



Facilitating Job Site Training and Supports

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Facilitating Job Site Training and Supports: The Evolving Role of the Job Coach

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Since the advent of supported employment, the job coach has played a key role in assisting people with severe disabilities to get and keep a job. The quality of the employment services provided to the worker and the employer often depends on the quality of the provider, in particular, the job coach. The overall function of the job coach has been to serve as facilitator of supports and as a technician to implement a variety of technical skills. For the purpose of this chapter we use the term job coach (also known as employment specialist, employment training specialist, of employment consultant) as the person who provides direct services on the work site.

A great deal of attention has been given to the technical skills required by the job coach on how to implement job site training strategies (Brooke, Inge, Armstrong, and Wehman, 1997; Fussell and Petty, 1998; Grossi, Regan, and Regan, 1998; McLoughlin, Garner, and Callahan, 1987; Moon, Inge, Wehman, Brooke, and Barcus, 1990). Job site technical skills include but are not limited to, job site analysis, orienting the worker to the new work environment, establishing and finalizing job site duties, establishing a training schedule, conducting a task analysis of the job duties, and establishing an instructional program. The instructional program may include using systematic instructional techniques, natural cues, compensatory strategies, reinforcement strategies, data collection procedures, teaching self-management strategies and social skills, assistive technology, and fading from the work site while monitoring the worker's productivity and social inclusion.

Each of the above references provides information on the "how tos" of implementing the technical skills. In addition to the technical skills, job coaches must possess effective facilitation and consultation skills. The focus of this chapter will be on the role of the job coach as a facilitator of supports and considerations when implementing the technical skills.

Research suggests that employees with disabilities who have more typical employment status as compared to workers without disabilities in the same workplace are more likely to be better integrated and have higher earnings (Mank, Cioffi, and Yovanoff, 1997a, 1997b, 1998). How individuals acquire jobs, the similarity of the work role to co-workers without disabilities, and the orientation and training process are associated with better integration and wage outcomes (Mank, et al., 1997b). Mank and his colleagues found that the best predictors of higher wages were the typicalness of the total compensation package (work schedules, work roles, number of hours worked) and the typicalness of the orientation and training process of the supported employee. The best predictors of better social integration were the similarity of work roles to co-workers, work schedule, and number of hours worked weekly. Results of this research have implications for the job coach and other supported employment practitioners on the way services are provided.

Throughout the employment process the job coach must ask one question: "Is this what typi-

cally happens in this work setting?” When the answer is “no,” the job coach must remember that he or she may be compromising an employment outcome for the supported employee. When a typical feature in the workplace is compromised, one might have to work doubly hard to enhance another outcome such as social integration.

Believing Is Seeing

The communication and behavior of job coaches on the work site often demonstrate their values in supporting individuals with severe disabilities in integrated employment settings. Organizations or supported employment programs often state their core values by posting them on a wall or inserting them into annual reports. There must be more than lip service given to these values. Job coaches must know that their organization and program are completely committed to their values.

Furthermore, the job coach must also be committed to and know his or her own core values about people with disabilities’ right to work. Job coaches must reflect and decide what they truly believe. Do people with severe disabilities have a right to choose, to take responsibility, and to be integrated in all aspects of life? Do people with severe disabilities have the ability to learn, to be empowered to make decisions about their own life, and know that there are supports naturally available to all people, including people with disabilities? Do people with disabilities have something to offer their communities? Although many job coaches generally may respond favorably to these questions, the real test is how they respond to the questions for the people they serve individually.

Core values are often demonstrated while facilitating supports and interacting with supervisors, co-workers, and other stakeholders. So, if job coaches “believe” in the values, then others will “see” it.

The Job Coach as a Facilitator

Effective facilitation involves developing positive working relationships with all stakeholders. There are several skills a good facilitator should possess. One of the key responsibilities of the job coach at the work site is to facilitate the training process and social interactions, and to share in the problem solving and decision making. Effective job coaches are aware of all of the stakeholders’ wishes, interests, needs, and objectives in the employment process and serve as a negotiator and facilitator to promote employment outcomes and social integration. Stakeholders include people with disabilities, family members, employers, co-workers, funding agencies, and other service providers.

The first step is for job coaches to explicitly share their role during the employment process, both on and off the job site. In order for job coaches to facilitate the employment process on the job site, they must listen, empower, support, coach, teach, collaborate, and build consensus for decisions with all stakeholders. In addition to the facilitation skills, the job coach must be a skilled trainer who clearly understands and demonstrates the technical skills (e.g., systematic instruction, reinforcement, and natural cues). A skilled trainer learns when to teach and be the content expert, and when to step back and facilitate (Rees, 1991). For the job coach, this may involve having to teach the supported employee directly while modeling the strategies for the co-workers, then stepping back and allowing the co-workers to instruct the employee.

One of the job coach’s key roles as a facilitator is to create an atmosphere of openness and trust with the employer and co-workers to encourage commitment and ownership with the supported employee. It is essential the employer view the supported employee as their employee and not that of the supported employment agency. Equally important is for the supported employee to feel openness and trust with the employer, co-workers, and job coach. The atmosphere must be one in which all stakeholders contribute to the employment process. Job coaches must take the responsibility for making relationships with all stakeholders work.

A job coach will use a number of skills at varying times to facilitate the job site training and supports for supported employees. Some of the critical facilitation skills needed for job coaches

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include communication, listening, observation, negotiating, discovering, and exploring.

Communication Skills

Communication skills include what people say and do, and how they listen. Good skills in this area are the foundation to building positive working relationships with all stakeholders. Both verbal and nonverbal communication techniques convey a message to the recipients. Each of the stakeholders may have different wants, needs, and attitudes during the employment process. To develop positive working relationships with all stakeholders, job coaches must understand good communication techniques. They must also understand how different wants and needs of the various stakeholders can cause barriers to conveying or receiving the right message. Real communication is a product of trust (Blanchard, 1999).

Verbal Techniques

Good verbal communication skills means that people say what they mean and comprehend the feedback from others. While the majority of our gathering verbal information is through questions, we can often inhibit information-gathering through asking the wrong type of questions, asking too many questions, or narrowing the opportunity to gather information. The employer or other stakeholders may view the job coach as the “expert” rather than as a facilitator or consultant if close attention is not paid to communication skills and how questions are asked. It is important that job coaches help build a support network and use the “expertise” from all team members or stakeholders. Understanding the question-answer pattern (or information-gathering pattern) is critical in opening the door to effective verbal communication.

There is a difference between open questions and closed ones, or direct and indirect questions. If we want to broaden the scope of information we receive, and solicit views and opinions of others, then we have to carefully choose how we ask questions and why we ask questions (Benjamin, 1984). Consider the difference in the following pairs of questions:

- It felt great to work on the first day of your job, didn't it?
- How did you feel after the first day on your job?
- Would you like to join your co-workers in the lunchroom today?
- It's possible to join your co-workers for lunch today. What would you like to do?
- Are you feeling comfortable with the tasks you have learned today?
- Tell me how comfortable you feel about the tasks you have learned today.

Good verbal communication techniques include:

- Asking open-ended questions. Not allowing people to just respond to “yes” or “no” questions. Questions must ask for information, an idea, a reaction, or an opinion by beginning with “what,” “why,” “how,” or “who.” Open-ended questions help with clarification and understanding.
Example: “Why do you think Tom is having problems?”
- Encourage more responses by using phrases such as “describe,” “tell me,” or “explain.” Ask for specific examples.
Example: “Tell me what Tom does when you think he is off-task?”
- Respond positively to the co-workers’ or supervisors’ contributions. One of the most powerful teaching tools available is positive reinforcement. While being genuine, positive reinforcement can go a long way.
Example: “That’s a great idea. Let’s try it.”
- Paraphrasing for clarity and understanding. Here the job coach may want to check the understanding of all stakeholders and to ensure all stakeholders clearly and correctly understand your message.
Example: “If I understand you, you are saying . . .”

Nonverbal Techniques

Nonverbal behavior tells the other stakeholders that you are attentive and interested in their ideas and opinions. Much of our communication with others is nonverbal. This behavior is displayed through body movement, facial expressions, gestures, and tone of voice. Nonverbal behavior or body language can either strengthen or hurt communication. Through careful observation of our nonverbal communication, we can determine if our words match our actions.

For example, if we are teaching a task to an individual and deliberately walk away from the individual, this may give a nonverbal message such as “now I want you to do the task independently.” Likewise, a slight frown from the individual or, even more extreme, reaching out for us and grabbing our hands, may in return tell us that they are not ready or sure of what we are expecting.

Paying attention to the person talking is often associated with good listening. Giving eye contact and turning your body toward the person are ways to encourage attention. People often nod their heads in agreement to show understanding. Distracting movements often display a lack of attentiveness as well as playing with an item, looking away, rattling papers, or reading other items.

Gestures or facial expressions are also important. Smiles tend to encourage and relax people and help them to feel comfortable to express their ideas and opinions. The gestures you display can also communicate approval or disapproval, interest and attention or lack of it, uncertainty or reassurance, and conflict or doubt.

How a person sits or stands also affects communication. Placing oneself at eye level with the person you are speaking to can communicate to the person that you are on an equal level and open to listening, and not just instructing. Developing an open and accepting stance and position as you communicate assists in ensuring that you are perceived as open and receptive, as opposed to rigid and closed minded.

What we say is just as important as what we don't say. Good listeners should know when to pause, wait, and say nothing (Rees, 1991). During conversations, silence also allows others to process and organize their thoughts.

Listening Skills

Job coaches can encourage openness and trust by showing all stakeholders that their opinions are valued and they are willing to listen to them. Many of the nonverbal techniques are signs of good listening, e.g., attentiveness, facial expression, and gestures. When job coaches use good listening skills with any or all of the stakeholders, three types of skills are often used (Heller, 1998):

1. Empathizing: getting information in a supportive and helpful way. The job coach who empathizes will imagine himself or herself in the other person's position, trying to understand what they are thinking, feeling, and experiencing.

Understanding Mary's Behavior

Paige, the job coach, notices that Mary, a supported employee, changes when a male co-worker named Tom enters her work area. She is not as pleasant and friendly with Tom as with other co-workers. When Paige asked Mary if there was any problem, Mary became very quiet and shrugged her off. Knowing this is an unusual response, Paige talked to Mary after work at a nearby restaurant.

Mary stated she really likes her job and shared that she has several co-workers that she enjoys being around and that are very helpful. Paige assured Mary she is there to provide her support if there are any problems at the work site. Mary indicated that she was afraid of Tom because on another day at work he had cornered her in her work area and had told her how “cute” she was. She did not want to lose her job so she did not tell anyone and is trying not to be friendly to him so that he will not bother her anymore. Paige realized how frightening this must have been for Mary. Together, they talked about ways to handle the situation and steps to take if this male co-worker continued to make advances toward

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her.

2. Analyzing: seeking concrete information while trying to separate fact from emotion. Seek clues from people's answers and use the responses to help you form the next set of questions.

Looking at a Bigger Picture

Mr. Green, the employer at Ed's Old Fashioned Market, contacted Mark, the job coach, and stated he had a problem that needed to be resolved immediately. He shared that earlier that day a customer saw the supported employee, Tony, taking a candy bar without paying for it. Mr. Green asked the cashier if Tony had bought a candy bar that day and was told that Tony had paid only for his lunch. Mr. Green confronted Tony about this accusation. Tony admitted he had taken a candy bar and ate it without paying for it. Mr. Green told Tony he had to pay for items in the store. Tony understood and paid for the candy bar. Once this was resolved, Mr. Green assured Tony that he was otherwise doing a good job in his position, so he was not fired.

From this interaction, Mark was able to form additional questions such as:

- What exactly happened or what did the customer exactly see when the employee was stealing the candy bar?
- What was the company policy on theft?
- What would the employer do if another employee stole from the store?
- Did he think the employee was aware of what he was doing?
- Did he think other employees were aware of the incident?
- How did he feel about terminating the supported employee?
- Did he know that by not terminating the supported employee based upon company policy, what the effects would be for the other employees as well as for the consequences of his actions?

3. Synthesizing: guiding the communication exchange toward an objective or a desired result, is the final step. This also involves making statements to which others can respond with ideas. Answers to others' remarks should be given in a way that suggests which ideas can be enacted and how they can be implemented.

Getting to the Root of the Problem

Michelle states she would like to have a job in the community. Her father, who is her legal guardian, says that if this is what she wants, he is supportive. But each time a possible job opportunity is presented to Michelle and her father, Michelle states that she would like to accept the position but her father finds some objection to the employment. These objections vary, such as "too far from home," "not a good company to work for," "the work environment is not what type of environment he wants his daughter in," etc. The job coach, Anne, notes these objections each time and then attempts to find a job site that is within the limitations that the father has provided.

After additional rejections, Anne realizes that there is some underlying reason for Michelle's father not allowing her to accept any employment offers. Unable to get the father to provide the specific reasons, Anne decides that prior to developing another job opportunity, she should have a meeting to determine what kind of employment both the woman and her father would accept.

During the meeting, Anne states that the reason for the meeting is to develop a plan to assist Michelle in securing employment in a work site that meets both her and her father's desires. She will need their open and honest input in order to reach this goal. Anne offers many scenarios of possible jobs. On each scenario the father agrees to the employment site outcome, but questions the earnings. Anne is able to pick up on this question and then

begins to discuss how much Michelle and her father would like to see her earn in employment. Within a very short time, Anne is able to discover that the underlying concern the father has about Michelle obtaining employment is the effect that her earnings would have on her Social Security benefits. Anne is then able to provide information on Social Security and work incentives.

Observation Skills

One should be keenly aware of all the ways people communicate verbally and nonverbally while reflecting back to what is being observed. In this way, we can determine if our perceptions of the situation are accurate. Part of active listening is “listening with your eyes, ears, and heart.” Keen observation skills include attending to words, volume or tone of the voice, expressions, mannerisms, and the emotional state of the messenger.

For the supported employee who communicates without words, for those who use words and symbols in a unique way, or those who communicate through their behavior, the job coach must use not only active listening skills (attention to detail, empathy, etc.) but also must make use of keen observation skills. The job coach must also assist co-workers and supervisors in learning the individual’s means of communication.

Take a Closer Look

When Jenny came to work one day, she immediately tried telling her co-workers something. But due to Jenny’s poor communication skills, her co-workers weren’t sure what she was trying to tell them. After several minutes, both the co-workers and Jenny gave up trying to communicate. Throughout the day the co-workers had a great deal of difficulty keeping Jenny working, following directions, and staying in her work area. At one point, Jenny fell to the floor and refused to get up.

Knowing Jenny tried to tell them something earlier, the co-workers began asking Jenny a number of questions about home and work. After a long period of time, they figured out that Jenny didn’t know who was going to pick her up from work. Later, they found out that her mother told her that “somebody will be there but I’m not sure whom yet.” Jenny was worried about who was picking her up and her behavior reflected her concerns.

Negotiating Skills

Negotiating involves two or more parties who each have something that the other wants, and is an attempt to achieve a mutually acceptable solution. Negotiating should not result in a winner and a loser. It is a process that ends with a satisfying conclusion (win/win) or a failure for both sides (lose/lose). Negotiating is based upon the attempt to reconcile a good result for both parties. To achieve a win/win situation, you must be prepared and flexible. Hindle (1998) describes the core skills for successful negotiations. These include the ability to:

- define a range of objectives, yet be flexible with some of them,
- explore the possibilities of a wide range of options,
- prepare well,
- listen to and question other parties, and
- prioritize clearly.

We Can Work It Out

Frank, a prospective supported employee, was referred to Jan for job placement. Like many people with disabilities, Frank had numerous service providers involved in his services, (residential advisor, vocational rehabilitation counselor, case manager, day activity director, and interested family members). Each of these interested parties had similar but different ideas about what would be best for Frank. Frank also had his own opinion of what he wanted to accomplish. His interests were to work as an executive in an office.

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All agreed with Frank that community employment would be beneficial, yet each of the parties had different interests regarding how his support needs should be met once he was employed. Jan, his support coordinator, prepared a plan for effective negotiation during his interdisciplinary team meeting that included person-centered goals, and addressed Frank's support needs.

With Frank, the team, and his family, Jan reviewed all of Frank's critical support needs and solicited input from all of the team members. By prioritizing critical needs, the team was able to identify a wide range of options to meet his needs once he was employed. When concerns were raised, Jan solicited ideas from the group to address concerns. Each time ideas were suggested, Jan checked with Frank to clarify if these ideas were suitable to him. When Frank raised a concern, Jan worked with the team to explore other ideas. Finally, the group prioritized the most important issues to support Frank's employment and community living. These were reviewed with Frank and written as part of his employment plan. Through this process, Jan was able to facilitate an effective negotiation that focused on person-centered supports for Frank.

Discovering and Exploring

An interactive process involves keenly observing, actively listening, and providing life experience opportunities to learn the individual's likes, dislikes, preferences, desires, and dreams. This process also includes careful evaluation and planning on supporting the individual in how and where they want to work. In order to discover and explore, the job coach must spend time with the supported employee, using all the skills described above to ensure proper supports can be established and goals can be reached. Additionally, person-centered planning approaches will help uncover who the individual is and the possibilities that are available or can be created to help the individual achieve his or her dreams and aspirations.

Beyond the Technical Skills

Throughout the employment process, the job coach balances the needs of the supported employee and the employer. The importance of understanding and demonstrating the technical skills involved in job site training cannot be overemphasized. However, over the years through our own experiences and reports from other supported employment providers, we have learned there is more to job site training and support than just implementing the technical skills. This section describes issues, concerns, and general considerations for the job coach while providing the on-site support.

Public Impressions: Job Coaches as Community Ambassadors

It is often said that the first five seconds of any first meeting are more important than the next five minutes. Paying attention to detail during this time can make a huge difference in developing a positive impression. As a job coach providing job site training and support, the impressions made to co-workers and supervisors, as well as the other stakeholders, can be a critical element for the success of the supported employee. The job coach becomes a "marketing tool" for both the supported employee they serve and the agency they represent. While grooming and appropriate clothing are a given, many job coaches must remember they are role models for appropriate social interactions between co-workers and the supported employee. Interacting with the supported employee with respect and dignity as well as communicating core values and beliefs will demonstrate to the co-workers how the supported employee is a contributing member to their workplace.

It is important to remember that the performance of the job coach (good or bad) is not just a reflection of the job coach and their agency. In fact, what becomes most salient to the business community is their total experience with the individual with the disability. Consider the following responses from employers regarding their experiences with supported employment:

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“Oh yes, we have tried supported employment, and I don’t think it will work. The job coach was around all of the time, sometimes with the employee and sometimes in the break room doing paperwork and reading books. It was real weird for me, as I felt like I hired two people, one who couldn’t work very well (individual with the disability), and one who could work (job coach), but just hung around. The supported employee needed a lot of help from the job coach for most of the job and the individual was totally lost when the job coach wasn’t by his side. Then after the job coach was no longer available, we had problems with the supported employee getting to and from work. I don’t think I will hire an individual with one of those supported employment agencies anymore.”

“I didn’t know what to think about supported employment. The job coach explained to me that it is an opportunity to diversify my workforce and learn how to involve my workplace in supporting individuals with diverse needs. From the first day, the job coach was assessing and evaluating how we could teach and support the supported employee, not just on the job, but in other areas of the employees’ life. The job coach helped us understand the tasks of the job from a different perspective, and in detail. We were able to get to know the supported employee in a personal way. We learned more about diversity and disability issues. Also, as the job coach gradually decreased the support to the supported employee, we were able to find ways to be creative in supporting (him). Now it is normal for all of my employees to find ways to be creative in supporting the supported employee when problems arise, and they enjoy him. It was a great learning experience for all of us.”

The job coach understands that he or she is an ambassador, not just to help individuals to choose, get, and keep jobs, but also helping a business in their choice to employ and support and keep individuals with disabilities in their workforce. Always remember to:

- Treat adults as adults. In talking to individuals with disabilities, find out how best to provide support and assistance.
- Suggest to workplace personnel that when questions or issues arise, they should address them with the person with the disability and not just with the job coach.
- Minimize the use of professional jargon. Using professional jargon may imply to co-workers that the supported employee can succeed only with special assistance from the “expert.”
- Always approach individuals with a positive and respectful attitude, and encourage others to do so as well.

Understanding the Work Culture

The job coach enters the workplace setting with a number of goals: 1) to support the employee with a disability to ensure job success, 2) to facilitate social integration, 3) to provide the “tools” necessary to the co-workers to support the employee, and 4) to support the co-workers in supporting the employee. The first step begins with conducting a job analysis to determine how the job is typically performed (for specific job analysis information and how to, see Brooke, et al., 1997; McLoughlin, et al., 1987). Several aspects of the tasks that make up the job are analyzed:

- Work schedule: hours, time of day, days of week.
- Physical environment: accessibility, workspace, work pace, visibility to public, opportunities to interact with co-workers, use of equipment.
- Nature of the work: work pace, lifting and carrying, communication required, appearance required, sequencing of job duties, initiation of work, changes in routine, academic requirements, time factors.
- Procedures: supervision, rules, routines.

Many job coaches complete the job analysis and neglect analyzing the workplace culture. Each workplace culture is unique. A number of guidelines have been offered attempting to understand the workplace culture (DiLeo, Luecking, and Hathaway, 1995; Hagner and DiLeo, 1993). Using their facilitation skills, the job coach should not only understand the culture, but also identify co-workers to support the employee and promote social integration.

Most information about the workplace culture can be gained by observing the interactions of co-workers and supervisors and conducting informal interviews. Hagner and DiLeo (1993) describe

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a number of areas to consider when trying to understand a specific work setting. Attention should be given to the following areas: company image, dress and grooming, social customs, workspace, power and influence, gathering places, tone of interactions, style of leadership, social activities, language and symbolism, and humor.

The job coach must also find out from the employer what the expectations are for all employees, including the supported employee. What are the critical skills the supported employee must have to be successful in this position? Does the employer emphasize quality, quantity, and teamwork? What are the absolutes that the employer expects of all employees and absolutes that will not be tolerated?

The Influence of Unions on the Workplace Culture

In workplaces with union representation, job coaches consider labor unions and the expectations of employees. This is a wonderful opportunity to become an ambassador for supported employment. In most companies, management of the company may decide whom to hire. However if the individual does not meet work expectations of co-workers who are union members, the union may vote to have management terminate the employee.

In many situations, management usually goes to the union and informs them of the decision to hire a supported employee and usually explains the supported employment program to the union members and stewards. The job coach should ensure that management understands supported employment services prior to management going to the union. The job coach may offer written information or assist management in describing the supported employment services to the union.

The job coach should also make sure the supported employee has information about the union's expectations, guidelines, dues, and any probationary period for new employees before becoming a union member. The management can identify union stewards for the supported employee to seek additional information. Once on the job site, the job coach should introduce the supported employee to union stewards and assist in facilitating a relationship with union members and stewards. The job coach should discuss the supported employment services with the union steward and be available to answer any questions or concerns he or she may have about supported employment.

Anticipating the Level and Type of Supports

In order to anticipate the level and type of supports needed by an employee, the job coach must be proactive. For the job coach to identify the job site training and support needs, he or she must know the supported employee. A great deal of information has been provided on various means of getting to know the supported employee and understanding their dreams, wishes, desires, strengths, needs, and expected employment outcomes. Person-centered or customer-driven planning approaches should be directed by the supported employee and guide the entire employment process. Tools such as interviews (Brooke, et al., 1997), vocational profiles (McLoughlin, et al., 1987), the use of MAPS (Falvey, Forest, Pearpoint, and Rosenberg, 1992), or PATH (Pearpoint, O'Brien, and Forest, 1993) are extremely helpful in understanding what is important to the employee.

Job coaches should be involved in the planning process to enable them to get to know the supported employee prior to job site training. Even if the job coach cannot be involved in the planning process, some of the guiding principles and techniques can be used to get to know the employee in addition to spending time with them.

Getting to know the supported employee prior to the actual job start day enables the job coach to anticipate the type of supports that may be needed on the job. For example:

- a person with limited or no verbal communication skills may need the job coach to spend more time with co-workers to teach how to communicate best with the individual.
- a person who has a head injury may need more compensatory strategies developed to improve memory of job sequences.
- a person who has a significant physical disability may need more adaptations to the job site or creation of a specific adaptation.

- a person who may use behaviors to communicate wants, needs, and frustrations may require a positive behavior support plan in place prior to entering the work site.

Providing On-Site Training and Supports

Facilitating job site training and supports requires the job coach to address several areas while ensuring success for the supported employee and the employer (co-workers). These areas include: 1) communicating the role of the job coach on the job site, 2) providing support unobtrusively, 3) involving co-workers throughout the employment process, 4) initial training and acquisition phase, 5) fading from the work site, and 6) understanding the off-site support needs.

Communicating the Role of the Job Coach

One of the most challenging aspects of the responsibilities of the job coach is to ensure co-workers and supervisors understand their roles while on the job site. A number of scenarios often occur that could lead to misunderstandings or even damage the employment status for the supported employee. For example:

- A co-worker may be assisting the supported employee in a task while the job coach is standing back or fading from the immediate area. This may give the perception that the job coach “isn’t working.” Clear communication and understanding of expectations is critical.
- The job coach “forgets” his or her purpose and begins to interact with co-workers too much, gets involved in the politics of the company, or gets involved in the gossip of the company.
- Co-workers begin to view the job coach as an ally, someone who is going to solve their problems with management and may actually approach management stating that the job coach noticed the problem and believes that changes should be made. Management becomes upset, as they did not hire the job coach to analyze their company and do not want the job coach in the company anymore. While the job coach had developed a relationship with the co-workers in an attempt to facilitate connections for the supported employee, inadvertently the working relationship with the company management could be damaged. The job coach lost the perspective of his or her role as facilitator/consultant to assist the supported employee.

It is helpful for the job coach to share their roles and responsibilities with co-workers. This will help to alleviate any fears the co-workers may have about the job coach and/or the supported employee. When co-workers are not aware of the role of the job coach, he or she may be viewed as an outsider who is evaluating their work. What would you think if you saw a stranger in your organization standing back with clipboard and papers watching the employees work, and making marks on papers?

Fears also develop due to lack of experience interacting with people with disabilities. Often people react negatively to the unknown or have preconceived notions of what will occur. Comments from co-workers have ranged from very naïve to absurd. When job coaches hear questions or comments such as “Can I catch the disability?” or “I heard that you have to be careful with them because they can explode at anytime,” they must always remember that this is a “teaching moment” and that their role as ambassadors becomes primary. What a wonderful opportunity to provide some informal education and be a good role model demonstrating appropriate interactions.

Fear of comparing salaries can occur, especially in job carving situations. The illustration below depicts this situation.

A Little Talking Can Go a Long Way

A job coach proposed to an employer that a supported employee could be hired to do part of a job, freeing up other workers to spend more time completing critical/technical job tasks. The employer, intrigued by this approach, accepts the proposal and a position

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is carved out for the supported employee. Co-workers may not be aware of the “new job position” and fear that they are being phased out or that the supported employee is receiving the same pay as they are without the responsibility of completing the more complex tasks. The co-workers begin resenting the supported employee by not including him in interactions, avoiding him, and displaying a negative work attitude. To avoid the situation, the employer and job coach could have informally discussed the new arrangement prior to the supported employee beginning work. A simple explanation and prior information about job carving could prevent misunderstandings and a disgruntled workforce.

Providing Support Unobtrusively

For many individuals, having someone from a supported employment agency accompany them to work and teach them how to do their work sets them apart as being “special or different” and is often stigmatizing. Job coaches who perform their work in an intrusive manner can jeopardize integration and inclusion for supported employees at the outset of employment.

Additionally employers and co-workers may be misled in understanding the supported employment process and the job coach’s role. For example:

Why Are You Here?

Mike was “supporting” Jack on his first week in the fast-food restaurant. Jack was learning how to prepare hamburgers, and Mike was beside him, observing his sequence and rate of speed. Everything was going along OK until the lunch hour rush. All of the employees were getting busier, including Jack, and the kitchen appeared a little crowded. Mike continued to observe Jack’s quality of work and tasks, when the manager called to Mike, “Hey, you, if you are going to just stand there over him like that, go fill some fries!”

Mike, who was surprised, complied with the manager, but felt this took his attention away from Jack. After all, he was supporting Jack and this was his job, wasn’t it? He wasn’t there to make fries. Mike and the supported employment team processed this situation and realized that in reality, Mike was supporting Jack, but was appearing intrusive or “in the way,” especially during a busy time. Also, the manager was not aware of Mike’s role in the work site. The team explored ways that they could provide job supports and training without appearing intrusive.

Job coaches should remember to:

- Begin fading from day one. For fading to begin at the onset, the job coach must closely watch what areas of the job or specific tasks the supported employee can complete independently, and remove themselves from the area of the employee. For example, if the employee can complete the first five steps of a fifteen-step task, then the job coach should stand back, away from the employee, during those steps. The job coach must be far enough away not to promote dependency and close enough to interrupt an error.
- Plan ahead with the employer and the supported employee on how much support is needed by the job coach, how it will be provided, when it will be provided, and where it will be provided.
- Teach employers and co-workers how to provide support to the supported employee.
- Develop methods that allow employers and co-workers to teach, monitor, and evaluate how well individuals are learning and performing tasks so that they can provide feedback to the supported employee.

Involving Co-Workers throughout the Training Process

A job coach will have to determine how he or she can involve co-workers throughout the training process. Initial identification of possible co-workers who can support the employee with a disability should be identified prior to the actual placement. Therefore the person responsible for job development and conducting the job site analysis should begin this process and communicate it to the job coach.

When determining training options with the employer and the employee with a disability, the job coach should consider the needs and preferences of the employee and the options offered by the employer. Grossi, Regan, and Regan (1998) describe three scenarios that can occur prior to determining who assumes the primary responsibility for job site training. First, the employer assumes the responsibility and the job coach is “on call” when assistance is needed. This scenario occurs more frequently when employers have experience working with supported employees and/or individuals with milder disabilities. Second, the employer requests the presence of the job coach in instances where assistance is needed. Here the job coach is present throughout the training to provide support primarily by answering questions, guiding the co-workers, and providing the “tools” to the supported employee. The job coach may demonstrate “how to” teach and support the co-worker. Finally, the employer requests the job coach to be present throughout the training. The job coach may serve as the primary trainer but partners with the co-workers throughout the training process.

No matter what approach is used, the supported employee must be involved in all levels of the decision-making process. It is the responsibility of the job coach to inform the supported employee about options available for training and support and assist in making an informed decision.

Identifying Co-Workers

Identifying a co-worker who will support the individual is not always easily recognizable. A good starting point is when the job site and workplace culture analysis is conducted. Some helpful tips may be to identify a co-worker who appears to act as a champion or mentor for the supported employee. This is often a co-worker who is highly regarded in the work environment. It may also be someone who shows a positive, curious interest in the supported employee and who volunteers support and guidance for the employee. Soliciting the support of popular, competent, and highly regarded co-workers can assist in facilitating connections for the supported employee and natural work site supports. Based on a study by Mank, et al. (1999), involving co-workers in the training process is related to better wages and social integration outcomes. Implication from this study suggests job coaches should consider a number of aspects in relation to identifying and involving co-workers. Mank, et al. suggest:

- The co-workers and supervisors who receive information on how to support the employee with a disability should be those in the immediate work area.
- Information should be provided individually or in small groups rather than in a formal, structured training session.
- Information should include specific support needs of the supported employee and the job. For example, information on how a person learns best, or the need for occasional redirecting or reminders to complete certain tasks.
- Information is best provided prior to the supported employee starting the job. This suggests the importance of developing co-worker involvement at the beginning of the job placement rather than later.

At times, co-workers may seem reluctant or resistant to become involved with the supported employee. If co-workers are resistant, the job coach can use their facilitation skills described earlier in this chapter to explore how best to engage co-workers. The job coach should work to understand the cause of resistance (fear, previous experience, apathy, stigma, and social bias). Once the job coach identifies sources of resistance, strategies can be applied. For example, remind co-workers that they are experts at their workplace and that your role is to help the individual to “fit in.” The job coach can also identify skills, strengths, and similar interests of the supported employee and the co-worker. It is important the supported employee is in physical and social proximity to others and not isolated in the workplace. A number of strategies can be used to help build relationships between the supported employee and the co-workers to assist in supports and social interactions:

- Encourage the supported employee to take breaks in the break area with other co-workers, and greet co-workers by name when arriving and leaving work.
- Consider taking the co-worker’s pictures (with permission) to help the supported employee

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after work in identifying co-workers by name.

- Identify co-workers' interests (basketball, children, sewing, movies, etc.) that are similar to the supported employee's interest, and facilitate casual conversations with co-workers in these areas.
- Encourage the supported employee to ask co-workers work-related questions directly, versus the job coach facilitating all the communication.
- Talk with co-workers to understand their impressions and level of comfort of their interactions with the supported employee. Identify ways to improve interactions between the supported employee and co-workers.
- Understand the work environment and socially acceptable behaviors. Does the work culture allow for co-workers to support individuals and one another?
- Promote shared or overlapping job tasks for supported employees where they can be seen as valued team members.
- "Demystify" the image of the job coach as the expert. Acknowledge and support co-workers in providing valuable information during the employment process.

Co-Workers in the Training Process

If co-workers are the primary trainers for the supported employee, the job coach should work with them to help them understand the learning style that works best with the supported employee. It is helpful to encourage and teach co-workers to understand how to effectively use verbal prompts, gestures, eye contact, modeling, physical prompts, and physical and social proximity in communicating with the supported employee. It is often helpful for co-workers to understand how to break down tasks and abstract instructions into concrete steps that are understandable for the employee, and decide the most important tasks to be trained first. Job coaches can support the co-workers by assisting in problem-solving and brainstorming ideas to support and teach the supported employee. Throughout the employment process, the job coach should show appreciation and acknowledge the expertise of the co-worker in this job. The job coach should also provide encouragement to both co-workers and the supported employee and reinforce the training provided by the co-worker with the supported employee.

If the co-worker and the job coach train the individual as partners, decisions should be made at the onset as to how this process will be conducted. It may be confusing and frustrating for the supported employee to get instructions from multiple people, so a plan should be developed on how training will occur among the co-worker, the job coach, and the supported employee. This training plan should also include how and when the job coach will fade support from the workplace. The job coach should always be looking for what typical supports are available in the work environment to support the individual when the job coach is not present.

At times, situations occur when it is necessary in the workplace for the job coach to be the primary trainer at the job site. These situations may include a busy work setting where co-workers are not readily available or accessible, when special accommodation issues arise, or when co-workers cannot afford to provide training due to productivity demands. Other instances may be when the severity of the disability requires more support for both the employee and the co-workers, co-workers and employers lack experience in working with supported employees, or jobs are carved or created for the supported employee. Even under these situations, the job coach should encourage involvement of co-workers and facilitate relationships, helping the workplace personnel to invest interest in the supported employee so as to avoid isolation for the supported employee. It is important that the supported employee is viewed as an employee of the company and not as an employee of the supported employment program.

Initial Training and Skill Acquisition Phase

Components of the initial training and acquisition phase include 1) establishing a training schedule and worksite analysis, 2) providing a task analysis of the job duties to be instructed, 3) establishing

an instructional program to include systematic instructional procedures, reinforcement procedures, and data collection procedures, and 4) developing a contingency plan, if appropriate. (For explicit information see Brooke, et al., 1997; Fussell and Petty, 1998; Grossi, et al., 1998; McLoughlin, et al., 1987; Moon, et al., 1990). Throughout implementation of each of the components, DiLeo (2000) notes there are a number of considerations when training:

- Treat the employee with a disability with respect and dignity.
- The supervisor or another co-worker should introduce the supported employee to co-workers, just as any new employee is introduced.
- Never complete the job tasks for the supported employee; rather, assist in acquiring skills and supports to complete the tasks.
- Develop, coordinate, and facilitate supports for the supported employee within the work environment and outside of the work environment (transportation, alarm clock, budgeting, etc.) to promote the job coach's ability to fade from the work site as soon as possible.
- Position yourself to stand behind, beside, or across from the supported employee, not between the employee and co-workers.
- Always consider the most natural and least intrusive teaching approach first.
- Teach using natural cues and utilize natural supports existing in the workplace.
- Use short, frequent teaching sessions with repeated opportunities to practice skills.
- Use a task analysis to collect data to find out what the employee knows.
- Chart the progress.
- Be consistent.
- Encourage co-workers to talk directly to the supported employee.
- Support the supported employee in developing self-management techniques to complete job tasks, such as having a watch with an alarm, a pocket notepad with job tasks or checkoff list, or a wallet with picture list, etc.

The job coach may work with the supported employee, employer, and referral source on job adaptations or assistive technology to support him in completing a job. When partnering with co-workers, always reinforce the co-worker's training. Assist co-workers in providing systematic instruction (avoiding jargon) and provide additional support to the employee and co-workers on tasks that the employee is having difficulty learning.

Fading from the Work Site

When the role of the job coach is communicated effectively, the supported employee, co-workers, and supervisors understand the efforts of the job coach, whether he or she is present or absent in the work area, and eventually the work site. The fading schedule and support plan should be developed collaboratively by the supported employee, co-workers or supervisors, and the job coach. The fading schedule should include the job coach gradually increasing the time off the work site as the employee becomes more proficient in his or her work duties. During fading, the initial support plan should be developed for the ongoing support needs of the supported employee on the job site. Areas to be covered in this plan should include:

- information regarding the job site (e.g., job site analysis, job duties, task analysis, charts, instructional strategies, reinforcement strategies, positive behavior supports, and identified supportive co-workers with their roles).
- incidents that have occurred even if only once, and how they were handled.
- current or possible future support needs.
- primary and secondary support people.
- the typical supports available in the work site (e.g., employee assistance program).
- community supports.

During fading, customer satisfaction feedback should be solicited from the supported employee and co-workers/supervisors to determine work related satisfaction issues. Additionally, information should be solicited from the employee, co-workers, supervisors, and funding agencies about the

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satisfaction of services received from the job coach.

Understanding Off-Site Support Needs

Although the nature of support provided by the job coach on the job is critical, astute supported employment professionals realize that the world of work is only a portion of the individual's community life. Off-job supports often interface with successful employment outcomes. Frequently, individuals have other providers that address nonwork support needs (housing, finances, medical issues, socialization, living skills, etc.); however, it is a good rule of thumb to be aware of nonwork support needs, and coordinate supports with other providers. This is especially critical, as a supported employee's earned income often has fiscal impact on other supports (housing, entitlements, etc.).

When job coaches are responsible for all of the areas of support, it is important to have a comprehensive plan to address all support needs. These should be reviewed and updated regularly with the individual served. This comprehensive plan for all of life domain issues should include and is not limited to the following: residential and domestic information, independent functioning, physical and health related issues, friends and social supports, hobbies, interests and recreation, use of generic community services, and financial considerations.

Summary

The role of the job coach continues to evolve as the supported employment field becomes more sophisticated with technology and research. The importance for job coaches to understand and demonstrate the technical skills needed to provide on-site training and support cannot be over-emphasized. These technical skills have been well documented since the inception of supported employment. Often job coaches may be skilled in the technical skills but often lack the facilitation and consultation skills described in this chapter. A skilled job coach can balance the use of both the technical and facilitation skills.

Using facilitation and consultation skills effectively can enhance the employment outcomes for employees with disabilities by building relationships among all stakeholders. A skilled job coach will balance both the technical skills and facilitation skills throughout the employment process, keenly observing the needs of the customers and adjusting the type of skills to be used accordingly. Through technical expertise and expertise in facilitating people skills, job coaches are powerful ambassadors for supported employees and inclusive workplaces.

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