



Instructional Design & Training for a Diversified Workforce

Job Development Boot Camp™

*Creating Amazing Possibilities in the Workplace
for People with Developmental Disabilities*

(Key words: Job development, job carving, customized employment, marketing)

By Mindy Oppenheim

Here I am again in your town, presenting my Job Development Boot Camp™ workshop for the same agencies I trained one-and-a-half years ago. The attendees appear to be an entirely new group of job developers. What happened to the last batch? Promoted? Burned out? In new jobs? What impact does this turnover have on job seekers, families, communities, and program outcomes?

The following job development model is built around the premise that job development is competitive and turnover is high. I call this model my “6 P’s of Job Development.” The model provides a structure for teaching new job developers.

In addition, the model provides a structure for managing the job development function in an organization. By looking at your program outcomes you can determine which one of the “P’s” needs to be “tweaked.” The “6 P’s” are: Positioning; Prospecting; Preparation; Presentation; Proposal; and for lack of a better “P”; Power Close.

What is ‘Positioning’?

A successful job development program is structured to transcend staff changes and individual staff/employer relationships. The goal is that when a new job developer is hired, he or she will hit the ground running with excellent marketing materials, organizational support (i.e. access to board of directors and executive director), an employer “hot list,” and an easy-to-use database of all employers who have hired from your program in the last five years. (I’m referring to software such as Outlook, GoldMine, Act! etc.)

In positioning, a new job developer may be looking at their caseload thinking, “*Where’s the beef? I don’t think I have anything an employer needs.*” The best way to begin is to list all of the resources and services that you and your organization offer to employers. These resources and services are what set you apart from your competition and every job seeker in the community. Your resources and services add value to business. Programs that deliver resources and services are rewarded with multiple placements, referrals to other businesses, advice regarding industry trends, marketing strategies, and others.

Examples of resources and services include: job-site accommodation and modification, training and job-coaching services, in-service training (disability awareness, stress management, etc.), and job analysis and customizing jobs for efficiency (customized employment). Your organization may offer employers physical space to interview candidates, on-the-job training dollars, Work Opportunity Tax Credits, architectural tax credits, and information on the *Americans with Disabilities Act*. The list could be longer depending on your agency and the people in it. These are your value-added services. Think of the Verizon commercials: When an employer hires one of your candidates, they are also getting an entire support package.

Positioning begs the question, “What do employers think when they think of your organization?” Do employers think, “*Great source for entry-level high-turnover employees,*” or are they thinking, “*poor pitiful people, we’ll send the organization a donation?*” Some organizations send mixed messages to the

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community. Job developers pitch, *"We've got competent, qualified, capable workers."* The problem is -- the employer just received a solicitation in the mail asking for donations so Bobby can take the bus to his 10-minute-a-month volunteer position.

Your position statement should be catchy, memorable, and relate to what is important to employers. This is your "elevator pitch." Picture yourself in an elevator with the president of the largest employer in your town. You've got 60 seconds. Don't blow it!

Understanding Positioning

Understanding positioning is critical. If you are making a lot of contacts but not closing **for a** presentation meeting or job analysis, you may be up against a bad reputation. You may be hearing from employers, *"We worked with your agency (or one like yours) in the past and it didn't work,"* or, *"We already have two of 'those types' of workers, and we don't want anymore."*

Positioning occurs in the mind of the employer. People only accept facts that match prior information. If you argue or disagree, you are unintentionally calling the prospect a liar, attacking his or her belief system, and probably shutting the sale down (note when your prospect looks at his/her watch or becomes distracted). It's an immutable law of marketing that the mind only accepts that which matches prior knowledge or experience.

This means we have to "retie" existing connections or create new ones. Remember, you can't change a person's mind once it's already made up. *"Don't confuse me with facts – I'm on information overload!"* Xerox spent **\$1 billion** in marketing to get people to think "Xerox=computers." What do *you* think of when you think of Xerox?

We need to create a consistent, positive message that will stick in the minds of your prospects. Look at your program and ask yourself questions like, *"What are we great at?"* *"What are we the leaders in?"* As a rule, if we can't save time, money, make them look good, or increase their customer base and satisfaction – why would employers want to do business with us?

Here are some elevator pitch examples: *"We will save you time and money on hiring, training and retaining qualified individuals,"* *"We're number one for employee retention,"* *"We're your one-stop for all your hiring needs,"* or, *"Voted best job matchers in the universe."*

Prospecting

Once you've defined what it is you're selling, the next question is: *"Who needs it?"* Taking into account your resources, services, and current pool of workers, what types of employers are most likely to hire them? This is a great activity to do with your entire staff. Include accountants, secretaries, and vendors. Bribe them with food! Ask the group the question, *"What types of employers are most likely to hire and partner with our agency?"* The goal is to get everyone to buy in to your idea. Here are some examples:

- Employers who've hired your job seekers previously;
- Employers with high turnover;
- Employers with flexible schedules;
- Employers that will benefit from the Work Opportunity Tax Credit (WOTC);
- Employers without employee assistance programs (EAPs);
- Friends and family;
- Board members;

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- Green, and other socially responsible and community-minded businesses (i.e., The Ronald McDonald House, Target giving 5% back to the community, etc.);
- Businesses that value diversity;
- Vendors;
- Religious organizations; and
- Businesses that market to your demographic (i.e., drug companies).

Now that you have a list of different *types* of businesses -- as a group, you should list *specific names* of businesses. Your list should include the name of the business and the reason why this is a good prospect. Maybe it's a staff person's personal contact, or the business has high turnover. Don't forget to write down this connection because this is a potential pitch (after further research) for when you approach the business. For instance: "*You've got high turnover, we can help,*" "*You're a socially responsible community-minded business – we want to partner with companies like yours,*" or, "*We buy \$50 million in office supplies a year from your company, we expect a quid pro quo*" (e.g. an equal exchange or substitution).

Developing and operating from a prospecting "hot list" will save job developers time, energy, gas, and reduce rejection and possible burnout. Before making a contact with an employer ask yourself, "*What makes this employer a good prospect?*"

Now that the job developer is armed with a compelling position statement, a list of value-added resources and services, and a "hot list" of employer prospects. The next step is to research the company and prepare for presentation and proposal meetings. You'll also need a networking/marketing plan.

The goal is to schedule a presentation meeting with the person(s) in the company with the power to say, "*Yes*" to job carving and customized employment – forming a partnership of sorts with your agency. Until I am in front of the "*yes*" person I focus on research and recognizance and do **not** try to close (yet) for specific jobs.

Getting to the 'Yes' Person

We've all heard the saying, "*It's not what you know, it's who you know.*" This is especially true for job developers, who must develop and maintain a network of industry decision makers that offer opportunities for your job-seeking clients. These are the influential people who will help you navigate their company and refer you to their contacts. But before you develop a marketing plan, you must first get a snapshot of your current pool of workers.

Start with a simple matrix. A matrix is a visual organizer of *who's looking for what job*. First, list your job seekers on the side of a piece of paper (use initials or numbers to protect client confidentiality), and the types of jobs across the top. Next, place check marks in the small boxes provided.

In addition to a pocket copy, you may write the same information on a white board or flip chart. Either way, the matrix will give you a "big picture" of everyone's caseload. Moreover, since you never know where job leads will come from, a matrix will keep you from missing out on opportunities when you walk into potential job sites.

Once the job matrix is done, it's time to sketch out a marketing plan. You'll need to create another matrix – this time with staff names down the side and the following categories across the top:



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- 1) **Memberships** -- Based on your current caseload, which *single* organization will yield the most relevant contacts? Kiwanis? Lions? Rotary? Others? Joining isn't enough -- you must *actively* participate and develop relationships. It's also a good idea to be "connected" to a local chapter of SHRM (Society of Human Resource Management) and/or other professional associations.
- 2) **Presentations** -- Besides the organization you'll participate in, consider getting on the agenda of relevant organizations and associations. Attending one per quarter, per staff person, is a reasonable goal. Develop a presentation that educates and informs, such as local employment projections, workforce demographics, community disability statistics, etc. It would also be impressive if an organizational member could provide a testimonial as to how your services saved their business time, money, and made them look good. Bring some job seekers with you, too. A picture is worth a thousand words.
- 3) **Advertising** -- Advertise with the organizations and associations you've established a relationship with via their websites, newsletters, etc. Consider other creative advertising outlets: buses, creative leave-behinds (my business card is a pack of Forget-Me-Not seeds), and participation in community events are just a few ideas. I was recently in Salt Lake City and drove by a billboard that said, "Don't disABILITY." What a great message!
- 4) **Media** -- Get a feature article about your program, a worker who overcame adversity, and/or a successful employer partner, in print or on the air at least twice a year. The publicity will benefit the business *and* your program. Create a portfolio with these articles to impress future prospects!
- 5) **Special events** -- Host an event that will attract your target prospects. The key is to be the person the employers have to call. This is another great way to establish relationships and credibility. Examples include career fairs, Business Advisory Committee meetings, training events, and golf tournaments.
- 6) **Internet** -- Create a website that employers will use as a resource, such as information on tax credits, the *Americans with Disabilities Act*, etc. Develop an online newsletter, email blasts, or post job seekers' resumes online.

These are just a few ideas to position and publicize your program, and create a presence in the community. I encourage agencies to choose one or two activities in each of these six areas, and update them periodically based on job seekers' needs.

The Presentation Meeting

You're now ready to make your pitch to a business. Dana Burns, HR Director for Executive Placement at Charles Schwabb, advises job developers to come to this meeting prepared (i.e. research the company, set up an informational interview, take a company tour, etc). The goal is to have the following questions answered before making a formal presentation with the "Yes" person.

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- Number of employees;
- Types of jobs;
- Company mode (growing, in trouble, etc.);
- Identify the “Yes” person;
- Company culture;
- Goals that support your proposal (i.e. a corporate mission statement might include the need to give back to the community);
- Which of your value-added services the company may be interested in; and
- List of job seekers you are targeting for this company.

Is HR My Point of Contact?

HR is paid to put square pegs in square holes. This is fine if you have square pegs, but job development often involves outside-the-box thinking. HR may not have the authority to approve customized employment, but hopefully they can help you get to the right person. Also, remember that you have resources and services that will benefit HR, such as in-service trainings, information on the *ADA*, worksite accommodations, etc.

The Presentation Meeting

You’ve made it to the “Yes” person and possibly other influential people at the company. If you’ve done your research, your message will be simple, memorable, interesting, and relevant to their needs. A skillful job developer learns to ask the right questions to get them to talk about their business and subsequently ask for your resources and services. Come prepared with a list of questions, and be ready to address *each* individual’s job-related needs if multiple people are involved in the meeting.

A Valuable Lesson

Unless there is a positive opening and some familiarity with your program, don’t talk about job carving, customized employment, etc. Trying to sell these concepts at an initial presentation meeting is a huge turnoff to employers. Instead, your goal should be to close the presentation meeting with an invitation to conduct a job analysis and to pitch your proposal.

A **job analysis** is your ticket into the company to learn about the work culture, see the jobs, discover work that’s not getting done, tasks people would love to give up, and other aspects of the business that will create opportunities for job carving and customized employment.

To discuss a **proposal**, ask: *“If I can save your business time, money, make you look good, increase your customer base and/or customer satisfaction – MAY I WRITE YOU A PROPOSAL?”*
“Wonderful, can we meet again next Friday?”

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The Proposal

A *proposal meeting*, not a *presentation meeting*, is when prospective employers will expect creative, outside-the-box ideas – especially if you can prove you can save them time and money! A proposal should be short, concise, and include: 1) the prospective employer's main needs, goals, and priorities; 2) your approach to providing a solution; 3) the features and functions of your approach; 4) how the benefits of your approach will meet their needs; and 5) any other features and benefits the prospective employer will gain by working with you.

In summary, effective job developers teach businesses how to eliminate various workplace barriers. Job developers offer valuable resources and services. Businesses need you!

Mindy J. Oppenheim, M.Ed., provides staff training and technical assistance for supported employment, rehabilitation, school-to-work transition, and welfare-to-work programs internationally. For more information on Mindy's trainings, contact her at (415) 345-1780, SETraining@yahoo.com, or visit www.staffdevelopment.net for resources and upcoming training opportunities.