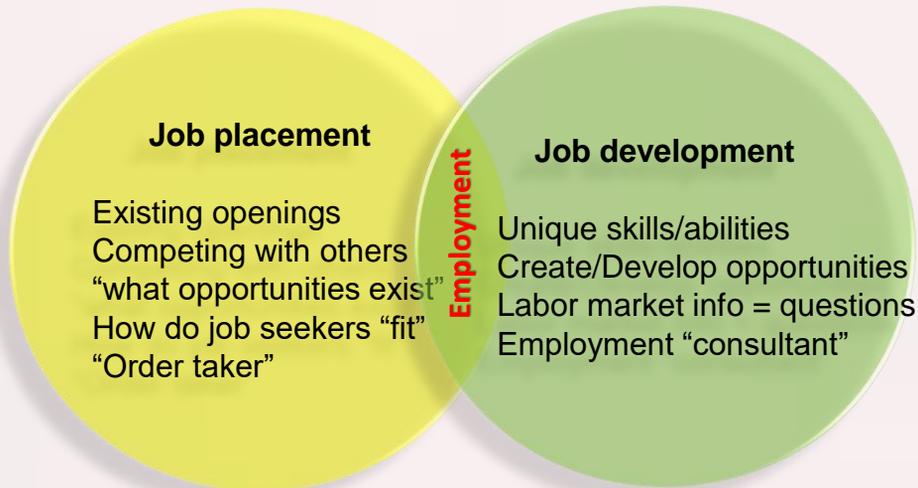
...Customized Employment approach **MUST** help the employer's operation in some specific way!



32



## Job Placement & Job Development



33



## Essential Elements of Job Development

- Avoid using job openings and typical personnel processes
- Use all connections and networks
- Develop strategies for assisting employers to identify areas of need
- Emphasize informational relationships with employers
- Customize job descriptions
- Negotiate a support plan

Source: WINTAC, 2017 (<http://www.wintac.org/topic-areas/resources-and-strategies-competitive-integrated-employment/resources#resc-ce>)

34



## Find out as much as you can about which companies that...

- exist in your community
- hire people to do the kind of work that matches your job seeker's profile
- have the kind of "atmosphere" that would match your job seeker's temperament and preferences?

35



## So where do you start looking?

- Business section of newspaper or business publications
- Chamber of Commerce and other professional organizations (become an active member)
- American Job Centers (Workforce Centers, One Stops)
- The Internet (e.g. Linked-In, Google, Facebook, company websites, YahooYellowPages, Indeed.com)
- Boards of Directors
- Personal sphere of influence

36



## Personal Sphere of Influence

- The people you know – people who are directly or indirectly part of your life
  - Immediate family – distant relatives
  - Close friends – casual acquaintances
  - People you do business with – mail carrier, plumber, tailor, barber, dry cleaner, deli counter clerk, gas station attendant, etc.
  - People who do business with you – family members, other businesses, school personnel, etc.

37



## Getting your foot in the door needs a good opening line

**An Innovative Business Resource  
YES!**

**Assisting youth with disabilities  
and other challenges get jobs  
NO!**



38



## Make the Request Easy to Say "Yes" to!



My company provides area businesses with employee recruitment and retention support. Our success comes from learning about the hiring needs and expectations of businesses. I'd like to learn more about your company and arrange a tour to see your work first hand.

39



## Make the Request Easy to Say "Yes" to!



"I work with students interested in your industry. I would love to set up a 20 minute visit to see what you do and talk to you about the skills needed to work in this field so I can help the students learn what they need for these types of jobs"

40



# Patrick

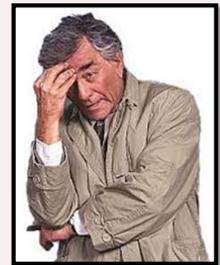


41



## During your meeting or tour, find out about the business...

- Customer /employee complaints
- Log jams/backlogs/ long lead times
- Unassigned, but critical tasks
- Burn-out or high turnover
- Managers or key staff pulled away from core tasks
- Workload fluctuations
  - Rush times, crunch times, seasonal fluctuations, sporadic-but important- tasks



42



## Informational Interview



43



## Maddie's Informational Interview



44



## Customizing employment for students with significant disabilities – DO's

- Approach an employer you know OR spend time developing a relationship
- Sell yourself and services; use features to benefits
- Focus on job seeker assets; use a features to benefits
- Create a customized task list
- Be honest about the needs for possible extra supports – and sell yourself as the main support

45



## Meet Ivan – Positive Personal Profile

- Loves all sports – Brewers, Packers, Bucks (baseball, football, basketball)
- Easy to work with
- Happy
- Full of potential
- Independent
- Sweet
- A great spirit
- Determined
- Close knit family
- Very persistent
- Funny/ humorous
- Friendly
- Jokes
- Caring
- Hard worker
- Very smart
- Good listener
- Champion bean bag tosser

46



## Marquette University Student Recreation Complex Needed Help!

- Five full sized basketball courts
- About 2000 students and alumni used the facility every day
- Courts were filthy – especially in the winter
- Janitorial staff had to clean them constantly – which no one liked to do

47



## What We Did...

- **Informational Interview** - refined task list based on observed needs
- **Compared task list** with Ivan's **Positive Personal Profile** to determine match
- Presented **employment proposal** to Marquette
- Set up “**working interview**”
- **Negotiated terms** of employment

48



## Employment Proposal

### Ivan's Skills

- Loves sports - especially Marquette
- Persistent
- Hard worker
- Funny
- Easy to work with

### Refined Task List

- Clean five courts during high peak time
- Adapting the wet mop so Ivan could drag it behind him
- Pick up extra basketballs left behind and returning them to desk

49



## “Human Zamboni”



50



## Things to Remember...

- Listen to your job seekers!
- Don't expect them to stay in jobs they don't like
- Focus on assets – not deficits
- Be strategic in approaching targeted companies
- Become an expert at infiltrating the “Hidden Job Market”

51



## Things to Remember...

- Employers are always looking for employees who are interested in their business and willing to learn
- Get to know employers and determine how can you help their company
- Present relevant skills & assets of your job seeker, in a professional manner (visual resume, reverse job fair)

52

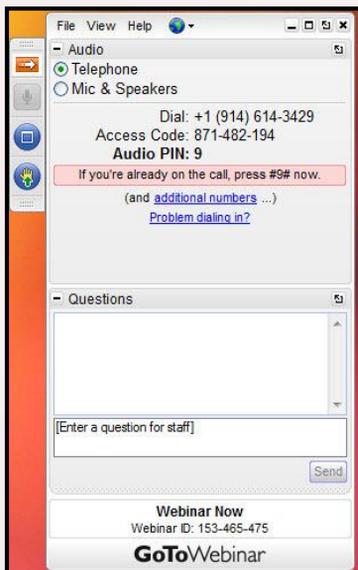


## Final Thought...



“In the end, it is important to remember that we cannot become what we need to be by remaining what we are.”  
– Max De Pree

53



## Questions

- On the webinar platform use the questions feature to submit your questions.
- Email [elearning@transcen.org](mailto:elearning@transcen.org)

54



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55



## About TransCen, Inc.

TransCen, Inc. is a national organization offering web-based and in-person training for state agencies, school districts, provider organizations, and others interested in meaningful work and community inclusion for individuals with disabilities.

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Thank You