

CUSTOMIZED EMPLOYMENT—JOB DEVELOPMENT PLANNING

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INTRODUCTION

Students with intellectual and developmental disabilities have much to offer the business community. Job developers should use a person-centered approach to focus in on a job seeker's strengths, interests, and preferences rather than relying on low-paying, low-skill jobs with little opportunity for raises, advancement, or increased hours. Preliminary work gathering information about a student through the Discovery process, job tours, and informational interviews with potential employers are all critical steps for good job development planning.

ELEMENTS OF JOB DEVELOPMENT PLANNING

Applying the work of Condon (2013, Marc Gold & Associates), job development planning includes:

- Identifying characteristics of a job seeker's ideal job (conditions and contributions)
- Stating what works and what does not work for the student in a job setting
- Development of a task list and matching tasks needed by the employer with skills the student can perform or learn to perform
- Developing a job proposal
- Preparing for a job proposal meeting

Throughout this brief, we'll describe the steps in creating a job proposal for Akemi, a student who is looking for work. You'll see how the elements above tie in to this process as Akemi and her job developer work toward finding fulfilling work for Akemi in her field of choice.

This Grab and Go Practice is part of a series helping students, parents, teachers, and job developers develop customized employment opportunities for students with intellectual and developmental disabilities.

AKEMI'S STORY

Akemi is a 20-year-old student with Down syndrome. Her vocational themes are fashion, art, and history. She especially likes to pull together a "look," whether it be creating a fashionable outfit, setting up a party, or decorating for the holidays.

Akemi has a speech impediment that can sometimes make it difficult for new listeners to understand her. However, if she takes her time and focuses on the point she is trying to make, she can usually be an effective communicator.

Akemi is always on time, works hard, and likes routine. She is a good organizer, has an excellent memory, and once she knows her job tasks can work independently. She has worked in several jobs at her high school, is very sociable, and is active in her church.

CUSTOMIZED EMPLOYMENT PROCESS



CHARACTERISTICS OF AKEMI'S IDEAL JOB

Characteristics of an ideal job include the **conditions** the job seeker needs for the job to be a successful fit and the **contributions** the job seeker will offer to fill the employer's needs.

While developing the plan, it is important to keep in mind what works and does not work for the student in a job setting. In this example, the job developer draws on the information in Akemi's Positive Personal Profile.

What works for Akemi	What does not work for Akemi
Familiar routine including scheduled time to check in with supervisor	Inconsistent procedures
Friendly environment	Supervisor & coworkers too busy to get to know her
Patient supervisor & coworkers	Coworkers impatient with her communication difficulties
Respectful, clear, & consistent supervision	Coworkers hesitate to provide supportive cueing
Opportunities for growth in her position	No clear career pathway
Easily accessible public transportation	No public transportation

Conditions refer to specific elements of a job, such as days and hours worked each week, pay, benefits, location of the job, inside/outside work, time of day, etc. Prioritize non-negotiable conditions, such as accessibility to public transportation or an environment that may trigger seizures or behavior challenges. Consideration of these conditions is important to have a successful outcome for both the job seeker and employer.

Akemi's Conditions for Employment

- Four days a week – 9:00AM–3:00PM
- On the bus line
- Sociable environment
- Opportunity to take on new job responsibilities
- No Sundays



Contributions refers to what skills, credentials, experiences, and personal qualities the job seeker will bring to the job that will meet the needs of the employer.

Akemi's Contributions

SKILLS

- Organizing items and displays
- Providing customer service
- Performing inventory
- Wrapping gifts
- Recalling local history

PERSONALITY CHARACTERISTICS

- Always on time
- Hard worker
- Friendly and outgoing
- Organized and thorough

EXPERIENCES

- Worked at high school coffee shop: stocking, inventory, cashiering
- Helped build sets for high school theater group
- Helps set up for events at her church
- Audited a college-level marketing class
- Takes regular workshops on local history

RECOMMENDATIONS

- High school teacher
- Church friend

CREDENTIALS

- CPR & First Aid training



Development of a Task List

The task list represents the job tasks that can be performed or learned by the job seeker that are related to their vocational themes and that you can negotiate on behalf of the job seeker. Tasks that can be performed or learned by the job seeker are identified during the Discovery process and initially documented in the Positive Personal Profile.



AKEMI'S TASK LIST

- Performing an inventory of items
- Setting up “looks” in a shop
- Sorting clothes and putting together outfits
- Helping customers locate items
- Setting up for gallery events
- Stocking shelves
- Organizing spaces
- Assisting visitors at galleries, tourist locations

Skills & Tasks Matched with Potential Employers

Identifying what tasks may be required at a job is done during an informational interview or observational tour, or by completing online research about potential jobs (for example, through O*Net job descriptions). You can create a table to document matches between the student’s current skills and tasks needed by the employer and what the student should be able to learn in a reasonable timeframe.



Below is a list of potential employers and the match-up of skills and tasks for Akemi.

POTENTIAL EMPLOYER #1: COLLEGE THEATER DEPARTMENT			
Department	Tasks that need doing	Student skills	Potential job
Staging	Help plan and build sets, organize props, inventory props	Good organizer, has a good eye for putting things together, very methodical	Assistant stage manager
Costumes	Put together outfits for shows, organize props for upcoming shows, inventory props, help actors get ready	Good fashion sense, understands historical fashion trends, organized, likes to help, very methodical	Wardrobe assistant

POTENTIAL EMPLOYER #2: ART GALLERY & SHOP			
Department	Tasks that need doing	Student skills	Potential job
Gallery	Help set up exhibits, assist customers during shows, set up for workshops, organize supplies	Organized, strong customer service skills, good eye for placement of items	Gallery assistant
Shop – front of house	Help set up displays, assist customers, cashiering, gift wrapping	Good eye for how things should look, good wrapper, good customer service skills, can learn to cashier	Shop clerk
Shop – back of house	Inventory control, organize spaces	Good organizer, methodical	Shop assistant, or extension of shop clerk duties

POTENTIAL EMPLOYER #3: LOCAL MUSEUM & SHOP			
Department	Tasks that need doing	Student skills	Potential job
Museum – front of house	Give tours; help set up displays, workshops, & talks; usher/assist customers at events	Good customer service, knowledge of local history and museum, experience at setting up displays	Tour guide/usher
Museum – back of house	Help create documents for museum guests, organize spaces, do general office work, inventory control	Can learn to create documents, good organizer, methodical, has some office skills (can learn others)	Museum staff assistant
Shop	Help set up displays, assist customers to find items, cashiering, gift wrapping	Has a good eye for how things should look, good wrapper, good customer service skills, can learn to cashier	Shop clerk

CUSTOMIZED JOB DEVELOPMENT PLAN WORKSHEET

The companion worksheet with this Grab & Go will help you develop a job proposal for the employer. The proposal may outline a job that is carved out from existing positions within the company or is a new job created specifically for the job seeker (Condon, Enein-Donovan, Gilmore, & Jordan, 2004). For either situation, the job proposal describes how the job seeker can meet the needs of the employer.

Since transition-age students' interests and preferences evolve over time, you should update the worksheet regularly as new information is gathered from the student. A recommendation is to update the plan after each work experience.

Using these task lists, you now have a good template to begin drafting a customized job proposal letter for one or more of these employers.

NEXT STEPS: JOB PROPOSAL LETTER AND MEETING TO NEGOTIATE

Our next Grab & Go Practice Brief, Employer Negotiation, will walk you through developing the job proposal letter and meeting with the employer to negotiate the job proposal.

REFERENCES

Condon, C., Enein-Donovan, L., Gilmore, M., & Jordan, M. (2004). *When existing jobs don't fit: A guide to job creation*. Boston, MA: University of Massachusetts Boston, Institute for Community Inclusion.

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