

# What is Customized Employment?

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**MEANINGFUL  
WORK**  
+  
**COMMUNITY  
INCLUSION**

# Learning Objectives

1. Understand the essential elements of customized employment
2. Identify ways to put customized employment strategies into practice
3. Recognize the critical role of vocational rehabilitation and community rehabilitation services to support both the job seeker and business

# ODEP Defines Customized Employment

- “A flexible process designed to personalize the employment relationship between a job candidate and an employer in a way that meets the needs of both”
- “Customized employment is based on individual’s match between the strengths, conditions and interests of the job candidates and the identified business needs of an employer” (ODEP, 2012)

# Customized Employment Strategies

- Customized employment should not be the “new model” for job seekers with disabilities, but should expand the universally accepted practice recognizing the power of community and promoting relationships
- Customized employment gives power back to individuals, families, employers and community stakeholders fostering flexibility, individuality, unique strengths and desires, and builds partnerships with the community

# Customized Employment Basics

- Presumption of employment
  - No “job readiness”
  - No “realistic”
- Seeks to individualize the relationship between the job seeker and the employer.
- Primary components of Customized Employment process :
  - Non traditional assessment or what is referred to as job seeker exploration or discovery – the foundation for customized employment
  - Development of an individual profile (Positive Personal Profile)
  - Negotiation/Customization/Re-assignment of tasks focusing on strengths and assets of the job seeker

# Customized Employment: Essential Elements

- Negotiation of job duties
- Individualization (a job for one person)
- Negotiated pay of at least minimum wage
- Businesses in the community or businesses owned by the individual
- Facilitates mutually beneficial voluntary employment relationship
- Job development “agents” represent job seekers

# Customized Employment: Essential Elements (cont.)

- Presumption of employment
- Self-employment chosen by individual
- Used to assist job seekers with disabilities who have not been or unlikely to be successful with traditional demand-side employment strategies

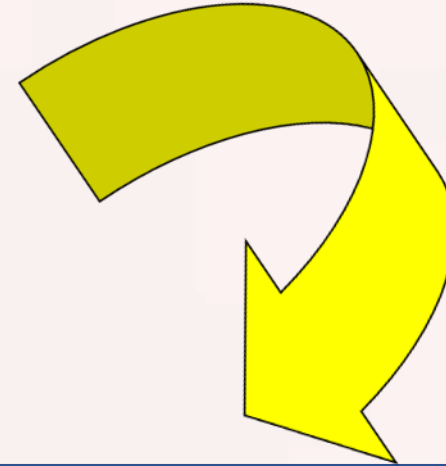
Source: WINTAC, 2017 (<http://www.wintac.org/topic-areas/resources-and-strategies-competitive-integrated-employment/resources#resc-ce>)

# Discovery Essential Elements

- Determine strengths, needs and interests
  - Qualitative approach
    - Interviews
    - Observations (multiple settings)
    - Job shadows
  - Descriptive versus evaluative
  - Asset versus deficit
  - Sufficient time - ongoing



The most valuable  
assessment strategy?



Spending time with the job  
seeker in a variety of  
settings

# Building a Positive Personal Profile

- Dreams and goals
- Talents
- Skills and knowledge
- Learning styles
- Interests
- Personality traits (quirks included)
- Temperament
- Values
- Environmental preferences
- Dislikes
- Work experiences
- Support system
- Challenges
- Solutions (accommodations)

# Building a Positive Personal Profile

- Believe in the job seeker
- Focus on skills – not deficits
- No prerequisites
- Everyone is “job ready”
- Look for “rays of light”
- What will employer value about the job seeker?

# Meet Mattie

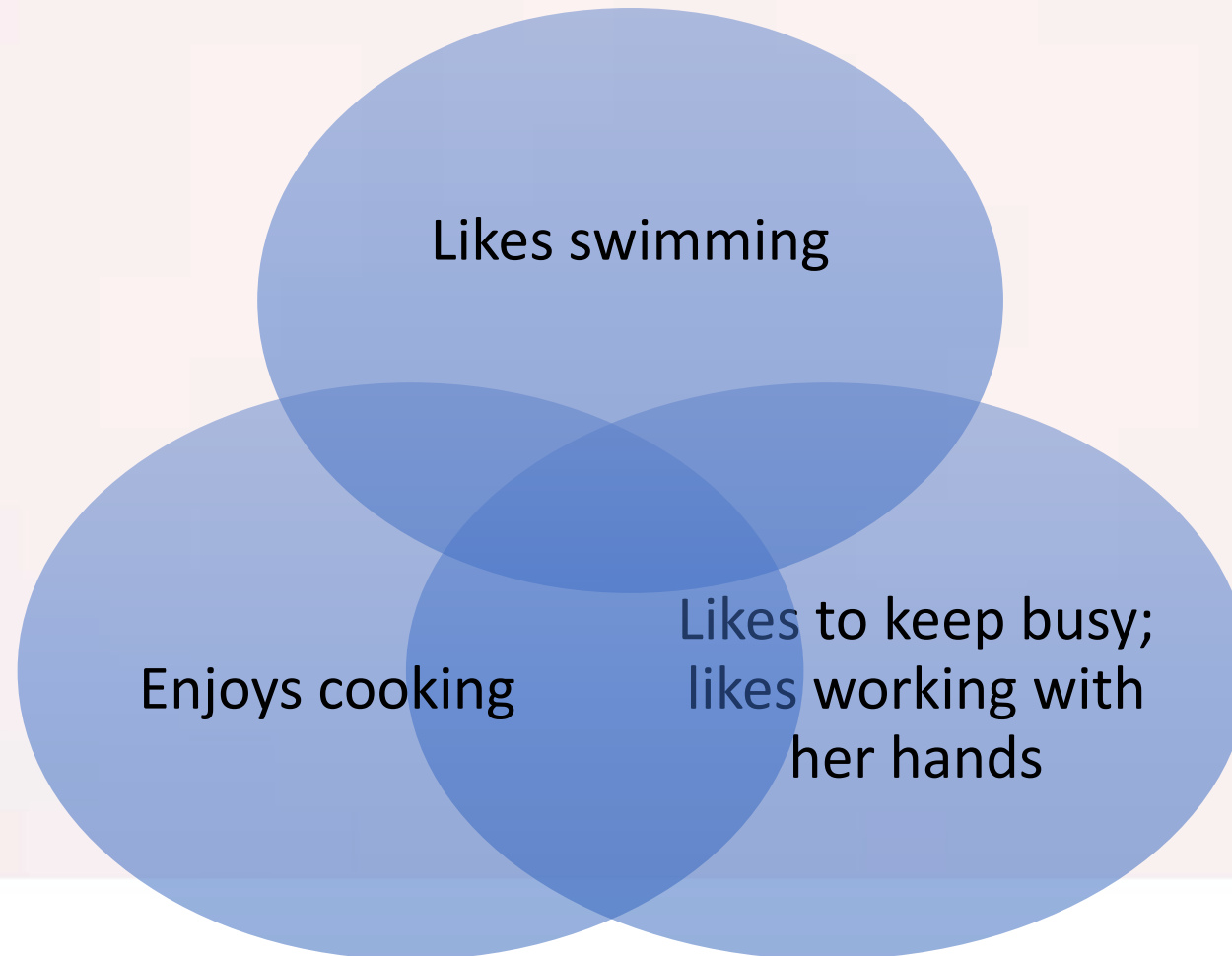
## What the file said:

- Developmentally disabled and deaf and blind
- Lived in an institution most of her life
- “Failed” at several work placements
- Nonverbal
- “Behavior outbursts”
- Moves slowly

## What we said:

- Very curious
- Loves variety and learning new things (including tactile communication)
- Likes working with her hands
- Always smiling
- Enjoys cooking (smelling the food, stirring, pouring)
- Loves swimming (especially sitting in the whirlpool)

# What are good jobs for Mattie? What employer would value her?



# 18 years at Pizza Hut



# 6 years at Menomonee Falls School District

# Why Was Mattie Successful?

- Job matched not only her skills but also her interest and personality
- Mattie has skills (attributes) the employer valued and an interest for the work
- The Employment Consultant found an employment setting, a supportive manager/supervisor, and a position that utilized Mattie's skills and also minimized her disabilities

# Job Development Versus Job Placement

- Job placement: looking at the opportunities that already exist in the community and putting job seekers in direct competition with other job seekers
- Job development: looking for the unique skills and abilities of job seekers to shape and develop employment through negotiations with business



# Essential Elements of Job Development

- Avoid using job openings and typical personnel processes
- Use all connections and networks
- Develop strategies for assisting employers to identify areas of need
- Emphasize informational relationships with employers
- Customize job descriptions
- Negotiate a support plan

Source: WINTAC, 2017 (<http://www.wintac.org/topic-areas/resources-and-strategies-competitive-integrated-employment/resources#resc-ce>)

# Informational Interviews

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

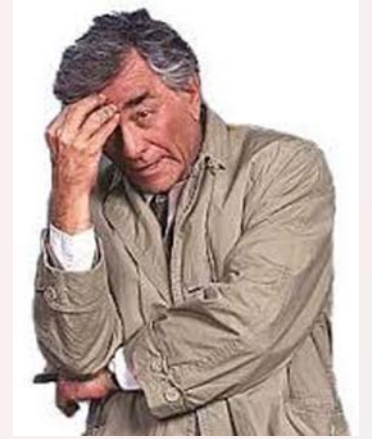
# Make the Request Easy to Say “Yes” to!



“I work with individuals interested in your industry. I’d like to come and see what you do, and talk to you about the skills needed to work in this field so I can better counsel the job seekers I work with”

# Be on the Lookout For...

- ✓ Possible ways to improve work flow
- ✓ Employees bogged down with important yet non-essential tasks
- ✓ Core staff who struggle to manage their work loads
- ✓ Unhappy Customers
- ✓ Duties that might be performed in a different way – but will yield excellent outcomes
- ✓ Degree of flexibility of the workplace
- ✓ Seasonal fluctuations



# Maddie's Informational Interview



# Customized Employment is...

Employment where job tasks are **reassigned** from an existing job, **restructured** from one or more existing jobs, or **created** to match the skills and accommodation needs of the job seeker and...

...Customized Employment approach MUST help the employer's operation in some specific way!



# Seven Steps to Negotiating Employment

1. Recap visit or meeting
2. Present what you saw; identify where assistance might be needed
3. Outline how your candidate can help the business
4. Present potential employer benefits
5. Clarify your role in the process
6. Make the “ask”
7. Reiterate the potential employer benefits



# Meet Ivan – Positive Personal Profile

- Loves all sports – Brewers, Packers, Bucks (baseball, football, basketball)
- Easy to work with
- Happy
- Full of potential
- Independent
- Sweet
- A great spirit
- Determined
- Close knit family
- Very persistent
- Funny/ humorous
- Friendly
- Jokes
- Caring
- Hard worker
- Very smart
- Good listener
- Champion bean bag tosser

# Marquette University Student Recreation Complex Needed Help!

- Five full sized basketball courts
- About 2000 students and alumni used the facility every day
- Courts were filthy – especially in the winter
- Janitorial staff had to clean them constantly – which no one liked to do

# What We Did...

- **Informational Interview** - refined task list based on observed needs
- **Compared task list** with Ivan's **Positive Personal Profile** to determine match
- Set up "working interview"
- Presented **employment proposal** to Marquette
- **Negotiated terms of employment**

# Employment Proposal

## Ivan's Skills

- Loves sports - especially Marquette
- Persistent
- Hard worker
- Funny
- Easy to work with

## Refined Task List

- Clean five courts during high peak time
- Adapting the wet mop so Ivan could drag it behind him
- Pick up extra basketballs left behind and returning them to desk

# “Human Zamboni”



# Things to Remember...

- Listen to your job seekers!
- Don't expect them to stay in jobs they don't like
- Focus on skills – not deficits
- Be strategic in approaching targeted companies
- Become an expert at infiltrating the Hidden Job Market

# Things to Remember...

- Employers are always looking for employees who are interested in their business and willing to learn
- Get to know employers and determine how can you help their company
- Present your candidate's relevant skills & assets, in a professional manner

# 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.

[www.transcen.org](http://www.transcen.org) or contact us at [info@transcen.org](mailto:info@transcen.org) for more information!



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