

JOB TRAINING & PLACEMENT REPORT

for professionals who support employment for people with disabilities

'It Takes a Village to Provide Employment Support'

Most people are familiar with the African proverb, "It takes a village to raise a child." In other words, raising children is difficult, and it requires the help of many people in order for children to grow up and become successful adults.

Helping people with disabilities to get jobs isn't all that different. Just as there aren't any shortcuts to successful parenting, there is no easy fix to increasing employment outcomes for the disabled population. And, just as children need the assistance of numerous adults while they're growing up, so it takes a number of supportive individuals for persons with disabilities to become gainfully employed. Consequently, one could also say that, "It takes a village to provide employment support."

With this concept in mind, this article will describe how one Ohio organization has coordinated with its local One-Stop Career Center to provide additional supports for persons with severe mental illness.

Background

Debbie Dutton-Lambert, Chief Vocational Officer of Greater Cincinnati Behavioral Health Services (GCBHS), recognized the value of work in the recovery process for individuals with mental illness — and the alarming trend

toward decreased revenue from traditional funding sources for vocational rehabilitation.

Given these realities, she hypothesized that using services from the Hamilton County One-Stop Career Center, Southwest Ohio Career Resource Center, would leverage the vocational services available to persons served by GCBHS and potentially provide better vocational outcomes.

This hypothesis was crafted into research design with assistance from a consultant, and then presented to The Health Foundation of Greater Cincinnati for funding. The overall intent of the study was to establish a new best practice for psychiatric rehabilitation that leverages untapped resources and facilitates employment for individuals with severe mental illness.

Obstacles

Like any new venture, there were challenges in integrating *Touchstone Employment Network (TEN)*, GCBHS's supported employment program, into the One-Stop. For one thing, the One-Stop Career Center was grappling with its own barriers with constant policy changes and staff turnover. Despite training through a Department of Labor Work Incentive Grant, many One-Stop staff members didn't have the



experience to serve persons with disabilities. These individuals were encouraged by *TEN* staff to utilize the One-Stop independently for

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activities such as job-readiness workshops and computer use in the *TEN* resource area. However, the reality was that long waiting periods and lack of individualized attention discouraged independent use.

Benefits

Even with these barriers, there were many factors involved in the collaborative effort that promoted employment — namely benefits counseling and financial planning. Benefits and entitlements counseling is an essential service for individuals who are returning to work, as many depend on Social Security Administration (SSA) benefits such as Supplemental Security Income (SSI) or Social Security Disability Insurance (SDDI) in order to meet health care needs. The One-Stop provided this consultation service to individuals free of charge through the Legal Aid Society of Greater Cincinnati.

Furthermore, One-Stop staff members also helped many persons develop résumés. The One-Stop made accommodations, including job interview workshops scheduled in the afternoon, to compensate for medication effects typically experienced in the early morning.

TEN staff was trained to complete *Workforce Investment Act* registration paperwork prior to escorting persons to the One-Stop. Doing so ahead of time helped minimize these individuals' anxiety and frustration while waiting in the busy center.

Collaborative Effort Pays Off

Overall, the persons assisted in this collaborative effort expressed positive feelings and enthusiasm about being part of a mainstreamed employment service. The research study demonstrated that a combi-

nation of One-Stop, and supported employment assistance is the most effective way to provide comprehensive employment services.

This collaborative effort also helped individuals with severe mental illness to navigate through the One-Stop system, which provided maximum benefit.

One Door Closes, but a Window Opens

Everything hasn't been rosy. The One-Stop is under the direction of new management since the conclusion of this study — and despite hopes for future partnerships, a comparable level of cooperation has yet to occur. However, setbacks aside, the One-Stop continues to offer a wealth of resources to a financially strapped public mental health system.

Furthermore, while the initial collaborative effort hit a pothole, a new road was being paved — as Dutton-Lambert shifted her focus to a more systemic approach statewide. To promote the use of One-Stops by behavioral health providers, she collaborated with her peers throughout Ohio to form an alliance of providers called the *Employment Leadership Alliance (ELA)* of Ohio. One idea of the *ELA* was for it to serve as a clearinghouse to connect trained mental health (MH) and vocational rehabilitation (VR) services practitioners with those seeking information about MH and VR assistance.

Moreover, the *ELA* also seeks to educate funding sources, providers, persons with mental illness, and the community at large about the value of employment as integral to recovery.

Summary

Persistence pays off. The *ELA* has been successful in educating Ohio's mental health system on how to access One-Stops for

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employment needs and resources — as well as how to participate on local workforce boards to represent the interests of the mental health system in community workforce development.

For more information on the research study described in this article, visit www.healthfoundation.org/publications/other.html.

(Editor's note: Scroll to the "Severe Mental Illness" section.) ■

Source: Reprinted with permission of Commission on Accreditation of Rehabilitation Facilities (CARF), "Promising Practices" series. Visit www.carf.org. Editor's note: For more information about One-Stop Career Centers, log on to www.careeronestop.org. To find the One-Stop nearest you, visit www.servicelocator.org.

—Resources—

🔗 *My Job Search Pilot*

features an online job-search management tool, along with experienced job-search coaches and customized research and administrative support to meet the needs of individual clients. For more information, visit <http://myjobsearchpilot.com>.

🎧 *The New Professional's Guide to Success*

is a downloadable audio program that provides ground rules for communication, protocol, and other “soft skills” designed to prevent embarrassing lessons for employees and costly mistakes for employers. It is especially designed for members of Generation Y, who too often learn the hard way that by behaving too casually, they unknowingly send a message to an employer that says “comfort” rather than “commitment.” For more information, visit www.neelscompany.com.



Editor's Notebook

It has been said that none of us exist “on an island,” and it’s true. Probably any one of us could cite several influential people in our lives who helped us get to where we’re at today.

Whether it was a parent, grandparent, a special teacher, coach, or someone else, it takes the support of other people to get each of us started down the right path in life.

Similarly, it also takes the help of numerous people to provide employment support, as noted in this month’s cover article.

Many thanks to Angela Ruffalo for alerting *JTPR* to the many good articles like this one on the CARF website. We’ve used several of them in this newsletter, and we may publish others in the future.

If you get a chance, visit www.carf.org/newsletter. Once

there, click on one of the “Promising Practices” links.

Finally, while we usually don’t single out specific products other than listing them in our resources section, *JTPR* believes readers would find *Getting Back to Work* worth checking out. (See book review below.)

While the book mentions aspects of job hunting available in other titles, it also includes advice on working through the emotions associated with not having a job. That, to me, is the toughest part, and yet such tips are hard to find.

We hope your new year is off to a good start. Until next month.

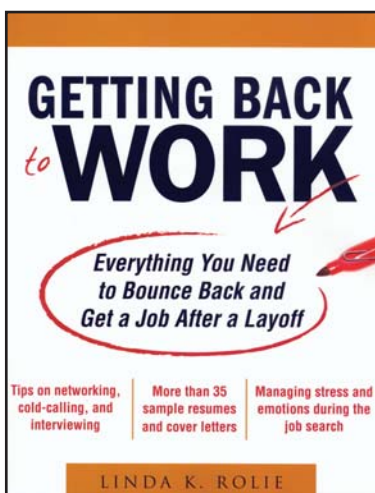
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Book Review

Tips on Moving On After a Layoff



You can’t control whether you lose your job, but you *can* control the reactions and decisions you make afterward. In addition to revitalizing an

outdated résumé, networking, and trying to land interviews, a laid-off employee must also deal with the emotions that accompany losing a job: fear, shock, anger, and loss of self-esteem — all of which can negatively affect motivation and the way you present yourself to potential employers.

In *Getting Back to Work: Everything You Need to Bounce Back and Get a Job After a Layoff*, author Linda Rolie, a career development expert with a background as a psychiatric therapist, offers time-tested tools for finding a new job in today’s economy — while also working through the psychological chal-

lenges that come with being laid off.

Her advice includes:

- Guidance on how to manage emotions and stress while looking for a new job;
- Exercises to identify transferable skills, competencies, knowledge, abilities, and qualifications; and
- Templates for writing impressive résumés, cover letters, thank-you notes, and more.

Getting Back to Work, \$15.95, softcover, is available from McGraw-Hill, www.mcgraw-hill.com. ■

Coming Home from Prison

Helping People Start Over

Of the more than 2.3 million people incarcerated in federal and state prisons, more than 700,000 are released annually, according to the U.S. Bureau of Justice Statistics. These people often leave prison without a transition plan and with little more than the clothes on their back, a bus ticket home, and a mandate to report to the local parole officer the next day.

Of those released, two-thirds will return to prison within three years unless they receive support from community agencies like Goodwill Industries®. The following are what some Goodwills are doing to assist this population:

■ **Goodwill of San Antonio's *Learn While You Earn*** project features transitional employment, job-retention support, and continuous case management. This is in addition to job placement, counseling, and referrals to alcohol and drug treatment facilities.

In each of these service areas, the agency collaborates with other providers. The idea of the program is to give people who are non-violent ex-offenders a range of job-related and social-support services to facilitate their re-entry into society.

■ **Goodwill Industries of Greater Detroit is seeing huge success with its *Flip the Script* program.** Goodwill Detroit reports that 91% of people completing *Flip the Script* have not re-offended or had any serious contact with the criminal justice system since the program's launch in July 2003.

Flip the Script works with minority males ages 18-30 both prior to and after release through a partnership with Wayne County Jails and Courts. The program's intensive curriculum focus on the critical areas of math, reading enrichment, positive relationship development, parenting skills, and workplace ethics.

As a transitional work program, *Flip the Script* places participants into temporary, wage-paying jobs while providing ongoing support. The temporary jobs provide former prisoners with much-needed income in the period just following release. They also give program staff an opportunity to identify and resolve any workplace behaviors that may cause participants problems in landing a permanent job.

■ **Goodwill Industries of Central North Carolina (Greensboro)** launched a re-entry program called *Jobs on the Outside* in December 2008. The

comprehensive, collaborative initiative provides individuals on probation or parole with skills training, job-search and/or job-placement assistance, and other services. The agency began assessing the need for such a program when people were being released early due to prison overcrowding.

The Greensboro Goodwill created *Jobs on the Outside* by learning about existing prisoner re-entry programs from Goodwill agencies across the U.S.

Jobs on the Outside provides career counseling, computer training and vocational development; and it helps participants with résumés, job searches, and interview preparation; and it refers participants to community service agencies. ■

This article is reprinted with permission from "Working!" a publication of Goodwill Industries International, Inc. (www.goodwill.org).

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Four Tips for Job Seekers

1. Research the company. Few things frustrate hiring managers more than applicants who know absolutely nothing about the company.

While it isn't necessary to know the name of the CEO or what year the business was founded, it's imperative that applicants understand at least *something* about the organization — what products it makes, services it provides, etc. Failure to know *anything* about the firm in an interview makes it appear as though the applicant is only interested in the job itself, and not someone who wants to work for the organization.

In an increasingly online society, there's really no excuse not to have at least *some* prior knowledge about where you're interviewing. Google the name of the company, and if you don't have a computer, ask someone at the local library to help.

2. Understand the company's needs. In a day and age when hiring managers have so many applicants to pick from, selling your skills is no longer enough. Chances are, plenty of people are

capable of doing the job; the applicant needs to set himself/herself apart from the pack.

One way of doing that is to attach value to your abilities whenever possible. For instance, rather than simply saying that you're "*highly organized*," state how this helped a previous employer. For instance, "*My organizational skills streamlined my department's efficiency.*"

It's even better yet if you can attach a dollar value to it. For example, "*I was able to enhance my department's efficiency 40%, which improved profits by 25%.*"

3. Be nice to the help.

Recognize that as a job seeker, you're being observed the minute you walk in the door, not just in the interview. Be friendly and respectful to an administrative assistant and any other employees you encounter.

If you have to wait before the manager is ready to speak with you, rather than texting or listening to an iPod, make a *little* idle chit-chat with an employee (don't overdo it) or thumb through a trade magazine if one is available.

This will leave a more positive impression. It pays to appear observant and interested in the company, not in "your own little world."

4. Have a portfolio, not just a résumé. In today's technological society, a résumé alone may not be enough. Even if the job application doesn't require it, having a quick synopsis of your skills on paper that you can give to the hiring manager — or even a brief PowerPoint® presentation — will impress a prospective employer since most applicants won't take the time to do this.

Even if the hiring manager doesn't have time to review your document or PowerPoint® in the interview, it will still leave a positive impression, as it will demonstrate your attention to detail.

Summary

A job seeker may not be able to decide whom a company will hire, but a job seeker *can* take steps such as the ones outlined in this article and stand out from the crowd. An applicant that a hiring manager remembers is one that is a step closer to getting the job. ■

Workplace Survey

Don't Forget Spell-Check!

An estimated 84% of executives polled in a recent survey conducted by OfficeTeam, said that it takes just one or two typographical errors in a résumé to remove a candidate from consideration for a job opening.

In fact, nearly half (47%) said a *single* typo can be the deciding factor in whether to bring someone in for an interview.

According to OfficeTeam, candidates who submit application materials with typographical or grammatical errors may be seen as lacking professionalism and attention to detail, and thus spoil their chances for an interview or further consideration.

It's also important to remember that computer spell-check functions, while useful, are not fool-proof! It's crucial for job seekers

to proofread their résumés — and ask someone to help since a fresh pair of eyes can help candidates spot mistakes overlooked by spell-check.

It sounds basic, but simple errors — such as a job seeker applying for the position of "office manger" will derail even the most talented applicants. ■

Source: OfficeTeam
(www.officeteam.com).

Brian: *Creating a Job While Filling a Business Need*



Brian is a man in his 20s who loves working with animals. After graduating from high school, Brian worked at a department store, where his responsibilities were not a good fit for his skills and his interests.

Brian and his job coach decided to seek employment that would be a better fit with Brian's passions and goals. Brian was able to purchase valuable equipment and use it to negotiate with a business where he was eventually hired.

How the Idea Began

Brian was served by an employment provider agency in Georgia that was moving people out of sheltered workshops and into community-based employment. The provider was receiving training on customized employment, which was used to help Brian develop and pursue his goals.

The provider put together an employment planning team to help discover Brian's interests and identify opportunities, a process known as "job seeker exploration." The team included Brian, his parents, his VR counselor, job coach, and a former teacher.

They met regularly over several months and uncovered Brian's passion

"His employer feels that Brian is not just employed but on a career path, as his responsibilities at the business have increased over the years."

of working with animals. Brian's job coach found a small grooming business that had recently opened near Brian's home and began to explore opportunities for employment.

Finding a Business Need

Brian's job coach approached the employer and asked what service or product they could offer to help them grow their business. They immediately identified a need for hydraulic lifts for the animals, which would ease the physical stress on the groomers. The job coach realized that she now had leverage to sell a solution to the employer — referred to in customized employment as "finding a negotiation point."

Finding Funding

Together the job coach and employer went through a catalog for groomers and chose equipment that would benefit the business. Brian's team was committed to his passion for working with animals, and they brainstormed creative ways to fund this equipment. This would give Brian something tangible to contribute to the business in addition to his personal skills.

The team decided to use funds from a Customized Employment Grant to purchase the equipment on Brian's behalf. Bringing this important

resource to the business, the job coach negotiated wage and responsibilities, and Brian became a salaried employee.

Funding from a Vocational Rehabilitation agency paid for training, which included job coaching. A job coach checks in with Brian and the employer several times a month to troubleshoot any issues that arise on the job. However, Brian's co-workers provided the bulk of the initial training and ongoing support.

What Happened

Brian has been employed for five years and currently works 30 hours per week. His responsibilities include all the aspects of dog grooming and customer service, and he is in charge of independently opening the business on some mornings.

His employer feels that Brian is not just employed but on a career path, as his responsibilities at the business have increased over the years. Brian's reputation as a person who needs significant support on a job has changed into that of a successful entrepreneur who, through his own resources, has made the dog-grooming business even more successful.

Brian's employer is extremely happy with his work and finds him stable, dependable, and hard-working. Brian reports that he likes everything about his job, including both the people he works with and the animals.

Lessons Learned

❖ **Resource ownership**, as in the case of Brian bringing equipment with him to the grooming job, is one way for an individual to add value to what they can contribute to a business.

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What's New in AT?

❖ **Having access to money that can be used in creative ways** is key to creating opportunities for individuals to become linked with businesses. For example, a PASS from the Social Security Administration can allow a person to purchase job-related equipment or provide the funds to start a small business. Vocational Rehabilitation can purchase skill training, capital equipment, vehicle repairs, insurance, work clothes, adaptive equipment, and computers. Many community rehabilitation programs can use funds to meet employment needs.

❖ **Brian began with a “job seeker exploration” process**, which asks the questions, “*Who is this person?*” and “*What are the ideal conditions for employment?*” This is crucial as it reveals the person’s interests, skills, and passions that help the team uncover opportunities.

❖ **Brian’s employment with the groomer created a win-win situation.** It resulted in a career path for Brian and increased business for the employer.

❖ **Brian’s financial contribution to the business enabled the initial connection with the employer.** However, his increase in responsibilities and his longevity on the job can be attributed to supportive co-workers, regular contact with a job coach, his own strong work ethic, and a successful job match. ■

Source: Reprinted with permission from the Institute for Community Inclusion, University of Massachusetts Boston (<http://communityinclusion.org>). For more information, contact Doug Crandell, Cobb Community Service Board, at dcrandell@cobcsb.com.

What is it? AccuGait

What does it do? AccuGait is a portable, computerized gait analysis system designed for use in gait assessment.

How does it work? The system consists of a platform with a composite material top plate and Hall effect sensing elements. The unit interfaces directly with a laptop computer via a built-in amplifier.

Who makes it? Advanced Mechanical Technology, Inc., 176 Waltham St., Watertown, MA 02472, (617) 926-6700, www.ami.biz.

What is it? CLASS

What does it do? CLASS (Comprehensive Learner Adapted Scope and Sequence) is a computer program that allows special education professionals to administer tests, produce reports, and develop an Individual Education Plan (IEP).

How does it work? CLASS, which covers students at all grade levels, may be used as is, or customized to meet program changes or specifications. The core software consists of 13 disks that cover English, math, science, and other subjects. Ancillary programs are available for speech therapy, severe mental impairment, and others.

Who makes it? Technical Perspectives, Inc., 1475 Richardson Dr., Suite 230, Richardson, TX 75080, (800) 594-3779, www.classplus.com.

What is it? Evok

What does it do? Evok is a programmable hearing aid designed for use by individuals who are deaf or hard of hearing. It is available in various styles.

How does it work? The unit automatically adjusts for sudden changes to signal levels, such as soft and loud voices during the same conversation. An

adaptive phase canceller prevents feedback. The unit may also be fitted with various programs for different situations, such as noisy environments, automatically switching to the appropriate mode.

Who makes it? Persona Medical, 170 North Cypress Way, Casselberry, FL 32707, (800) 789-6543, www.magnatone.com.

What is it? Milestone 312 DAISY Player

What does it do? The Milestone 312 DAISY Player is a digital talking book player designed for individuals with blindness or low vision.

How does it work? This small device incorporates an audio book player, accessible MP3/AAC player, voice recorder, FM tuner and recorder, alarm clock, and an RFID tag reader in one unit.

Who makes it? It is distributed by Technologies for the Visually Impaired, Inc., 9 Nolan Court, Hauppauge, NY 11788, (631) 724-4479, www.tvi-web.com.

What is it? Nano PDA-Lite

What does it do? The Nano PDA-Lite is a Braille notetaker and personal digital assistant designed for individuals who are blind or have low vision.

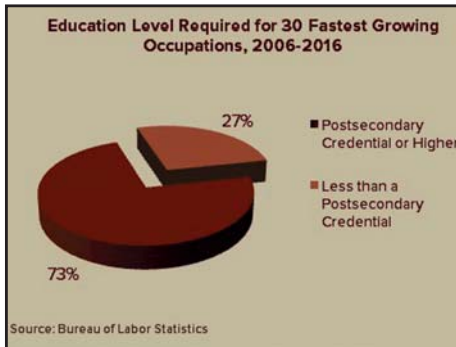
How does it work? The unit has a Braille keyboard and cursor keys with voice output. Text notes are entered by using the Braille keyboard or the cursor keys; audio notes are entered through the recording function.

Who makes it? It is distributed by Maxi-Aids, Inc., 42 Executive Blvd., Farmingdale, NY 11735, (800) 522-6294, www.maxiaids.com. ■

Source: ABLEDATA (www.abledata.com), which adds over 1,000 assistive technology products to its database each year. ABLEDATA records are provided for informational purposes only. Products contained in ABLEDATA have not been examined, reviewed, or tested.

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Job Creation: Targeted Approach Needed



The current economic crisis requires that additional steps be taken to create employment and training opportunities for those hardest hit by the recession. Targeted approaches are needed to raise the skills of the American workforce and to provide earned income to low-income workers.

The following are among the recommendations outlined by the Center for Law and Social Policy (CLASP):

❖ **Youth employment:** Expand the *Workforce Investment Act (WIA)* youth program from \$1.2 billion provided through the *American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA)* to \$2 billion. This would allow the summer jobs program, which provided work for 306,466 youth last summer, to continue.

It would also allow local areas to extend jobs and supports to older, out-of-school youth throughout the year. For example, year-round funds could be used for paid internships up to two years for out-of-school youth while they participate in an education program leading to marketable post-secondary credentials.

The paid work experience, comparable to a work-study job for low-income college students, would provide an incentive for out-of-school youth to persist in their studies and provide much-needed family income.

With the lowest youth employment rate in 60 years, and only one in three of all teams working, this investment is sorely needed to get young people on track for lifetimes of productive and gainful employment.

❖ **Transitional jobs for populations with barriers to employment:** Fund transitional jobs for individuals, such as ex-offenders, with little or no work experience and multiple barriers to employment.

Transitional jobs programs provide a bridge to unsubsidized employment by combining time-limited subsidized employment with comprehensive services to help participants overcome barriers and build work-related skills that will allow them to enter and succeed in the labor market.

❖ **Try-out employment:** Fund subsidized try-out employment and paid internships for up to six months in training-related fields for youth and adults completing *WIA*-supported training.

This would help overcome the reluctance to provide training through *WIA* when jobs are scarce, offer hands-on experience, and provide a

bridge to employment in fields expected to grow as the economy recovers. Employers would be encouraged, but not required, to hire trainees.

❖ **On-the-job training (OJT):** Provide additional federal funds to encourage the *WIA* system to make greater use of OJT subsidies for companies that hire and train low-income, long-term unemployed workers in fields that are expected to grow as the economy emerges from the recession.

While the current reimbursement rate is up to 50% of a trainee's starting wage for six months, local areas could be given the flexibility to increase the reimbursement rate above this level for up to six months, as long as the employer paid the prevailing wage for comparable positions in the industry, provided affordable health insurance, and offered advancement opportunities. Employers would be required to retain the worker for at least one year after the subsidized training period. ■

Source: CLASP (www.clasp.org). Additional job creation recommendations are available at www.clasp.org/admin/site/publications/files/Job-Creation-Fact-Sheet_Final-for-Webrevised.pdf or contact Evelyn Ganzglass, (202) 906-8015.

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