



Customized Employment: The innovation that makes "Employment for All" possible

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Customized Employment

Customized Employment is an innovation that allows job seekers with a significant impact of disability to avoid the traditional barriers created by the demand and personnel functions of most businesses, thus providing access to community, integrated employment based more on *contribution* rather than *competition*.

Customized Employment

Customized Employment (CE) becomes necessary when the limits of Competitive Supported Employment are reached for some individuals. Too often, job seekers with the most significant disabilities are unable to meet the demands of open jobs, even with the additional support afforded by job coaches. Historically, this resulted in a growing "underclass" of individuals who were considered unable to work. CE offers a solution, a work-around.

Kim's journey to
employment
helped us
understand the
necessity of
customizing
employment



A poorly matched competitive job almost cost her a chance to work



Customized Employment: A business friendly concept

Kim's supervisor
used "unmet
need" as the
lens to
customize her
new job
description



By using customized supported employment, Kim worked for over 15 years



Important News!

On July 22, 2014, the President signed the Work Innovation and Opportunity Act of 2014, (H.R. 803) thus amending the Rehab Act of 1973.

This new act provides a federal definition of Customized Employment and it provides a strong focus on employment for all, especially transitioning youth.

Customized Employment

*According to the 2014 Amendments to the Rehab Act
(H.R. 803 Section 7 (7) (29 U.S.C. 705)*

Customized Employment means competitive integrated employment, for an individual with a significant disability, that is based on an individualized determination of the strengths, needs, and interests of the individual with a significant disability, is designed to meet the specific abilities of the individual with a significant disability and the business needs of the employer, and is carried out through flexible strategies, such as:

The "flexible strategies" described in WIOA

(A) job exploration by the individual;

(B) working with an employer to facilitate placement,
including —

(i) customizing a job description based on current employer needs or on previously unidentified and unmet employer needs;

(ii) developing a set of job duties, a work schedule and job arrangement, and specifics of supervision (including performance evaluation and review), and determining a job location;

(iii) representation by a professional chosen by the individual, or self-representation of the individual, in working with an employer to facilitate placement; and

(iv) providing services and supports at the job location.

Unbundling & Flexibility

Typically employers have met workplace needs by bundling tasks into job descriptions. These descriptions can create barriers for some job seekers. Customized Employment allows employers to “unbundle” demand and to take advantage of discrete competencies.

Flexibility is a universal design strategy that acknowledges the reality of complexity in the lives of job seekers. When businesses offer flexibility, many barriers to employment can be overcome.

Characteristics of CE

- Starts with Discovery rather than assessment
- Avoids job titles - no open jobs
- Job development driven by the job seeker rather than the labor market
- All job descriptions are negotiated, not pre-existing
- Occurs in regular community workplaces or self-owned businesses

Characteristics of CE

- Individualized: one person, one job - no groups
- Acceptance of CE is voluntary by both parties, the job seeker and the employer
- Driven by a customized plan that identifies the job seeker's conditions, interests and contributions
- Based on tasks rather than bundled job descriptions

Characteristics of CE

- Involves pay of at least the minimum wage
- A "universal design" strategy applicable to all job seekers in the workforce
- Uses a representative form of job development (see federal definition)
- Relies on "positive disclosure" and negotiation more than civil rights

Customized Process

- Discovery
 - Capturing discovery through profiles
 - Customized, person-centered planning
 - Portfolio/visual resume development
 - Job development and negotiation
- Here, CE dovetails with Supported Employment*
- Job site analysis, accommodations, support

The Unique Role of Discovery

Comparative assessments and process often hit directly and negatively on the impact of a job seeker's disability. The result can lead to exclusion from work and lowered expectations.

Discovery is a qualitative process that avoids comparison by translating the individual's best features to employment possibilities.

The Individual's Blueprint: Developed in Discovery

Conditions for Success:

This area focuses on the ingredients that must be available or avoided in order to make employment feasible, enjoyable and successful for the job seeker. All of us have conditions for success.

Interests for employment:

This area focuses on the intrinsic interests of the individual that can provide direction for the type of work they might find meaningful. These interests are found from the job seeker's life.

Potential Contributions:

This area focuses on the specific potential benefits that the individual will offer to employers. These contributions are translated from the job seeker's best skills of life.

The Employer's Benefit: Developed in a Needs Analysis

Unmet Workplace Needs:

This area focuses on tasks that need to get done but are not getting done in the way the employer would like. It also can include tasks that have not been performed but need to be.

Tasks better performed by others:

This area focuses on aspects of jobs that might better be performed by others at a lower pay grade. This option can directly save money for employers.

Specific Benefit/Productivity:

This area focuses on workplace needs for additional productivity in specific tasks. It must be matched with job seeker's specific competencies.

The Business Case for Customized Employment: Balancing the Equation

Flexibility Needed

1. Addressing conditions for success
2. Focus on interests
3. Specific Contributions

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Value Added

1. Addressing unmet needs of business
2. Tasks better done by others
3. Tasks that enhance the business

Isn't CE just "good" Supported Employment?

No, CE is a compatible concept to Supported Employment but it is a distinctly different strategy. Rather than focusing on employment supports available to an employee, CE focuses on customizing the employment relationship for job seekers. The 2014 amendments to the Rehab Act affirm this distinction.

Tasks derived from a file clerk position to do sorting and filing

