

# Where the Magic Happens: Employment Consultants and Their Role Connecting People with Employment and Improving Outcomes

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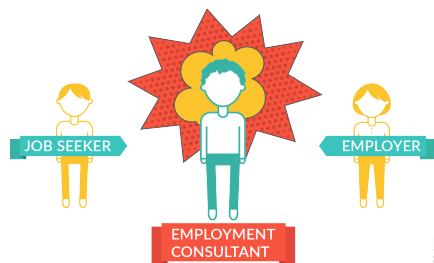


## Background

The majority of individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities (IDD) report a desire to be employed in meaningful, competitive, integrated positions; however, very few actually are (Nye-Lengerman, Pettingell, Nord, & Hewitt, under review). The successful transition of adults with disabilities into employment depends upon the effectiveness of the support services available to them (Luecking, Fabian, & Tilson, 2004). Therefore, there is a profound need for a workforce who can close this gap and aid individuals with IDD to obtain meaningful, competitive, integrated employment. This research focuses on understanding:

- Strategies of effective employment consultants;
- How employment consultants spend their time; and
- What support activities lead to improved employment outcomes.

## Who are employment consultants?



Employment consultants are members of the direct-support workforce who support job seekers with IDD to find, secure, and maintain employment. They connect job seekers with IDD to employers and employers to job seekers. Employment consultants are situated in a variety of organizations with different structures that influence their activities. Employment consultant activities may include: building trust, getting to know the job seeker, finding tasks/jobs, supports planning, and support after hire. Each of these activities plays an important role in both supporting job seekers and improving employment outcomes.

## Building trust

**Building trust is a foundational activity that occurs throughout the employment process. Building trusts helps prepare the ground for smooth placement for all involved (i.e., job seekers, families, and employers).**

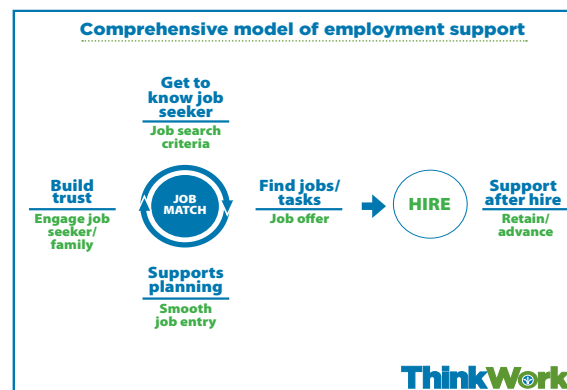
Building trust means job seekers are treated with respect, and that their needs and preferences are the focus of the placement process. This can be intentionally achieved by spending time with the job seeker, asking questions, and connecting beyond just standard assessments. Building trust makes the process go more smoothly for all involved, and it leads to the best job match, maximizing satisfaction, minimizing the support after hire, optimizing job retention, and fulfilling business needs.

## Getting to know the job seeker

**This activity informs the job search by defining search criteria. Good search criteria can then lead to a better job match.**

Getting to know the job seeker requires active listening, hanging out with intent, observing job seekers in various environments, and talking to people who know the job seeker. This allows the employment consultant to understand the job seeker's motivations, passions, strengths, interests, and talents.

## What do support activities look like?



## Finding tasks/jobs

**When employment consultants engage in this activity, they aim to identify places where job seekers can use their strengths, interests, and talents to fulfill business needs.**

It is important to note that, in general, only 20% of jobs are actually posted, while 80% exist in what is called the "hidden job market." Therefore, employment consultants need to build relationships with employers and businesses to identify possible jobs and present workforce solutions when appropriate. In addition, employment consultants may also join business groups or conduct informational interviews.

## Supports planning

**Employment consultants engage in a variety of activities to support job seekers to have a positive, successful job entry.**

This work includes assisting with solving transportation issues, building work and social skills, identifying and teaching businesses and job seekers about assistive technology, and supporting benefits planning. These activities help prepare the job seeker and the support team, so they are ready when a job offer is made.

## Support after hire

**Once a job seeker has received and accepted a job offer, employment consultants offer continued support to enhance the likelihood of retention and advancement.**

These supports look different for each job seeker depending on his or her needs. Often, employment consultants offer more support earlier on, and then fade their support as natural supports are able to provide what the job seeker and or employer needs.

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