



RRTC on Employer
Practices for
Individuals with
Disabilities

Research Summary

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Employer Views of Customized Employment: A Focus Group Analysis

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A quick look: ■

Customized employment (CE) is a personalized approach to matching a job candidate with an employer while satisfying the needs of both employee and employer. This practice is used by many employment specialists who work with individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities (I/DD). But while customized employment practices are widely used, there hasn't been much research conducted to gauge employers' views and opinions on CE. This article explores many of those viewpoints.

Key Findings: ■

Focus groups featuring 10 employers from various businesses across a variety of industries were conducted in which some similar themes related to customized employment emerged.

- ▶ The five similar themes were business needs, networking, communication, training, and financial.
- ▶ None of the employers interviewed had experience with CE, but four of them had experience hiring individuals with I/DD by using standard hiring practices.
- ▶ Of the four employers who previously hired an individual with I/DD, two of them said their employees performed their tasks very well while the other two stated that they performed their tasks moderately well.
- ▶ Three out of the four employers said they would hire an individual with I/DD again.

Putting It into Practice: ■

The themes taken from the employers during the three focus groups reveal a great deal about what employment specialist can do to better implement CE practices.

- ▶ Employers stated that it is important for employment specialists to learn about their business needs by engaging and partnering with the business in a variety of capacities and tasks and to develop the relationship at the beginning of the process.
- ▶ The employers explained that networking between the employment specialists and the employer could help establish strong business relationships and assist in CE.
- ▶ The focus group discussed the benefits of employment specialists who work with individuals with I/DD having business or human resources experience.
- ▶ The focus group 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.

More about this Article (What did they say?) ■

- ▶ When asked about business needs, one employer said, "I would probably want that individual to come and spend multiple days working in all different aspects of the business and meeting with me so that they had a real true understanding of all the different layers and departments. We could actually brainstorm and come up with perhaps some creative employment areas."
- ▶ An employer explained the importance of communication of how the employee's skills will align with the business, "It is hard for us being so small that we wouldn't want to just create, you know, the position would have to be something that made sense and that was a need we needed to be filled."

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