

# Customized Employment Through the Eyes of Employers

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## ■ A QUICK LOOK:

Customized employment is a personalized approach to matching a job candidate with an employer while satisfying the needs of both employee and employer. It's used by many employment specialists who work with individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities. Recently, researchers conducted focus groups with employers to explore their thoughts on customized employment and to gain insight on what employment specialists can do to create more positive employment outcomes for job seekers.

## ■ KEY FINDINGS:

- The five similar themes that emerged among employers were:
  - business needs
  - networking
  - communication
  - training
  - financial
- None of the employers interviewed had experience with customized employment, but four of them had experience hiring individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities using standard hiring practices.
- Of the four employers who previously hired an individual with an intellectual and developmental disability, two of them said their employees performed their tasks very well. The other two stated that they performed their tasks moderately well.
- Three out of the four employers said they would hire an individual with an intellectual or developmental disability again.
- Employers explained that finances would be a factor in whether or not they could hire someone whose job is customized for them and that the position would need to fit within the company or department's budget.

## ■ PUTTING IT INTO PRACTICE:

To create more positive employment outcomes for clients, employers suggest employment specialists:

- Learn about the employer's business needs by engaging and partnering with the business in a variety of capacities and tasks.
- Network with employers to help establish strong business relationships and assist in customized employment.
- Develop a relationship with the employer at the beginning of the discovery process.
- Have the job seeker with the disability "try out" the position before they commit to it to make sure it is a good fit for the employee and the company.

## ■ MORE ABOUT THIS ARTICLE

Researchers facilitated 3 focus groups featuring 10 employers from various businesses across a variety of industries. They used a standardized open-ended focus group interview method.

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