Employer Engagement #2
Approaching Employers and Developing Long Term Partnerships

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MEANINGFUL WORK + COMMUNITY INCLUSION

will begin at 2:00 PM ET

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About your Host

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

TRANSCEN inc.
career and workforce development

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Poll 1

Have you had customized employment training?

Yes

No

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Poll 2

How many customized employment placements have you had to date?

a. 1
b. 2 – 3
c. 4 – 7
d. 8 – 10
e. 10+

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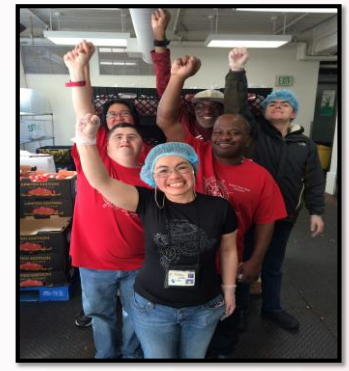
Today's Objectives

1. Approaching Employers Confidently
2. Conducting Informational Interviews and Determining Labor Needs
3. Building Rapport with Employers
4. Review Study Recommendations



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Overview of Study

- The United States Department of Labor (DOL), Office of Disability and Employment Policy (ODEP) contracted with Economic Systems, Inc. to conduct an economic impact study of employers who have hired individuals with disabilities in customized jobs for the Employment First State Leadership Mentoring Program (EFSLMP).
- The objective of the study was to gain the perspective of employers related to employing persons with a disability (especially those with significant disabilities) and working with local employment programs, including the use of Customized Employment.

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Economic Impact

- **Economic impact** measures estimate or describe the changes in business revenue, profits, personal wages, jobs and/or job duties based on an economic event.
- The **economic event**, for this study, is defined as a new employer *policy* such as customized employment, a new *project* such as a workforce integration plan, or the *presence of an organization* such as an employment program serving job seekers with a disability and the delivery of employment services within the employer's place of business.
- The **economic impact analysis** measures estimate and/or describe the change in economic activity from before to after the economic event. The increases in income may come in the form of raises and/or increased hours or operational efficiencies for existing employees, or new jobs for the unemployed.

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Employer Selection

- Experienced an operational or economic benefit from working with local employment service providers (recruiting, hiring, and job retention)
- Worked directly with one or more local employer service providers who have placed persons with a disability in their workplace
- Customized a job for an individual with a disability that meets the ODEP definition of Customized Employment
- Played a major role in the hiring, approval to hire and/or customization of one or more jobs

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Employer Representation

- Deputy Executive, A National Research Institute and Hospital
- Vice President, Manufacturing Operations, Window and Door Manufacturer
- Executive Chef, Regional Medical Center
- Senior Materials Manager, Cabinet Manufacturer
- Human Resources Manager, Door Manufacturer
- Human Resources Assistant, Door Manufacturer
- Human Resources Manager, Process and Automation Equipment Manufacturer
- Office Manager, Veterinary Clinic
- Senior Human Resource Generalist, Construction Company
- Senior Recruiter, Convenience Store

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Employer Characteristics

- Each employer had been working with one or more local employment service providers for a number of years and had employed a number of employees with disabilities over time
- They each worked with Employment Specialists who understood and could articulate the concepts of Customized Employment and had success matching job candidates to the required tasks and culture of these worksites
- Employers were 'internal champions' for Customized Employment and were able to articulate how flexible employment strategies and alternative sources of labor benefited their organizational culture, overall operation and bottom line
- All employers adopted some form of quality improvement process

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Findings from Webinar #1

- Reduced Cost
  - Recruit
  - Hire
  - Train
- Reduced Turnover and Absenteeism
- Improved Workplace Culture
- Opportunities to Expand Placements
- Opportunities for Advancement for Employees with Disabilities
- Increased Productivity

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Findings for Webinar #2

- Approaching Employers and Building Rapport
- The importance of incorporating Quality Improvement processes into Business Engagement Activities
- Importance of Mitigating Risk

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So you've made a contact…

What Will You Say?

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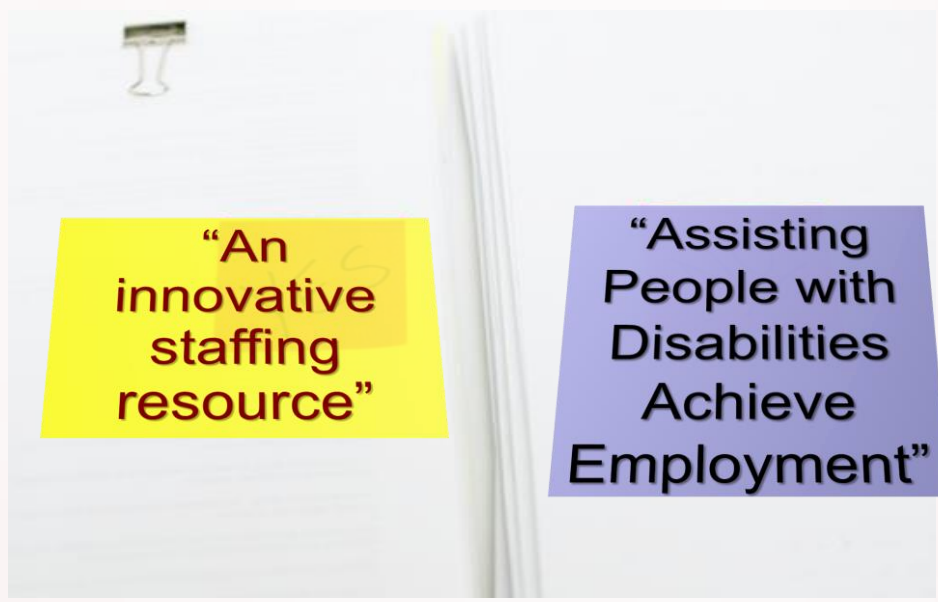

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Informational Interview's Goal

"I'd like to **learn more** about your company"

"Do you have any jobs?"

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Make the Request Easy to Say "Yes" to!

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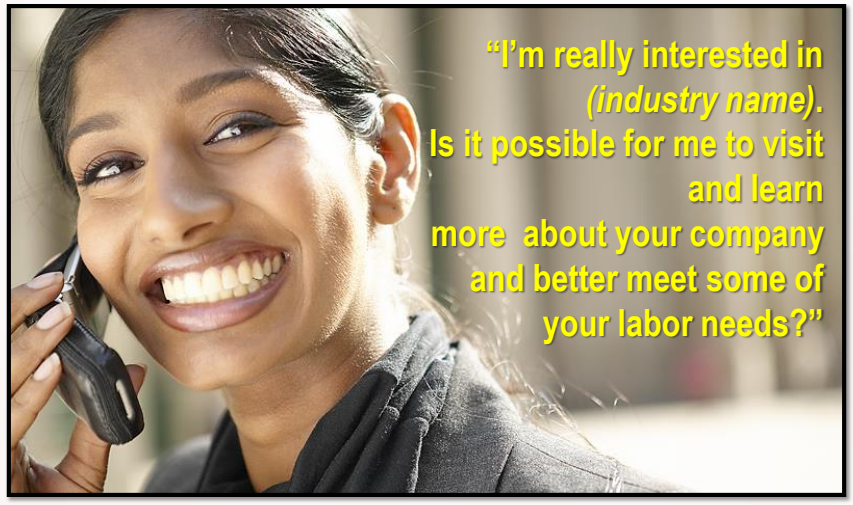
Make the Request Easy to Say "Yes" to!



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Informational Interviews

- Foot in the door
- Low pressure
- Chance to make a great first impression
- Start of working relationship
- Uncover possible opportunities

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Approaching Employers and Building Rapport

- Employers talked about the importance of building and cultivating relationships by asking the questions that get at employer needs. The employers also talked about building trust through these relationships.
- Sending well matched job applicants increases the trust between job developers and employers. Trust can lead to collaborative relationships where employers see providers as supplying the right candidates to meet the employer's needs.
- They recommended a 'top down' and 'bottom up' strategy for getting buy-in by a potential employer. The top down strategy requires access to key decision makers where the mitigating of their perception of risk is addressed and evidence of positive, economic impact is presented. The bottom up strategy requires access to potential co-workers in the workplace where they can see the capability of the job candidate.

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Approaching Employers and Building Rapport - Employer Quotes

- "When we hired someone that was a good match, we were able to build the relationship to the point where I could trust them to know if they referred somebody to me, it was the right person. They weren't just sending me 10 applications and asking if I wanted to hire one."
- "It's important to share success stories so other employers would know it can be successful and have a better idea of how their operation could benefit from working with an employment program."
- "They are veterinarians, they were trained to do surgery and fix your dog and make sure your pet's healthy. They're not trained to run a business. We need people helping in those areas."
- "It works out in the end, but you've got to be able to have that internal champion, I think, to get you through that and to make that pitch."

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Importance of Labor Needs Assessments and the use of Quality Improvement Processes

- All the employers confirmed that their customized employment jobs are based on continuous improvement methods to identify tasks that improve over-all operations.
- A key business case for Customized Employment is making existing employees more productive by removing tasks that prevent them from focusing on core tasks. Customized Employment is most effective when it increases overall business productivity. The productivity increase can be measured
- Providers can engage employers by speaking the business language of process improvement (e.g. Six Sigma, Lean). This approach can be an effective strategy to understand business processes.

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Importance of Labor Needs Assessments and the use of Quality Improvement Processes- Employer Quotes

- “Let's do a cost savings project. Let's find a way to take this job that has secondary tasks and have it be done elsewhere, and combine it with other tasks and just make the operation better for everybody.”
- “The notion of customizing a job is consistent with something like a six-sigma or any kind of continuous improvement process.”
- “Anything that can make it more efficient and being able to have somebody to help figure it out. We are a small business, those efforts to make us more efficient are so needed but we lack the skill set to do that in most of our small industries and so having someone that would come in and could offer that knowledge to identify those inefficiencies would help a lot of companies.”
- “This solution, based on a labor needs assessment, solved a problem and many of the things that plague an industry can be fixed with simple problem solving.”
- “We want somebody to come and spend time with us, and get to know us, and ask us difficult questions.”

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Importance of Mitigating Risk

- Employers reported that the perception of risk associated with the hiring of employees with a disability is a key concern that needs to be addressed in order to be able to partner with employers on a long-term basis.
- These employers also made the case that, when done correctly, the employment of persons with a disability can help mitigate risk.
- Employers reported that the process of making the workplace safe for employees with a disability made it safer for everybody.
- These employers indicated that there is inherent risk associated with hiring employees without disabilities in entry level positions where safety is a concern.
- Discussing potential risk and finding solutions is essential to effective customized job development. Employers must feel comfortable that they are not unnecessarily exposed to liability by either the employee with disability or job coaches.
- Mitigating risk may be an accommodation or a solution for risk factors for all employees.

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Mitigating Risk – Employer Quotes

- “We felt confident we could mitigate the risk and he approached us about this and he said, ‘Okay, there is risk. We acknowledged it, but then said, "I think there's some ways we can deal with it.”
- "Whether it’s real or fake, the safety issue comes up first. My boss said ‘it’s what keeps him awake at night, not just the supported employees with a disability, everybody’.”
- “Nobody gets hurt the first day, but when they’ve been here a week and they say ‘I’ve got this’, they don’t have it. That’s why they get hurt. For the supported employees, it’s always their first day on the job. They’re always paying attention. They care about quality and we say ‘they understand about quality’.”
- “Cheap labor is usually cheap for a reason, there is substance abuse issues, historical issues and you’re taking a risk by extending an offer to anybody. I think from a risk perspective, we have diminished the risk and increased the profitability by looking at what’s historically been an overlooked group of people who want to work, they’re very motivated.”
- “Most of them were somewhere on the autism spectrum. They have powers of concentration that I’ve come to look at as superpowers. These guys pay attention from a safety point of view.” Another employer agreed: “Yes, their head is in the game.”

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Conclusions

- Employment specialists can use this information to build a business case for their employment services including Customized Employment and build a trusting relationship with employers
- Decreased exposure to liability and risk
- A labor needs assessment is the most effective way to determine how you can benefit the employer, effectively job match and start to build trust and rapport
- Total Quality Improvement Processes (LEAN, Six Sigma) are an effective way to relate Customized Employment to ways they can improve productivity

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Recommendations

- Well-trained staff in the areas of discovery/assessment, job development and workplace supports including the concept of Customized Employment.
- Effective communicators about the services they have to offer employers and the benefits of these services utilizing some of the economic impact results provided in this report.
- Agency marketing materials should emphasize how hiring individuals with disabilities can improve productivity and decrease costs. Employer testimonials should be included. Effective communicators about the process, benefits and potential economic impact of Customized Employment utilizing some of the examples and economic impact results provided in this report.

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Recommendations (part 2)

- Training for job developers including customized job development should include elements of quality improvement (e.g. Six Sigma and Lean). This would give job developers a very useful tool in working with employers to create customized job descriptions that increase the productivity in the workplace.
- Building a trusting relationship with an employer is, at its core, providing solutions to employers that decrease costs and increase productivity, both of which are quantifiable and replicable.
- Employment Specialists should focus on maintaining on-going working relationships with employers through a range of recruitment and retention services

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Recommendations (part 3)

- A monitoring and tracking system of their employer customer base. Such as tracking system could assess the economic impact and benefits of their services over time to encourage repeat business (multiple placements) and a better employer penetration rate by, using some of the same questions of employers that are used in this study.
- Individuals involved in job accommodations for an individual with a disability should consider how those accommodations could be utilized for non-disabled employees to increase productivity and reduce risk.

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Additional Resources

- Employment First Lead Center

http://employmentfirst.leadcenter.org/

- ODEP EFSLMP Initiative

https://www.dol.gov/odep/topics/EmploymentFirst.htm

- ODEP Drive Website

http://drivedisabilityemployment.org/

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Contact

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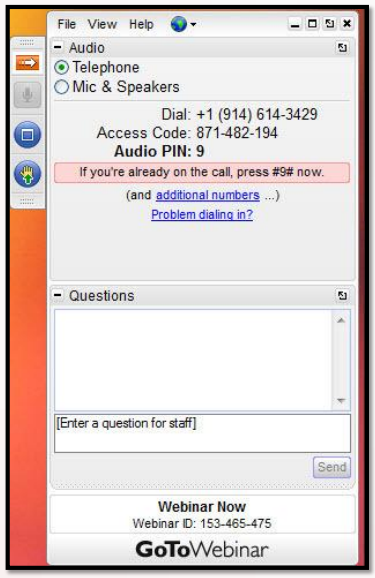

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Employer Engagement Webinar #3

Accessing the Economic Impact and Benefit of Your Employment Programs

August 6, 2019 – 2 to 3:30 PM Eastern

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.

Transcen.org (301) 424-2002 Inquiries@transcen.org

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Thank You

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