

CUSTOMIZED EMPLOYMENT—EMPLOYER NEGOTIATION

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

INTRODUCTION

When job developers are proactive in building strong relationships with employers, they will discover that many businesses are willing to hire people with disabilities into positions that meet the needs of their company. To leverage that willingness, job developers need to create a job proposal that describes how those needs can be met using the strengths and attributes of the job seeker, and how supports will be provided to ensure a successful match.

The *Grab & Go Practice Brief: Job Development Planning* outlines the considerations for making a good job match. The next step is to develop the job proposal letter. With that completed, a meeting can be set up with the employer to negotiate the details.

BEFORE THE MEETING

Developing the Job Proposal Letter

Here are some guidelines for creating a job proposal letter that outlines exactly how a student job seeker could meet the needs of an employer:

- Prepare a formal letter to send to the employer by email or regular mail.
- Highlight the “work needs” that have been identified through the employer informational interview and observational tour.
- Promote the skills and strengths of the student and outline how these can be used to benefit the company through either job creation or job carving.
- Include plans for how a student will be supported to learn the tasks, meet performance expectations, and fit into the culture of the company.
- Ask for a time to meet to discuss the proposal in more detail.

DURING THE MEETING

The job proposal meeting is an opportunity to go into more detail about the job proposal. Successful negotiations with an employer start by highlighting the strengths of the job seeker through negotiating the tasks to be performed, and then negotiating the job seeker’s needs.

Here are some steps to follow during a job proposal meeting:

STEP 1: Discuss specific tasks that were identified in the employer informational interview that you suggest could be reassigned to the job seeker.

STEP 2: Highlight the skills and strengths of the job seeker and how these skills can be used to meet the employer’s needs.

STEP 3: State the potential benefits to the employer of reassigning these tasks.

STEP 4: Discuss what role you will play in supporting and assisting in training the job seeker. Discuss partnering with the immediate supervisor to create an environment that will be supportive enough for professional supports to fade.

STEP 5: Make the “ask” – are they willing to go ahead and hire the student? Do they have other questions or concerns that you need to address before they’ll commit? Is there anything else that can be done to make this a successful placement? Can you set a start date?

STEP 6: Come to an agreement on job duties, hours, schedule, and rate of pay for the job seeker.

(adapted from National Center on Workforce and Disability/Adult, 2006)



ADDRESSING EMPLOYER CONCERNS

Your hard work building a trusting relationship with the employer prior to this meeting will go a long way towards addressing any concerns. However, there may be additional ones that come up in the job proposal meeting. Here are some questions that you should be prepared for and some suggested responses:

Questions or concerns	Suggested responses
How do I know that the applicant can do the job?	We have only chosen tasks for this customized position that we know the job seeker is able to do or can be trained to do, as is the case with other new employees. I am happy to show you photos from the visual resume of the job seeker doing similar tasks.
I don't have the time to have to watch the employee 8 hours a day.	There should be no need to oversee the employee every minute. We have carefully identified tasks that they enjoy doing and are able to do with training. We will assist you in training the new employee and getting to know their coworkers. Key to job success is also making sure that the employee takes advantage of the support that you provide all of your workers.
What if I hire someone and the individual has problems on the job?	Keeping in contact with you is important to ensure long-term job success. We will be checking in regularly and will be happy to meet to help you resolve any issues. It has been our experience that these issues are usually no different than for any other worker. The time we put into ensuring there is a good job match will help to minimize any potential problems.
I will have to check with corporate to see if we can do something like this.	We are very happy to provide additional resources if that will be helpful. I would also be glad to meet with your regional manager to explain our program. The US Department of Labor has excellent materials about the benefits of customized employment to businesses (US Department of Labor, 2009), including specific information on increased productivity and customer satisfaction. I can point you to those resources online.
We currently do not have the hours to create another position.	Through customizing the job to meet your work needs, the other employees will be freed up to do tasks that you spoke of earlier that are currently not being done. I would be happy to talk to you about a trial employment period prior to making a commitment, to see if it will make a difference in your workplace efficiency.
Who is liable if there is an accident?	Workplace safety is a consideration we take into account when making a job match. People with disabilities are no more prone to accidents than any other worker. In fact, a national study has indicated no difference in the safety records of those with and without disabilities (National Service Inclusion Project).
We have done this before and have had bad experiences in the past.	I'm so sorry to hear that. That must have been frustrating and stressful. I will say that every new hire is different, and I am confident that we can provide the support you and the employee need to have a positive experience. Would you tell me more about your specific concerns?

Marketing materials for the job proposal meeting

Fact sheet about your program (1–2 pages)

- Features of your services (e.g., customizing jobs to meet business needs, assistance in job training, ongoing support)
- List of benefits to the employer
- List of employers you have worked with
- Employer testimonials
- Your contact information

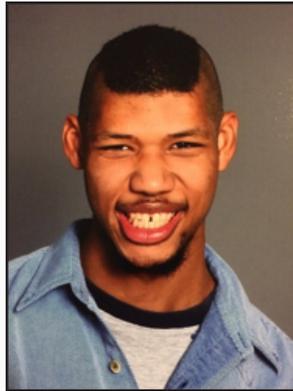
Digital portfolio (Griffin, Hammis, David, & Geary, 2007)

- Highlight job seeker's strengths and accomplishments
- Visual resume – include photos of job seeker performing work tasks
- Include recommendations and work/school samples of best work done – include visuals such as pictures or video
- List of companies worked at previously

One-page summary (D. Hafner, personal communication, March 15, 2017).

- Recent photo of student, name, expected graduation date, contact information
- Student statement on career goals, their strengths, what they've learned about their career goal from recent work experiences, values related to their career choice, and their hopes for the future in their chosen field.
- Recent work/internship accomplishments (bulleted list highlighting places worked, leadership skills, demonstrations of initiative, goals achieved)
- School accomplishments (bulleted list highlighting leadership skills, initiative, goals achieved)
- Character traits important to employers, such as:
 - » Reliable
 - » Friendly/personable
 - » Honest
 - » Hard-working
 - » Organized
 - » Leadership skills
 - » Loyal
 - » Great customer service

EXAMPLE ONE-PAGE SUMMARY



Tavis Freeman

{email}

{phone number}

College Program Graduate 2019

It is my goal to seek employment in food service. I enjoy cooking for my family and friends and it makes me feel good to be able to care for them that way. I am a hard worker and like helping others. My education has led me to experiences working in recycling and working with children at the community center.

Recent accomplishments:

- Helped produce a video on college programs for people with disabilities
- Completed 2 semesters of college

Volunteer and work experiences:

- Volunteer at Bird Street Community Center in Dorchester for 3 years in their children's program
- Worked at Wentworth Institute in recycling program

Friendly • Honest • Loyal • Hard-working

Success occurs when the job seeker and the employer jointly agree to the answers to these questions:

- What tasks will the job seeker do?
- What hours will the job seeker work?
- How much work does the employer want the job seeker to get done each day?
- How much will the job seeker be paid?
- What accommodations and support will be necessary?
- How will all this help the business?

After the Meeting

Follow up the job proposal meeting with a letter or email that:

- Thanks the employer for the meeting
- Summarizes what was discussed
- Identifies next steps for the employer and the student

CONCLUSION

Employer negotiation may seem daunting. However, when job developers are prepared with a thoughtful proposal that focuses on how the strengths and skills of the job seeker are matched to fill an employer's needs, it will be easier for the employer to see the benefits of making this hiring decision.

Once the student is hired, the next step is to use the relationship already built with the employer to ensure the new employee receives the support they need to be successful.

Please see the *Grab and Go Practice Brief: Customized Employment: Post-Employment Supports* for more information on that!

REFERENCES

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