Editorial

Employers play a central role in the development of all supported employment models. Along with the employee and the supported employment providers, they represent a third leg in the rehabilitation triangle. A determining factor of employment success is the employer's acceptance of the consumer as a productive and contributing member of his or her business. Therefore, the supported employment provider must assume primary responsibility for assuring that the worker is adequately trained and supported to fulfill the needs and expectations of the employer. This role requires supported employment providers to view both employers and individuals with disabilities as consumers of supported employment services. As supported employment consumers, employers represent another market for rehabilitation services that must be recognized by supported employment specialists.

The recognition of employers as consumers of rehabilitative services has focused great attention upon the importance of marketing these services. A distinction should be made here between marketing and selling; marketing emphasizes responsiveness to the needs of consumers, while selling is typically concerned with the packaging and promotion of products in such a manner that results in wide distribution.

Marketing of rehabilitation services has been conceptualized to include three processes: (1) assessing the needs of potential consumers; (2) tailoring the services to meet consumers' needs; and (3) maintaining long-term relationships with consumers to receive feedback and to provide quality assurances. The essential ingredient of effective marketing is responsiveness — knowing what consumers want, knowing how to provide what they want and ensuring that what they received was what they wanted.

All too often, we have tended to approach the needs of workers with disabilities and of employers from two separate perspectives in which the needs are identified and resulting marketing strategies are developed in isolation. Unfortunately, we have not looked closely enough at the different types of work supports that are available to persons with disabilities in the workplace. There are many of these supports which I recently categorized into six groups. These are listed below:

I. Agency mediated supports

   1. Job coach assistance
- Specialized training
- Compensatory strategies
   2. Assistive technology
   3. Compensatory strategies (e.g. memory aids)
   4. Counseling
   5. Substance abuse services
   6. Medical services
   7. Specialized transportation
   8. Vocational rehabilitation counselor

II. Business mediated supports

   1. Job restructuring
   2. Workplace accommodations
- Environmental modifications
- Assistive technology
- Task modification
- Schedule modification
   3. Coworker mentoring
- Job task training and support
- Social support

4. Job creation
5. Employee assistance programs
6. Employment consultant (hired by business)

III. Government mediated supports

1. Social security work incentives
   - Plan for achieving self-support
   - Impairment related work experience
2. Tax credits
   - Work opportunity tax credit
   - Disabled access credit
   - Tax deduction to remove transportation and architectural barriers. Medicaid waiver

IV. Consumer mediated supports

1. Personal care attendant
2. Peer mentors
3. Independent living centers

V. Family support

1. Family members as job developers
2. Attitude enhancement

3. Transportation
4. Supported living

VI. Community mediated supports

1. Civic association and organizations
2. Neighborhood associations
3. Friends and neighbors
4. Social support networks

These supports can be initiated, implemented and evaluated in the business environment. Each individual person will require a unique set as supports to help elevate them to their full potential.

In this issue Jan Weiner-Zivolich and Steve Zivolich and their contributors direct their attention to many of these supports. These are the types of designs that need to happen in businesses for persons with disabilities to participate in the workforce more fully.

Paul Wehman
Editor