

Building Relationships with Employers

ProjectE3

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>> Welcome to today's E3 webinar. Today, you will be hearing from Tim Riesen from Utah State University who will talk about building relationships with employers leading to customized employment. A couple of announcements before we get going, Tim's presentation is a little over an hour. When Tim is done, we'll have about 30 minutes for questions and answers. Crystal Hence will be joining us to help with that. While the recording is going on, if you have a question, please put it in the Q&A box. If you happen to put it in the chat, we'll figure it out. Heidi Decker-Maurer who you can see will be running the Q&A session and she will have more to say when we get to that point. Jen Gundlach Klatt manages our CRC. Jen, do you want to do a quick explanation of how people will be able to get CRC he credits if they would like.

>> JENNIFER GUNDLACH KLATT: Sure. Good morning, if you're in need of CRC, you will receive an email with instructions. If you have any questions, please direct those to projectE3@gmail.com.

>> With that, we will go ahead and get started. Tim's presentation is a little over an hour and then we will go right to the Q&A after that. Again, any questions you may have, technical difficulties, we believe the sound is good, but if not, please drop us a note in the chat and we will increase the sound on the video recording.

So, thanks again, and we will talk again after the end of the presentation.

>> TIM RIESEN: Hi. My name is Tim Riesen. I'm a research assistant in the profession of rehabilitation. What I would like to achieve today is first talk about the importance of integrated employment for people with disabilities. So, I'm going to be spending a little bit of time giving you some background information about some outcomes for people with disabilities, and potentially some potential directions about how we are moving forward with employment for people with disabilities.

And then I would like to review a study that I conducted in 2017 with employers about their views of customized employment. So, we did a series of focus groups with employers, and I'm going to spend some time reviewing some of the data, reviewing some of the themes that emerged from this focus study

and conclude today's session with some recommendations for future practice and research.

So, hopefully, today's session will give you some better insights about how we can build better relationships with employers and what that means from a practical standpoint, how employment specialists can really engage with employers to produce better outcomes for youth and young adults with disabilities.

So, I think before we start talking about building relationships and engaging with employers, it's really important to explore what's happening in employment outcomes for people with disabilities.

I think this is a really interesting time in terms of employment considering that last month the United States had one of the biggest job growths in recent history since the 1980s so we had this incredible job growth for people without disabilities but people with disabilities haven't traditionally been involved in these job growth paradigms so if you look at these, what's happened to people over the years, we see that people with disabilities aren't necessarily achieving employment outcomes with the same frequency that people without disabilities are achieving.

So there have been a number of seminal studies or a number of outcome studies that have really reinforced this idea that people with disabilities aren't achieving these outcomes to the same extent that people without disabilities are, collects data annually on outcomes for people with disabilities and this is a broad range of disability categories and they found in the latest iteration of the American community survey, they found that roughly 33 percent of the Americans with disabilities between the ages of 16 and 64 are employed so this data really suggests that people with disabilities just aren't accessing employment to the same extent that people without disabilities are accessing.

If you start looking at specific disabilities such as intellectual development disabilities or when you start looking at what's happening with employment actions in terms of people with more employment needs, the numbers drop precipitously. The state data report on employment services and outcomes for people with intellectual developmental disabilities suggest that only 18.6 percent of people with intellectual developmental disabilities are employed in integrated environments.

Another study, the national core indicator project suggests that only 14.8 percent of individuals with intellectual disabilities who are receiving DD services or developmental disability services are employed in integrated

settings so this leaves a large number of individuals with intellectual developmental disabilities not engaging in meaningful employment. Oftentimes, these individuals are engaged in -- such as work and nonwork based facility settings where they're not really working on employment-based skills and not really participating in community employment.

So, these numbers in light of what we know about the economic growth in this country are quite alarming in that people with disabilities seem to be left out of the game in many circles when it comes to employment outcomes. So, when we start thinking about why this happens or why people with disabilities do not participate in employment with the same frequency that people without disabilities participate in employment, both researchers and advocates have really, I guess, highlighted a number of contributing factors, right? So, we've looked at these variables that really examine why people with disabilities don't participate in employment with the same frequency that people without disabilities participate in employment.

Talking about people with a more significant disabilities. One of these factors is the lack of applied inclusive work experiences for people with disabilities. So, oftentimes, the way we've structured programs and services for people with intellectual and developmental disabilities, or people with more significant support needs, is that we set up con strived work experiences for these individuals. And so, they don't necessarily develop the same work identity that perhaps a person without a disability would develop over the life span.

Because the experiences that they participate in aren't necessarily realistic and aren't necessarily tied to the performance -- of real work. Another contributing factor is this idea of work readiness paradigm and this idea that we don't set up for people without disabilities. Oftentimes, we have a certain set of standards that we say a person with a disability has to achieve or a certain set of competencies that a person with a disability has to achieve before he or she can enter into the employment realm and we don't establish this same criteria for people without disabilities so we're working on this kind of different mind-set for people without disabilities and people with disabilities that we oftentimes assume people without disabilities, have to ensure people with certain competencies. The individual with a disability can engage in meaningful employment. And then finally, we have traditionally low expectations for people with disabilities.

So, oftentimes, we don't think about it as a viable option. Oftentimes, the more significant a person support needs tend to be, the expectations seem to correlate with the significance

of a person's disability. So, each of these three contributing factors certainly influence those poor outcomes that we've, that I showed you earlier, that American community survey and the state data that I showed you earlier that relate to these poor outcomes.

But another item that we oftentimes don't talk about in terms of poor employment outcomes is what Tammy Backrach called in 2015 an incomplete agenda (Bachrach) and essentially what she was referring to is that oftentimes we spend so much time trying to get a person employment ready and the onus is on the person with a disability to get ready for work that we don't spend enough time working with employers and understanding how we can engage with employers.

So, Tammy talks about this incomplete agenda that we focus solely on providing education and support to people with disabilities, and we don't always look at what employers need. We don't always look at the barriers that employers might have in terms of hiring a person with a disability.

So, this leads us to, you know, where we're headed in terms of employment that I think we're at a crossroads in terms of developing supports and services for people with disabilities that really requires us to start thinking about how we can more effectively engage with employers, to learn how we can perhaps re-facilitate the employment environment just as we're learning to provide supports to people with disabilities. So, we need to work together. We don't work in isolation. We need to work with the person with disability and we simultaneously need to work with employers to ensure that we're meeting the needs of both.

So, from the legislative standpoint, legislation is clearly responding to these poor outcomes and is clearly responding to these factors that have really prevented good outcomes for people with disabilities and most recently the workforce innovation and opportunity act in, and a number of things this legislation did, first and foremost, was it was really designed to improve the outcomes of people with disabilities. So, if you go back to the outcomes that I showed you a couple slides ago and you look at these outcomes, you look at broad categories of disabilities and roughly 36 percent of people with disabilities are employed. When you start looking at significant disabilities, those numbers just drop, in integrated environments. So, WIOA really responded to these poor outcomes and said, you know what? From a service provision standpoint, we need to do more to promote these better outcomes for people with significant disabilities. So, one of the things that WIOA did is for the first time from a statutory standpoint, it defined competitive integrative employment so

now we have a complete definition of what employment means. So, integrated employment simply means that a person with disabilities is employed in environments where the majority of people working in that environment do not have a disability

So, it's just regular employment environments.

And one of the other items embedded within this piece of legislation is the modified employment to include a definition of customized employment. So, although customized employment has been around since 2001, it hasn't necessarily been embedded within the statute until 2014 when this definition was included, when the definition of customized employment was included in the Rehabilitation Act itself. So, WIOA basically defines customized employment as something that's designed to meet the specific abilities of an individual with a significant disability and the business needs of the employer.

So, once again, if you look at this definition, and you look at the incomplete agenda that I was addressing earlier, this is really trying to respond to this idea that if we're going to make employment work for people with the most significant disabilities, we have to look at the individual with a disability and identify his or her strengths. While we simultaneously look at the employer. Identify what the employer needs.

So, customized employment really recognized that we need to work with both. Person with a disability, and employers in order to promote these better outcomes.

Other, the importance of building relationships and working with employers has also been highlighted in the literature. Most recently, WINTAC, the Workforce Innovation Technical Assistance Center has released an essential element of customized employment last year, 2017. Basically, this essential elements dependent highlights what individuals or what the customized employment process looks like from discovery all the way to working with employers.

And some of the components is that I thought would be worthwhile to address because it relates exactly to the focus groups that I'm going to be sharing with you here shortly, they highlight some really important characteristics of the customized employment process.

First and foremost is that we negotiate job duties, right? So, when we're working with customized employment kind of context. If we're truly customizing a job for a person with disability, traditionally, that job didn't exist before we started talking to an employer. So, this was going to certainly require employment specialists to have, you know, a certain set of skills to really work with the employer and talk about, learn about these unmet needs and then negotiate these job duties.

It's individualized, so, it's one job for one person. So, it's customized from one standpoint. We're not going in from developing, customizing for a number of -- we're really trying to create a job, to identify areas in which the employers might benefit. So, this this goes back to the idea of the incomplete agenda that I was referencing earlier that we need to spend more time engaging the employers to identify these unmet needs, or to identify ways in which we can meet the needs of the employer and simultaneously meeting the needs of the person with the disabilities as it relates to their strengths and interests. Right?

A mutual benefit needs to happen.

Customized employment avoids job openings and typical personnel processes. Once again, this requires the employment specialists to kind of step outside the box. Do things a little differently than we have traditionally done when we're looking at supply side jobs. Traditionally where one would fill out an application, to go through employment. Customized employment is the antithesis of that. We are going through employment, require the applicant to really learn how to engage with employers. This is one thing we were trying to push out that I will share with you here shortly.

And then, of course, during the customized employment process, that there is some representation, typically through an employment specialist, a job development employment specialist or somebody that could represent that individual during this customization process. So, the WINTAC document really sets the foundation. The U.S. Department of Labor -- ODEP, also sets indicators. One was creating personalized job descriptions and other expectations that didn't exist prior to the negotiation process. So, once again, this was going to require some nuanced skills on behalf of the employment specialists to really negotiate these specific jobs to really negotiate, it's not just something that's going to need to go in. This is going to require some networking, learning about business needs and it's a process. It's not just something that's going to happen overnight and then in 2013, there was a competency model for customized employment that was developed by the folks listed in the references there. Essentially, what they were looking at was specific competencies are that were required, that are kind of needed in order to facilitate the employment process.

Several things developed for business relationships, though. And specific employment practices. And that employment specialists need to be proficient at business networking. So, the U.S. Department of Labor. The competency model. The WINTAC document. All of this is working toward

working more efficiently with employers, learning how to identify needs, learning how to engage with employers more efficiently. Rather than just going in and asking an employer if they're hiring that we need to start going in and building these relationships with employers in order to make employment work.

In order to improve these poor outcomes we see every year, and in fact, some of these outcomes are decreasing, right? They seem to be getting worse, not better and so all of the research legislation is all pointing to this discussion that we need to do more, to interspace more effectively with employers so we can promote these better outcomes. So, there have been a number of studies over the past several years since we've been doing employment for people with disabilities that have really looked at employer perspectives on hiring and retaining individuals with disabilities but most of these studies are centered around traditional approaches to employment.

In fact, I did a review of the literature in 2015 and looked at all the literature out there in customized employment, the research literature out there and we found in this review that there's very little information about how employment specialists can engage with employers, right, that there hasn't been a lot of research in this particular area. With one notable exception. This was done by Luecking in 2006 in which he and his colleagues conducted telephone interviews with nine employers who had hired individuals through a customized employment process and what the authors found. That employers were generally satisfied with the customized employment process.

And help meet production goals, improve customer satisfaction. What it did not do is provide information about how we could start to engage with employers. How we start this process, to learn about how we can customize employment. This is what we can learn in the focus group study that I'm going to share with you right now.

Last year, we conducted a focus group study with employers to learn about. To the customized employment process. So, the specific research we asked is given the training on customized employment. A brief training on customized employment, what do employers with no expectations with customized employment identify as facilitators and barriers to this process so when we were kind of conceptualizing and making through this study. The reason why we chose to have no of, learn how employers has to respond to this process.

So, what we did is we recruited employers in one state to participate in this study and our recruitment. So, what we did is, we focused on about 80,000 employers in this state, and

randomly selected about 175 employers from this list of 80,000 employers so we did a random number in these employers and then we gave the task of calling these employers to a research assistant who called the employers to ask them if they'd like to participate in the focus group study. And of those. That left about 66 contacts, employers that we were able to contact or the research assistant was able to contact.

And of those 66, 14 employers agreed to participate in the study. So, we were a little bit worried about numbers here and a little bit worried about the end so we wanted to get more employers to participate in the focus group and we contacted the state's governor committee on people with disabilities and asked the director to forward a recruitment email to employers on their Listserv asking if they would like to recruit, too. So, from this recruitment effort, we had about ten employers who expressed some interest in participating in the study as well.

So, all in all, we had about 24 employers who said that they would participate in the focus group studies. After everything was done, ten employers actually participated in the focus group so we had some commitments but some employers didn't actually attend the focus groups so we had ten employers that participated in the focus group.

So, as you can see from the slide, we had representation from various different types of industry, we can use from various participation the standard used to classify different industries the employers were representing from the focus group. You can see from the slide we have some folks from retail. We had some employers that were engaged from transportation. Manufacturing., healthcare, technology, and so forth. So, we had a pretty diverse group. Four of the employees were small businesses. One employer had 76 to 100 employees. And the other business, or the other businesses had over 101 employees so they were considered large businesses, and four of the employers had experience hiring individuals with disabilities but they hired them through individual method, didn't customize a job for these specific individuals.

So, prior to the focus group, and this is where the training kind of, where we implemented some training so employers could have some basic knowledge of customized employment before we started to ask targeted questions about what they thought about customized employment, we sent the employer, the employers who participated or were going to participate in the online focus groups a short three minute video. So, this three minute, video basically presented vignets of people working with customized employment context and also provided interviews by national experts in customized employment,

talking about the benefits of customized employment, kind of identifying what it is. Providing some contextual information about customized employment.

Then the video provided interviews with employment who had hired individuals. Thinking about the customized employment. So, this video basically gave. We decided to use this video.

We also had a Qualtrics survey. Where we collect information about the number of employers, types of businesses and services, positions of the people who are participating in the focus group, and just basic demographic information from the employers.

Then we implemented the focus groups so we did a synchronous online focus group with the employer.

So, we chose to do an online focus group simply because we wanted to try to accommodate employer schedules. As you saw, we had 24 that agreed and only ten who showed up so it's really difficult to get employers to engage in these efforts and synchronous online focus groups have been used in health research. Folks are seeing there's some utility to utilizing this methodology to gathering information from focus group participants. It there is allows for geographic diversity so people can be in different areas of a state or be spread out geographically throughout the country in order to participate in these focus groups and it's really easy to collect the data when we use these online focus groups so we use a program called Adobe Connect for people to participate in the focus group, this allows the people to record the focus group in its entirety online and we have the data collection taken care of for us.

So, we collected three focus groups. Once again, we behave employers the opportunity to select which group they wanted to participate in. So, we wanted to give them different times so they can show up and we conducted 75-minute sessions.

So, we spent, you know, an hour and 15 minutes talking to employers to really learn about, to really learn about what they thought were, what they thought were facilitators and barriers to the customized employment process.

We used a qualitative methodology, so, open-ended focus group questions or interview questions and basically, the question in the limb bubble box on your screen gives you an example of one of the questions that we asked so we had asked what factors influence you and your business to customize jobs for people with disabilities so we would start with that question and then ask probing questions when the employers responded. Prior to asking these questions, I facilitated the focus groups and prior to asking these questions, I spent some time addressing any knowledge-based questions or questions that they had as a result of watching the video so they were a little

bit more informed about the customized employment process. Once again, these focus groups were digitally recorded and then we had a independent research assistant transcribe each of the focus group sessions and then we uploaded these transcriptions into an online qualitative software program called Deduce and we started to look for themes or identify specific themes related to our discussion.

And the purpose of this study was really to highlight or identify what employers thought were facilitators and barriers and then we classified these into specific themes related to customized employment.

So, here are the themes. This is what kind of emerged as a result of this study. First and foremost, employers are really highlighted the need to identify business needs. They thought it was really important that we spend a lot more time. Communicated all discussions for customized employment. Employers essentially said, if there's not solid communication that happens during this customized employment process, if we don't fully communicate with employers, people with disabilities, employment specialists, then there are going to be a number of barriers to this process. Training emerged as a theme and some financial implications, too, that employers were concerned about some of the financial aspects of customized employment so I'm going to spend some time talking about each one of these themes and provide some direct quotes so you get a sense of what employers were thinking about this customized process.

So, in terms of business needs, every single focus group, the employers really highlighted the importance of learning about business and spending more time engaging with businesses to really find those unmet needs. So, once again, when we're thinking about how this all connects to some of the information that I presented earlier, about this incomplete agenda, right here, this idea of business need is really reinforced, or employers really reinforce this idea that if we're going to make this work and if we're going to promote better outcomes for people with disabilities and if employers are going to, indeed, hire our customized jobs for people with disabilities, we -- in a customized context really need to learn about business needs. It's not just a one-shot approach in working with businesses that they want us to spend more time interacting and learning about business and learning how their businesses operate so we can find those unmet needs.

So, this was kind of reinforced in several of the quotes that employers talked about in terms of the focus group. One, employers said, you know what? When you're learning about business needs, I do not. Number one, that runs counter to the

process but also saying, just come in and pay good attention. Ask really good questions. Think creatively about how to fashion a job. Employers are like, we want people who can come in and solve our unmet needs, and sigh what needs to be done at the business. Also, take that information and align it to the strengths and interests of the person with a disability.

Another employer Sid I'd want an individual to come in and spend multiple ways working different aspects of the business, meeting with me so they can have a really true understanding of how our business works and the different levels of our business.

This employer has already spent time with us. If we're going to make this customized employment process work, it's going to be time consuming and we have to spend some good quality time with the employer, learning about the employer. Right? So, hopefully, we've done that with a person with a disability through the discovery process. Now, we're doing this with a business. Learning about these business needs. Once again, it's not something that's going to happen in one day. Employers are going to need different days. Learning about the function of the business. Learning about the layers of the business. Learning how they operate.

Another employer said, you know what? They should do a level of hands on work them. So, they can understand the process. They understand what they're doing. What the business does, specifically. Then, the employer said, you know what? If we do some hands-on work or if we engage with the employer that there would be some accountability built into this. That the employment process would really understand what happens in the specific business.

There were a number of barriers. There are some things that we've seen in the past. This came from an employer that had some experience working with community using a traditional approach that has been something we have not liked or they have perceived as a barrier.

One of which is being too pushy and not really taking no as an answer so they were saying, as you were coming in and learning about a business, don't be pushy. If an employer isn't willing to work with the employment specialist, that's okay. There are other businesses out there that are going to be willing to work. They don't want folks that are too pushy. One of the businesses not asking what the business needs are.

Once again, runs counter to the customized employment process. We're not looking to fill positions. We're looking to create and customize jobs so an employer said, if you don't come in and ask, what can you do? What can an employment specialist do for you and how can we help your company? The

employer said they'll be more reluctant to work with an employment specialist so it, asking the best questions. How can we benefit you? How can we make this work? And how can we fulfill some needs that perhaps aren't being met and then align that to the strengths and interests of the person with the disability.

And this is a, this last one is a really interesting kind of barrier that we've seen until the literature over and over again. Rehabilitation provider using a traditional method to employment, said one of the things that really presented a barrier to continued relationship. Community rehabilitation provider didn't know the process themselves. We actually had a provider come in and speak to us, and that person didn't understand as well. When the team asked questions. So, once again, when we're thinking about this process and thinking about how we start to engage with employers, we need to ask targeted questions about the businesses, but we also have to be able to answer specific questions about what the process looks like. And about what we as a provider or we as an employment specialist can provide to the employer because they want specific information.

networking was a critical component that employers felt like was an important component of the customized employment process. Employers said, when we're networking or you're thinking about networking, we really want to hear from other employers who have customized in the past. They thought this was a really important piece and this would be one of the things that would really influence their decision to hire or customize a job for a person with a disability. If they saw it working in action.

And I think this kind of is a direct result of the employers only seeing a two minute or three minute video of the customized employment process and not fully understanding how it works and how it fits within their structures, might be better to have them interact with other employers who have done that. Employers want that information. They want to see how it works so they can see how that is conceptualized. Employer us think specialists would need to have some ask examples of past successes with other companies and show how they've worked with other companies.

So, you know, they basically want to see how this stuff works. Another employer said, I would like to see some form of videos that b kind of show how it works. So, this aligns with what people are already doing in terms of developing digital portfolios and showing people with disabilities performing in different contexts so we can show this to businesses and show how this process works. But, this is going

to require us to maintain our networks in local communities so we can ask a business, hey, I'm working with another business. Can I show. Can you talk about how customized employment has benefited your business?

Employers also said, you know what? It would be really important for employment specialists to engage in networking activities that businesses typically do, so, this would be attending chamber meetings. Or attending local employment advisory committees or so on and so forth. And they said, this isn't important to get jobs. We want to know these experiences. We want to learn how businesses engage. So, networking was an important thing.

And as I indicated earlier, communication was something that permeated all discussions related to that. We have to articulate firmly what we want to do simply because employers, when we're talking employers, typically work off job positions or creating positions and job announcements and here from a customized employment standpoint, we're doing the opposite, talking about a position that wasn't there before we started to engage with the employers. So, employers need to have this clear communication and need to clearly articulate what this process looks like for the employer and for the person with the disability.

So, the employment specialist in essence really serves as a liaison between the employer and the person with a disability and that employment specialist needs to really clearly convey what this process looks like. All of this, how a person is going to maintain those relationships. So, a couple of things the employer said that would be really helpful from a communication standpoint is to ensure once the placement has been made or once the job has been customized, is to ensure that the employment specialist really does regular check-ins so one of the things that they talked about in the focus groups is their concerns that if they customized a job for a person with a disability, that once they make that decision to customize a job that the employer wouldn't have any support to help, you know, make sure that the customized employee is doing the as negotiated.

So, they're like, we want the employment specialist to do regular check-ins, to conduct performance reviews, one employer said. To make sure that we're, that the person with a disability is actually meeting the unmet needs that were negotiated.

Another employer said, you know what? Come in and talk to us about after this decision has been made to customize a job and working with this person over however many months or however long and come in with this person about what are the specific challenges and have us identify what's working and not

working, and maintain lines ever communication so that that perch can maintain a job over a specific period of time so we want the person to continually engage in effective communication. Not just during negotiation but during job training and follow along and so on and so forth. We kind of do a summary with all of our candidates. And put together a summary about why this person is fit for the position.

So, they're saying they do this for people without disabilities and guess what? This is exactly what we should be doing in terms of customized employment, right? If we've done our discovery well enough U we've highlighted a person's strengths and interests as they relate to employment and then we need to clearly present that information to the employer. Say, this is what the person's strengths and interests are. We've identified some unmet needs that would benefit your business.

Another said, present the person, give something they enjoy. Present a positive profile and also talk about their weaknesses, because everybody in the employer talked about this. They said everybody has some weaknesses in terms of employment. They said, this is what we try to do anyway as we get new employees. We get people going. We start to realize what employees are good at. Some people are good at some things and others are terrible so you try to line up people with what their strengths are.

So, employers understand this idea of aligning people in a business based on their strengths and having them do tasks within that business based on their specific strengths and interests.

So, as an employment specialist, as we're engaged with the employer, it becomes incumbent upon that employment specialist to present this information in ways that the business understands and in ways that the, that convey the utility of customized employment.

Training was another theme that a rose and one of the things that the employers talked about is, they were like, we're concerned about working with people with disabilities. Concerned about working in particular with people with more significant disabilities and this is something that we see across the board that employers do have some reservations about supporting and working with people with disabilities, particularly those with more significant disabilities. The employers were like, this isn't a barrier. We just want to learn how to do it. We want to learn how to support a person with a disability. Learn how to interact with a person with a disability at the workplace. So, they're like, spend some

time talking about how to support or teaching someone at the business how to support a person with a disability.

Employers also talked about the idea of trying an employee out before bringing that person on full-time. This aligns with the idea of doing some job tryouts and having a person kind of try some tasks out at the business before they make a decision to hire that person or customize a long term job for the individual. And they talk about you, look, we do this for people without disabilities all the time. We call it a contract to hire scenario or maybe as we're talking about employees, we can start using the language they are talking about to convey how we're going to support a person with a disability from using this construct.

Employers also said, you know what? We want specific training on how to handle issues that they may not be comfortable in handling, right? So, they're like, just, you know, tell us how we work with certain situations and provide us that in depth training. Once again, this is going to require an employment specialist to really be able to communicate this information but also be really knowledgeable about all these areas of employment for people with disabilities from, you know, providing specific instruction. Then conveying that information to the employer about, this is how we can support a person with a disability on the job.

And then financial. There were some financial concerns that employers kind of addressed in terms of this customized employment process.

And I think as we started to review these financial concerns, a lot of these arose because employers didn't fully understand the customized employment process. So, employers really seemed to struggle with this, with the concept of customization and what this means for their business. So, a couple of these quotes from employers illustrate the struggle that these employers are having. One employer specifically said, we just don't have the funds to do it financially because we I do not have the extra padding or luxury for extra labor. So, I think this quote right here really illustrates that the employer may not fully understand what we're trying to do in terms of a customized job for a person with a disability.

They're thinking we are just going to have to spend jaw money and that we're not going to get any benefit from it and I think what we need to be really cognizant of when we're working with employers is to really convey this idea of, the employee is actually getting something done. That they're going to benefit from making a decision to customize a job for that person. Another person said, we can't just create a job. It has to do with forecasting and productivity as a company. This

quote came from a larger business from a corporation. They were concerned working in a larger corporation or businesses over 101 employees that there are certain channels that one has to go through in order to make, to hire a person with or without a disability.

And so, they're like, we have to use these certain channels, so it becomes more difficult to customize a job based on forecasting and so on and so forth. I think it aligns that it oftentimes is difficult to work with larger corporations because of some of these institutional barriers that present themselves and going through the channels to hire a person with a disability. This means that the employment specialist who is working with the disability really needs to can say information about what the employment process looks like from a business standpoint and how it can actually benefit the business rather than being a financial strain on the business.

So, what does all this mean? And some of the findings and implications for this study. As I indicated, it seems to me based on the small focus groups we did that employers don't fully understand this process. They don't fully understand the customized employment. This is from one employer. If the person did not have the capacity to do a specific task or to learn its task or required a lot of prompting to complete an employment task, the employer would not o customize that job for an individual. I think the employer might not understand. It might just be the result of not understanding the video.

If the person doesn't have the capacity to do a task or that person requires a lot of direct prompting or that they can't complete tasks, then that's not a customized job. We have to convey to the employer that it's not about a charity model or just putting somebody in there to do something they can't do, it's about aligning that person's strengths and interests.

So, the point is, if we don't have meaningful engagement during this customized employment process then this whole process will not work. So, employers will really reluctant to work with employment specialists who look for these quick placements. And we've seen this across the board in traditional models of employment and we're seeing this now with customized models of employment that we don't see engage and meaningfully engage and employers are just not willing to work with employment specialists.

And as I indicated earlier, communication is essential about how the supports are going to be tailored around the employer and individual with a disability so the person can perform the tasks as we negotiated those tasks.

So, specific recommendations, and what we are kind of playing around with and what we recommend in terms of building

these relationships with employers is we talked a lot about value propositions.

Businesses do this all the time. We talk about value propositions. Businesses use value propositions to engage customers and buy their goods and services w

I think we need to embed it in this idea and engage a paradigm. That we need to use these value propositions noshed to get employers to tap into our goods and services, strengths and interests of a person with a disability and how they with meet those unmet needs so employers have to see value in what we're trying to do.

And value means that we've done our discovery well enough. We've matched strength and interest to unmet needs and we can clearly convey this to the employer and clearly convey that we have a person with a disability who has these specific strengths and they're going to work in your business and they're going to provide value to the business.

Right? Provide some, they're going to meet some unmet need that the business, that the business needs in order to be more productive, right? So, this requires us to really spend a lot of time learning businesses and learning about the nuances of specific businesses so we can make those job matches. It's also going to require employment specialists to have that business acumen and I talked about this earlier. Understand how businesses operate. This is something that businesses articulate in the focus group, that we. They talked about the customized employment, using business terminology, terms that perhaps the business understands a little bit more effectively. And then networking. They said, you know, we have to be proficient at networking and learning about local communities and learning about the connections that businesses have in their local communities, and that's how wire going to start to identify customized employment opportunities. And finally follow up.

Employers across the board indicated that they would need some pretty consistent follow-up in order to make customized employment work exam business corporations to incorporate new tasks. As a person is working, maybe there's some other things that the customized employee can do to fulfill some unmet needs at the businesses as long as they align with the businesses and strengths of the employee. So, these basic recommendations are I think, can really add value to the customized employment process. Discussed in your study. First and foremost, the small numbers limit the generalizations that can be made. We only had ten employers that participate in the study so that really limits what we can generalize about these findings so we'd want to see maybe a larger sample, larger employee, sample,

down the road, so we can learn about what employers are thinking in the process. We didn't use a comparison group which would certainly improve the study. If we look at employers with and without customized experience and we can compare the two.

So, these are some of the limitations of the study. In terms of future research and what we're recommending is the future research should investigate the difference between employers with and without customized employment experiences and really, you know, examine the differences between these two employers. And when we're examining the findings of the study, some of the information repeat seem to represent information we've learned through traditional routes to employment, right? Some of these scenes that we're seeing, we kind of saw this supportive employment so on and so forth. So, in terms of future research, what we're recommending is that we provide perhaps some more, we won't have more than a three, four minute video on customized employment and then ask more targeted questions about customized employment process so we can really, really flush out what employers think will work and will not work in terms of the customized employment process.

So, I think this study provided some initial, exploratory information about the customized employment process and provides some good information about how employment specialists can better engage employers to start this customization process. And I think we still have a lot to learn about how we can effectively engage with employers as we start to learn more about this customized employment process and learn more about how to work with employers, small businesses, medium businesses and large corporations.

So, with that said, I thank you for your time, for the Webcast today, if you have specific questions, you can post them on the comment board and I will certainly answer any questions you have related to this study or the customized employment process. So, again, thank you for your time and I have appreciated presenting to you today.

>> Thanks, Tim. Now I will turn it over to Heidi and crystal to answer questions. So, thanks very much. There you go, Heidi, and crystal. So, great. Take it away, Heidi.

>> Hello, my video is not letting me log on to the video portion of it.

>> We can hear you, Crystal. That will be just fine.

>> Okay.

>> Heidi, for some reason, I can see that your microphone is working but I'm not hearing you. Still not -- oh, maybe. Talk -- Heidi, can you say a couple words?

>> HEIDI DECKER-MAURER: Hi, can you hear me now? Fantastic. I must have accidentally set my microphone to a

different music phone. But, anyway, here we are. Thanks, everybody for joining us. Seems Tim packed a lot of information into that one hour. We have a little time for some questions. We don't have anything in the Q&A box right now but if anybody has any specific questions about the content of the webinar, we have some time for you to ask that if you could please type your question into the question and answer box, we'd be glad to take a look at the question and see if we can answer it today.

If we run out of time for the questions, we certainly will write down any extra ones that are going to go beyond our time.

Right now, I don't have any queued and waiting but I wanted to ask you, crystal. What have your experiences been with customized employment? Is there anything that you wanted to share having to do with Tim's presentation.

>> Sure. I think customized employment has come down to that networking piece. The really using it, who I know has a job opening at their company or a family member that knows a local employer at their business and really having that strong discovery with a client that can match the needs of what the business is looking for, has been my experience.

>> It sounds to me, one of the things that Tim brought up was spending time getting to know the employers. That does take a lost time, but, a lot of things having to do with any kind of helping people get jobs is developing relationships with people so would you say that it kind of comes down to making sure that you have relationships in place and that you're building them as you go so that you don't get caught up when someone is trying to get a job and you maybe don't have relationships with people who provide the kind of jobs that you're looking for.

>> Yes, I definitely feel that that piece is important. As far as the job, it does take time to build that rapport but we do find that taking the time to make that relationship is important. It's going to lead to longer success, which is going to be less time, maybe possibly going through that resolving door of finding a job but not being happy and having to look for another job. So, the time that you put in is just crucial in the long run.

>> That kind of makes sense. A lot of efforts mean a lot of work on the front end but then they payoff later so it sounds like this is one of those situations where, as long as you're. Build on those relationships, it's going to make it easier for both you and your clients to find and keep employment.

>> Yes. Very much so.

>> HEIDI DECKER-MAURER: Well, I think that h log let's see. No, I don't have any questions yet. Crystal, can you talk about examples of folks that you've helped with or customized

employment that you know about or have had good success with some of these, working out the relationships with employers and then making sure that they can help any of the people, the consumers who are looking for jobs. Do you know about any specific examples?

>> I can give a specific example. This placement was made over the summer here in Richmond through VCU. And the employment specialist that made the placement had a good friend that worked in the design for a new home community and a showroom and it took a lot of stocking, someone that came in, want to match certain floor pieces to certain wall papers and really just taking the items, prepare for the next customer to come in and make their selections for their new home.

And she simply was telling the employment specialist this and she said, you know, you work with people who do stocking. Do you have anyone who is really fast at stocking and can pay great attention to detail. And a job developed out of it and the employer is happy. The employees that were currently working there have spent time building relationships while the young lady that was hired is able to put back and give the prep room and the showroom ready for the next person.

So, it's beneficial to the company.

>> HEIDI DECKER-MAURER: That's kind of going to what Tim was saying. You can't make up a job but if you find a need. They can't make up a job because it sounds cool but if a need is discovered, a value add is discovered, it sounds like it can create a really good fit or opportunity for somebody to do a job that they're good at. The businesses would have to be developed and go by what the larger corporation syces.

So, in her experience, it seems that what a customized position, they're willing to do on the smaller business end so they can interface with people but corporate seems to hinder the process.

Are there any insights you could lend to maybe working or getting either corporate to sign off on a local franchise or giving permission or have you run into anything like that in your experience.

>> What we've found, there's a lot of human resources, rules and regulations and sometimes we're not able to put a face to that. But, if we're able to go up as far as we can on the chain and the chain of command and usually, someone knows someone in human resources and you just kind of keep networking and pushing to the next step and also because we've been forming relationships, we've been able to tie that back to other employers. Where they were able to meet with ABC. This helps other corporations to see, if they managed to do it we can speak with our HR and figure it out, too. Really, that employer

example, just finding it can be hard. If you can find an employer that is willing to talk to their managers and their CEOs and get someone in HR to have a meeting, that's usually a good starting point and then once you have the corporate relationship there, you can use that example to build others in the community.

>> HEIDI DECKER-MAURER: That definitely seems to be the case. Especially when we're talking about strategies or building community partnerships. Once people see that it can be done, they're more willing to extend themselves a little further because they see an example where something maybe they haven't heard of before, it actually works for someone. I think that all of us, any of us in any field, like to see some of the any now strategies or any new practices kind of demonstrated and shown to be successful kind of being the person who does the experience. So, I'm glad you've had good success with your organizations there in Richmond.

It's got to be difficult to kind of keep plugging away and get further and further up that chain but it seems like, again, building that relationship is worth the effort. If seems like for you, mercy has opened up opportunities aces you've gone further and further up that ladder and it seems to have opened up possibilities.

Well, thank you, Nicky for asking a question. Let's see, I don't have another question waiting right now. Typically, we talk a little bit with our expert about their experiences with some of the things that happened or were discussed in the webinar and we also like to answer your questions, but if there aren't any more questions, then we can go ahead and wrap up the session.

But, I want to keep it open. Does anyone else have any questions before we go?

All right. I'm going to send out -- I'm going to send out the link again for the CRC credits and also for links to today's Webcast so you can re-watch or, you know, share with any of your colleagues if you would like to. You will be receiving an email tomorrow that will talk a little bit more about the CRCs so we do have a link so folks can follow or copy that link right now before we can sign off today but thank you so much everybody for joining us. And Terry, I'm going to turn it back over to you. Of

>> Great. Thanks, Heidi. Thanks, crystal. A couple of things. Quickly, Heidi, you'll get something tomorrow. It will probably take us a week or so to get the webinar posted. For those of you that watch captioning, we just like to double check that everything lines up on the un captioning so this recording, it probably will be a week or so.

Like to invite everybody to join us next week if you're able. Continuing our customized employment theme, representative from Griffin Hammis will talk about the fidelity scale. So, please join us next week. Thanks for joining us today and we are done. Good-bye everybody and thanks very much. Wait, there's a question there, Heidi. Real quick. Oops. Yeah, take yourself off mute.

>> HEIDI DECKER-MAURER: It was a thank you. And Mona, thank you for joining us, too.

>> Okay. Great. Well, thanks, everybody and we hope to see you tomorrow or at our future webinars. Good-bye.

(Session was concluded at 12:18 PM CT)
