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**Faculty of Health and Human Sciences
Centre for the Development of Human Resources
Social Research and Development Monographs No. 3**

**THE EVALUATION OF
PE PERSONNEL 1992**

**A Report of a Values-Based Evaluation of a Competitive Employment
Training and Placement Service for People with Disabilities:
Purpose, Methodology, Outcomes and Recommendations**

Errol Cocks and Robert L. Jackson



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CENTRE FOR THE DEVELOPMENT OF HUMAN RESOURCES

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Purpose, Methodology, Outcomes and Recommendations**

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This Monograph is reproduced from the final Report of an evaluation contract with the approval of PE Personnel Inc., March 1993. Inquiries should be addressed to: Errol Cocks, Centre for the Development of Human Resources, Edith Cowan University, Joondalup Campus, Joondalup Drive, Joondalup, Western Australia, 6027.

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The service users, families, staff and Board members of *PE Personnel* were very helpful and cooperative during this evaluation and we wish to acknowledge their support with gratitude.

PE PERSONNEL EVALUATION REPORT

1.0 INTRODUCTION AND PURPOSES OF THE EVALUATION

Late in 1991, the Managing Director of *PE Personnel*, Ms Susan Robertson, approached the Director of the Centre for the Development of Human Resources (CDHR) at Edith Cowan University, Mr Errol Cocks, to discuss the possibility of an evaluation for *PE Personnel*. Over a period of three or four months, the purposes and shape of a proposed evaluation developed through clarification and negotiation, and in March, 1992, an agreement was reached for Mr Cocks and Mr Bob Jackson from the CDHR to carry out the evaluation. The results of the evaluation, as described in this report, cover the period up to 30 June 1992.

A decision was made that the evaluation would be qualitative and would be underpinned by a clear values base which would focus on the needs of the service-users. Initially, discussion centred on the use of PASSING (Wolfensberger & Thomas, 1983), an evaluation and teaching instrument based on Social Role Valorization (Wolfensberger, 1992). Eventually it was decided to utilise some of the PASSING Ratings, but to focus particularly on the coherency of the service. The concept of coherency is contained in particular evaluation ratings in both PASSING and PASS (Wolfensberger & Glenn, 1975), an evaluation instrument which preceded the development of PASSING.

1.1 Fundamental Purposes

The following fundamental purposes were identified and agreed for the evaluation.

1. To assess the service model and its implementation by *PE Personnel*, focussing on the coherency of the service in addressing service user needs.

The concept of coherency requires an examination of:

- the major assumptions under which the agency operates, particularly in relation to key issues such as, for a vocational service, the relationship between disability and work;
- who the service users are and what are their needs;
- which needs the agency means to address;
- how the agency actually goes about addressing those needs.

Coherency then refers to the extent to which these elements of the service are consistent with each other and "fit together".

2. To provide, through the evaluation process, directions and strategies for **program development**. This purpose means that the evaluation should not be a "hit and run" event, but must include some processes which facilitate development.
3. To develop a model framework for the qualitative, values-based evaluation and program development of similar competitive employment services.

It is important to note that the evaluation was **not** to be a management review or an evaluation of the cost-effectiveness or efficiency of *PE Personnel*.

To minimise confusions, it is important to point out that the terminology used throughout this report reflects the following distinctions.

PE Personnel is the *agency* providing *services*. At times the report will refer to the agency meaning the organisation or structure within which services are provided. On other occasions, *PE Personnel* will be referred to as a service which means the totality of what the agency actually provides. In addition, the term *program* will refer to elements of the overall service such as, for example, job search activities.

The major *stakeholders* of the agency include *clients*. Clients are made up of *employers* who provide the actual employment opportunities for people with disabilities who are the *service users* as well as being clients. At times the report will refer to clients which includes both people with disabilities and employers and on other occasions the term *service user* will be used to mean people with disabilities who utilise the services of *PE Personnel*.

2.0 EVALUATION METHODOLOGY

This report contains a full outline of the evaluation methodology in order to enable interested parties to see how the outcomes were arrived at. In addition, the description reflects the third purpose of the evaluation, to develop a framework which might have wider utility.

2.1 Principles of the Evaluation

In order to be consistent with the purposes of the evaluation, the following principles were established to guide the development of the evaluation framework and processes.

1. The evaluation is service user based.
2. It is conducted from an explicit values base.
3. The process will encourage participation and thus will emphasise a consultative process.

4. The evaluation will be based on the concept of a "*universal framework for a human service model*". (see Section 2.3).
5. A major principle will be the concept of the different elements of the service model being **congruent or coherent with each other**.
6. A related principle is that services for people with disabilities should operate as closely as possible to the manner in which services with similar objectives operate for **ordinary people in the community**.

2.2 Rationales for the Establishment of an Evaluation Team

The role of the team was to plan out the detail of the evaluation process, having understood the fundamental purposes of the evaluation and the broad framework of the evaluation (which is described below). The role then included carrying out various data collection tasks including consultation with stakeholders of the agency and examination of agency documentation; participation in the process of analysing data; agreeing on the nature of the pertinent issues; and involvement in the development of feedback and the final report.

In order to represent a range of interests and experience, the team was constructed with the following membership:

Mr Errol Cocks, Director, CDHR.

Mr Bob Jackson, Visiting Fellow, CDHR.

Mr Graham Eaton, Assistant Director of Employment Services, Activ Foundation Inc.

Professor Ian Eggleton, Professor of Accounting, University of WA; Board Member of *PE Personnel*.

Mrs Zwanny Lawrence, Parent of service users.

Mrs Jane Anne McLarty, Student at Edith Cowan University.

Ms Jane Spittle, Executive Officer, Disability Services Program (Metro.), Commonwealth Department of Health, Housing and Community Services (HH&CS).

Ms Michelle Stanton, Graduate Research Assistant.

2.3 The Evaluation Framework

Establishing an evaluation framework is of great importance because it determines such fundamental issues as what information is sought about the service, how that information is gathered, how it is organised and analysed and thereby strongly shapes the evaluation outcomes. The broad evaluation framework consisted of three major strands.

1. A **description** of the service model and the implementation of that model by *PE Personnel*. This description was based on four components of a "*universal human service model*" as elucidated by

Wolfensberger. The focus at this stage of the framework is to describe the service as factually as possible.

The concept of a "*universal human service model*" means that all human services contain each of the following four components no matter what kind of service (for example, accommodation, vocational, educational services etc), or who the service users are (for example, people with disabilities, elderly people etc).

The four components upon which the evaluation framework is based follow.

A. What are the major assumptions and principles underpinning the service?

Here we were concerned to identify the important, relevant areas where both explicit and implicit assumptions and principles held by the agency influenced how the service operated. Some of those important areas included what the agency believed about people with disabilities; the role of work in society; the relationship between people with disabilities and work; the role of families; the role of private enterprise etc.

B. Who are the service users and what are their needs?

This component of the evaluation framework involved identifying the key stakeholders in the service; focussing on a description of the service users; and elucidating the major service user needs.

C. What is the service purpose (content)?

The emphasis here was to determine clearly what the agency saw as its primary purpose/s, particularly in relation to which service user need/s the service saw as its rightful responsibility (its "purview").

D. What processes are utilised by the service?

1. This component addressed the full range of processes which were part of the service's efforts to address service user needs. The processes included service methods and technologies; use of language within the service; the manner in which service users were grouped in different ways by the service; locations where different aspects of the service were provided; and a range of additional, miscellaneous processes.

From this description was drawn a set of fundamental, key issues and questions about the service model, the manner in which the agency has implemented the model, and issues bearing upon program development.

2. The second strand of the evaluation involved analysis of the coherency of the service from the perspective of addressing service users' needs. Essentially, this involved a process of the team members **conciliating**, that is, discussing, clarifying and agreeing on, a number of key issues drawn from the service description. Part of this analysis included identification of agency strengths.
3. The third strand utilised certain ratings from **PASSING** to assess aspects of the service's adherence to some Social Role Valorization principles.

2.4 The Evaluation Processes

2.4.1 *THE SEQUENCE OF EVENTS*

The evaluation framework essentially set the sequence of events for the whole evaluation. Six steps were followed. Some processes overlapped between steps.

STEP ONE

Team meetings to establish: evaluation purposes; evaluation framework; the type of data to be collected and the processes for data collection; specific roles of each team member; and an overall time frame. All of these points were checked with senior staff of the agency before data collection began.

STEP TWO

A period of data collection which occurred over approximately 4 weeks.

STEP THREE

Team meetings made a preliminary analysis of data and confirmed what were the key issues to that point.

STEP FOUR

Further collection and confirmation of data.

STEP FIVE

Final analysis of data and preparation and presentation of feedback to the service.

Feedback to the agency occurred at several points. After the initial team meetings where preliminary issues and recommendations were formulated,

these issues and recommendations were fed back to senior staff of the agency for comment. Their comments were considered by the team in a subsequent meeting and a brief but comprehensive list of issues and recommendations was generated. These in turn were discussed at length with the Managing Director and a Board Member and provided the basis for this report. The Managing Director also discussed the issues and recommendations with the Board of the agency, and concerns raised by the Board were discussed by the Chairman and one of the authors. For the staff, a presentation was made to all staff at the beginning of the evaluation on the evaluation purpose and processes, and later a full morning's presentation was given to staff on the issues and recommendations coming from the evaluation, with opportunity for staff to comment and ask questions.

This interactive approach of the evaluation team with the agency had the advantages of utilising the considerable expertise of agency personnel in formulating recommendations to complex issues as well as ensuring that errors of fact — inevitable when dealing with such large amounts of information — were corrected before the final report. It also helped to focus on the developmental aspect of the evaluation, where the purpose was to generate agency development around key issues raised in the evaluation process.

STEP SIX

Completion of the final report.

2.4.2 DATA COLLECTION

Three major sources of data were identified and evaluation team members were assigned tasks singly and in pairs to gather the data. The evaluation purposes, principles, framework, and the early issues which were identified provided guidance for data collection. In addition, meetings of team members discussed aspects of information to be gathered, especially from interviews.

The three data categories and examples of sources of data are described below.

1. Documentation

PE Personnel made available freely to the evaluation team a wide range of written documentation which was studied by the team. The documentation included the following.

- A. Historical documentation on the origins and early development of *PE Personnel*.
- B. Organisational structure and key personnel.

- C. Board Minutes.
- D. All Annual Reports.
- E. Policy and planning documentation and documentation on any critical issues that may have been addressed by the agency including planning material.
- F. Promotional material including pamphlets and videos.
- G. Procedural documentation.
- H. Material which described the service model and service processes.
- I. Staff appraisal processes.

2. Stakeholder Information

The evaluation team identified the following major stakeholder groups and examined information on each group which was provided by *PE Personnel*.

- A. Board Members
- B. Staff
- C. Job Seekers and Workers (Service Users)
- D. Employers
- E. Funders
- F. Families of Service Users

3. Interview Information

From each of the following groups of stakeholders, a number of people were identified and interviewed by team members.

- A. Board Members individually.
- B. Some Board Members (including the Chairperson) and Managing Director as a group.
- C. Senior Staff.

- D. Individual Staff stratified to represent the spread of *PE Personnel* activities.
- E. Job Seekers and Workers stratified to represent the various categories of service users.
- F. Family Members similarly stratified.
- G. Employers stratified to represent a spread of different employer types.
- H. All funding agencies.

2.4.3 OUTCOMES

It was agreed when the evaluation was planned that there would be three major outcomes:

1. There would be ongoing consultation and discussion with some key stakeholders in the agency which would provide some program development. There would also be considerable emphasis placed on stakeholders' identification of what they considered to be fundamental issues associated with the program.
2. There would be formal, verbal feedback, possibly on more than one occasion, to specific stakeholder groups.
3. A detailed written report would be provided which would describe, *inter alia*:
 - the evaluation model framework, methodologies and processes;
 - a description of the service model and its implementation by *PE Personnel*;
 - an analysis of the service in terms of its quality and adequacy in terms of addressing service users' needs;
 - identification and explication of the key, fundamental issues of the service;
 - some directions and strategies for ongoing program development.

3.0 AGENCY HISTORY AND DESCRIPTION

3.1 Introduction

This section of the report contains a factual description of *PE Personnel* based on information and documentation provided and largely produced by the agency. Throughout the evaluation, it should be noted that the agency was very helpful in providing unrestricted access to information and the evaluation team would like to acknowledge the openness and cooperation of *PE Personnel* staff in this respect.

The service description follows broadly the evaluation framework and four components of a human service which were outlined in Section 2.3 of the report.

3.2 Agency History

PE Personnel is a competitive employment agency as described by the Commonwealth Disability Services Act 1986. The agency seeks work for people with disabilities and provides support to enable its service users to maintain their positions in the workforce.

The agency was established in February 1984 as *Project Employment Incorporated*, an incorporated, non-profit body. A seeding grant was provided by the (then) State Government Department of Employment and Training and staffing was provided by the (then) Division for the Intellectually Handicapped of the Health Department of Western Australia.

The service model was based on research described in a Master degree thesis *Exploring new avenues to open employment for the intellectually disabled* (Lewis, 1983). The research demonstrated that traditional pre-placement training strategies in Western Australia for moving people with disabilities from sheltered to open employment were inadequate and explored the viability of alternative rapid entry placement approaches. Based on research findings, it was argued that there was a need to establish a system of services for people with intellectual disabilities to replace the existing system of sheltered workshops, activity therapy centres and pre-vocational training centres.

The framework suggested that a proposed system be based on developments in the USA which identified two types of vocational programs, Competitive Employment Programs (CEPs) and Supported Employment Programs (SEPs) (Lewis, 1983: 117). CEPs are based on rapid entry into open employment with back-up support with the aim of placing workers with disabilities into self-sufficient, open employment. SEPs were based on the provision of long-term, supported employment, possibly of the sheltered type, or open employment. These employment types became identified as service types eligible for funding through the Disability Services Act 1986.

After its first year of operation, *Project Employment* had 6 staff, had registered 100 people with disabilities as job seekers, and secured 34 jobs in open employment. By 1987, the number of similar services, advised and supported by *Project Employment*, had grown to nine in five states of Australia, clearly reflecting the increasing interest and emphasis on this service type and the central role played by this agency in generating competitive employment services.

Between 1986 and 1988, with funding from the Authority for Intellectually Handicapped Persons and the (then) Commonwealth Departments of Community Services and Health (DCSH) and Employment and Industrial Relations (DEIR), *Project Employment* expanded its services to include job seekers with disabilities other than intellectual, for example, physical, sensory and psychiatric.

In 1988, the agency's name was changed to *PE Personnel* and its objectives were changed to reflect work with people from all disability groups (Minutes of Special General Meeting held on 22 June 1988).

In its 1991-92 Annual Report, *PE Personnel* described that in its 8 years of operation, the agency had assisted over 600 people with disabilities to secure over 1200 award wage jobs in open employment. Since 1984, the agency has grown steadily and now operates a more diverse range of activities.

In June 1992, *PE Personnel* had 28 employees; a service user base of 559 people with disabilities; provided job search and support functions; assisted in the establishment of similar agencies and services; and engaged in publishing, consultancy work and the provision of training programs for other employment service staff. These additional activities were run according to a private business model and generated supplementary income to support the agency's core activities. However, as a non-profit, incorporated body, *PE Personnel* was primarily dependent on public sector funding which it received from the Authority for Intellectually Handicapped Persons (AIH) and HH&CS.

3.3 Key Stated Assumptions of the Service Model

From the examination of *PE Personnel's* documentation and discussion with stakeholders, its statements of vision, values and objectives were found to have remained relatively constant even though the agency has diversified and grown. These constitute the explicit assumptions and values base underpinning the agency's activities and provide the backdrop against which the coherency of the service model is examined.

The following statements were found in many documentations of the agency including its Constitution, in material such as pamphlets describing the service, in agency reports and framed on the walls of the agency site.

Vision Statement

PE Personnel supports people with disabilities to establish careers in open employment that are of mutual benefit to the employee, employer and the community.

Agency Values

All people with disabilities have a right to work in open employment regardless of the extent or severity of their disability.

All workers with disabilities have a right to a fair day's pay as have the employers a right to a fair day's work.

Job seekers must play a central role in planning their own careers.

The candidacy of job seekers with disabilities for any vacancy must focus on their abilities and economic worth to the employer.

On-the-job support is the most efficient means of equipping workers with the full range of skills necessary to keep their jobs.

Pre-requisites to a successful career are desire to work, support from significant others, realistic career choice and access to on-the-job support.

Job seekers and workers have a right to privacy, confidentiality and respect in all their dealings with the agency.

The Agency's Objectives

Among the objectives stated in *PE Personnel's* Constitution are the following:

To offer employment services to people with disabilities.

To locate and register disabled persons who wish to secure award wage positions in open employment.

To secure award wage positions in open employment that reflect the registrant's career interests.

To provide pre and post placement services to ensure successful long-term employment.

To promote the rights, development and well-being of persons who have a disability.

3.4 The Service Users

People with Disabilities on the Register

At June 1992, *PE Personnel* had 559 people with disabilities on their register. Table One, abstracted from the 1991-92 Annual Report, describes people on the register according to whether they were job seeking or employed and the nature of their disability.

Table One shows that the majority of service users (77.6%) were people with an intellectual disability. Of these, 339 (78.1%) were referred from the AIH (1991-92 Performance Report).

TABLE ONE: JOB SEEKERS AND WORKERS BY DISABILITY GROUP - AS AT 30TH JUNE 1992

DISABILITY GROUP	JOB SEEKERS	WORKERS (CURRENTLY EMPLOYED)	TOTAL REGISTERED
Intellectual	264 (79)	170 (75.5)	434 (77.6)
Hearing	11 (3.3)	16 (7.1)	27 (4.8)
Physical	13 (3.9)	16 (7.1)	29 (5.2)
Neurological	26 (7.8)	16 (7.1)	42 (7.5)
Psychiatric	7 (2.1)	5 (2.2)	12 (2.1)
Visual	13 (3.9)	2 (0.9)	15 (2.7)
TOTAL	334 (100)	225 (100)	559 (100)

All people registered with the AIH, if they meet criteria of motivation to work in open employment and have the support of "significant others" in their lives (for example, family members where appropriate), are eligible for *PE Personnel's* services. Referrals to the agency also come from other human service agencies and through friends and families.

Nearly 50% of the 225 workers supported by the agency in open employment have been in one job for more than two years. Table Two describes length of employment and is extracted from the agency's 1991-92 Performance Report.

TABLE TWO: LENGTH OF EMPLOYMENT OF WORKERS AS AT 30 JUNE 1992

LENGTH OF EMPLOYMENT	1990-91	1991-92
Less than 1 year	32%	38%
1-2 years	24%	17%
More than 2 years	44%	45%

The variety of occupations in which service users are engaged is described in Table Three and were extracted from *PE Personnel's* 1991-92 Performance Report.

TABLE THREE: NATURE OF JOBS AS AT 30 JUNE 1992

OCCUPATIONAL CATEGORY	OCCUPATIONS	NUMBER OF JOBS
Administrative Support	Information Officer	2
Technological	Laboratory Assistant	1
Social Services	Social Case Worker, Bus Aide, Ward Help	5
Clerical	Accounts Clerk, Library Assistant, Clerical Assistant, Clerical - advertising, general, Telephonist, Key Punch Operator, Mail Officer, Accounts Clerk	24
Sales	Sales Rep, Fabric Sales, Check-out Operator, Sales Clerk	13
Service	Kitchen Hand, Cook, Cleaner, Laundry Assistant, Caretaker, Trolley Collector	74
Agricultural	Gardener, Farm/Station Hand, Nursery Attendant	17
Metal Working	Motor Mechanic, Apprentice Vehicle Painter/Panel Beater, Trades Assistant, Vehicle Painter, Auto Parts Recycling Process Worker	9
Woodworking	Wood Assembly, Apprentice Wood Machinist, Apprentice Cabinet Maker	3
Mining	Sample Washer	1
Material Handling	Storesperson, Fork lift Driver	6
Transport	Bus Driver, Courier/Driver	2
Construction	Painter & Decorator, Builder's Labourer	3
Textile	Sewing Machine Operator	1
Food Processing	Pastry Cook	1
Clay, Glass and stone	Cement Plant Operator	1
Basic Manual	Factory Hand, Labourer, Truck Driver's Offsider	65
Total		229

The most prevalent jobs are: factory hand (62); cleaner (32); trolley collectors (22); kitchen hand/canteen assistant (15); clerical (14); and gardeners (12) (1991-92 Performance Report).

At 30 June 1992, 161 (69.4%) of the jobs were full-time and 72 (30.6%) were part time.

The agency's job placement activities have been influenced by the economic downturn in Western Australia and resulted in the agency adopting some strategies to deal with this. In its 1991-92 Annual Report, *PE Personnel* noted that it had closed its register and decided to focus its resources on existing service users. Priority was to be given to service users who were formerly employed and who wished to return to the workforce. A further measure was the recent identification of certain strategies to reduce the number of job separations. These strategies were outlined in the 1991-92 Performance Report.

The 1991-92 Performance Report also identified some of the main reasons for job separations during that financial year. They included:

- poor job matches (14 separations)
- exploitative work places (11 separations)
- unmotivated workers (10 separations)
- industrial misconduct (14 separations)
- workers unsupported by the agency ie. people who did not want *PE Personnel* support (24 separations)
- retrenchment (14 separations)

3.5 Other Stakeholders

3.5.1 THE EMPLOYERS

On a number of occasions during the evaluation it was stated that employers also constituted part of the agency's client base. The majority of these are in the private sector although during the 1991-92 financial year, the agency targeted public sector employers. By June 1992, 58 service users were employed in 28 different government departments. Public sector agencies providing employment included the Department of Land Administration, Homeswest, AIH and Australia Post.

Table Four describes the number of jobs in different employer categories in June 1992.

TABLE FOUR: JOBS BY EMPLOYER CATEGORY AS AT 30 JUNE 1992

EMPLOYER	NUMBER OF JOBS
Small Business (less than 20 employees, usually family owned)	80 (35%)
Medium Businesses (21-100 employees)	40 (17%)
Big Businesses (more than 100 employees)	48 (21%)
Local Government	7 (3%)
State Government	49 (22%)
Federal Government	5 (2%)
TOTAL	229 (100%)

As indicated in Table Four, 52% of the jobs located by *PE Personnel* are with small and medium-sized businesses, 21% with big businesses and 27% with the public sector. In the agency's 1991-92 Annual Report, this is favourably compared with figures provided by the Chamber of Commerce and Industry in WA which has 50% of WA's workforce in small businesses, 20% in big businesses and 30% in the public sector.

3.5.2 ORGANISATIONAL STRUCTURE

Organisational Chart

PE Personnel's organisational structure (derived from the 1991-92 Performance Report) is outlined in Figure One overleaf.

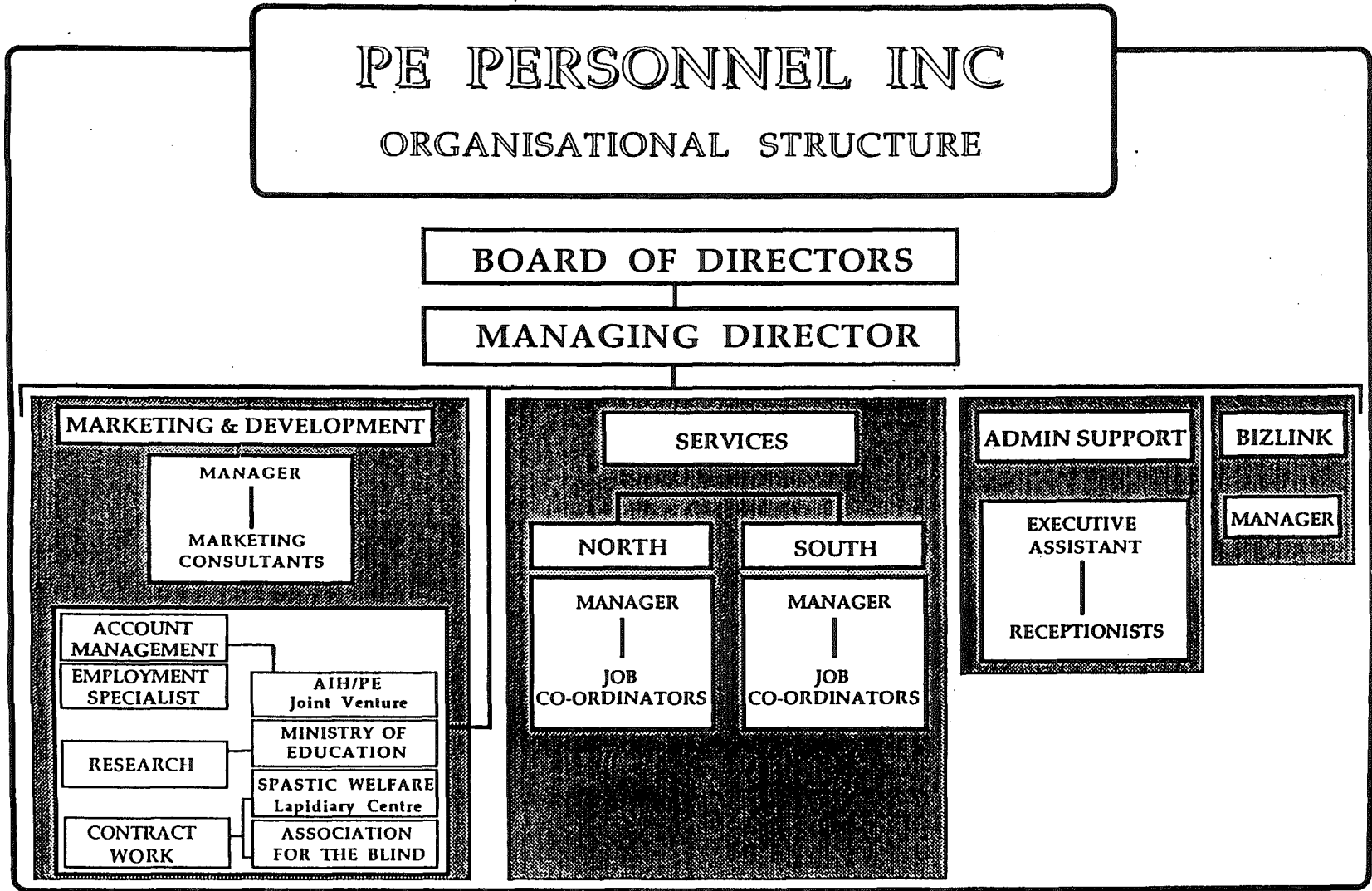


FIGURE ONE: PE PERSONNEL ORGANISATIONAL STRUCTURE

3.5.3 PE PERSONNEL STAFF

At June 1992, PE Personnel employed a staff of 28 who filled the following positions described in Table Five.

TABLE FIVE: PE PERSONNEL STAFF AS AT 30 JUNE 1992

MANAGEMENT	CONTRACT STAFF
1 Managing Director 1 Manager, Marketing & Development 1 Manager, Job Support <i>PE Personnel South</i> 1 Manager, Job Support <i>PE Personnel North</i>	1 Project Coordinator 1 Integrated Work Experience Officer
JOB SEARCH	JOB SUPPORT
4 Marketing Consultants	13 Job Coordinators 1 Employment Specialist 1 Account Coordinator
ADMINISTRATION	BIZLINK
1 Executive Assistant 1 Receptionist	1 Manager

With the exception of the Account Coordinator and the Project Coordinator, the agency was structured so that job search and job support activities were implemented in discrete stages with staff responsible for one or the other function. Each function required different skills so staff were recruited to specialise in either job search or job support activities.

Job support activities were organised on a regional basis with managers responsible for the areas north and south of the Swan River respectively. The

Job Coordinators also operated on this regional basis and were responsible to the appropriate manager.

Overall responsibility for managing the agency lay with the Managing Director to whom three other managers reported directly. The two Regional Managers were responsible for planning and coordinating regional operations. The Manager of Marketing and Development was responsible for the planning and coordination of agency marketing, research and development, training and consultancies.

The four Marketing Consultants were responsible for job search activities and reported to the Manager of Marketing and Development. The job description was to coordinate regional job search operations and engage in marketing activities which assisted job seekers registered with the agency to locate and secure suitable jobs and to promote services provided by the agency to potential employers.

The 13 Job Coordinators were responsible for job support activities and reported to their respective Regional Manager. The job description was to support workers registered with the agency to establish and maintain careers in open employment utilising job support procedures outlined in the agency's *Finding a Job, Keeping a Job* manual (Lewis, Robertson, Lawn and Roberts, 1991).

Table Five also refers to BIZLINK. This was established by *PE Personnel* in February 1992 to provide specialist assistance to 12 1991 school leavers with disabilities to secure and maintain employment. BIZLINK offers a range of integrated employment, education, training and vocational development options including job support, TAFE and SkillShare courses, and work experience.

PE Personnel's activities were overseen by both a Board of Directors and an Association of Members to whom the agency was accountable.

3.5.4 THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Constitutionally, management of *PE Personnel* was vested in the Board, the main functions of which were to guide the agency's activities, to establish policies and priorities and to plan future strategies and initiatives for the agency.

The central and important role of the Board and its composition were highlighted in the agency's *Finding a Job, Keeping a Job* manual. Here it was stated that the membership of the Board "*will have a critical bearing on the performance of the agency*". In particular, it was suggested that "*the board of an employment agency must have credibility in the commercial sector*" and that the "*presence of high profile, successful individuals from the business, finance, marketing and personnel fields will clearly and unequivocally position the agency within that sector*". Clearly, the central role of the business/enterprise model was

reflected in these statements and, as described below, in the composition of the Board.

The Board members are described in Table Six in terms of their roles on the Board and in their roles outside *PE Personnel*.

TABLE SIX: BOARD OF DIRECTORS OF PE PERSONNEL AS AT 30 JUNE 1992

ROLE WITHIN PE PERSONNEL	ROLE OUTSIDE PE PERSONNEL
Chairman (inaugural)	Deputy Chairman, Allied Capital Group.
Deputy Chairman and Director, Research and Development	Director, Country Services, AIH; carried out original research upon which service was based.
Director of Marketing	JBW Enterprises.
Director of Finance	Professor of Accounting, University of WA.
Director	Parent of a service user.
Director	General Manager, Drake Personnel.
Director	Solicitor.
Managing Director	Long work history in disability services; significant roles in the disability field locally and nationally.

3.5.5 ASSOCIATION OF PE PERSONNEL MEMBERS

The agency's management also was responsible to an association of *PE Personnel* members established by the Constitution which formed the body as a legally incorporated, non-profit, voluntary sector organisation. Membership comprised about 50 people including service users, parents and others who had their principal contact with the agency through its annual general meeting.

3.6 Agency Methods and Processes

3.6.1 JOB SEARCH

PE Personnel identified four key criteria that need to be fulfilled to maximise the chances that job seekers with disabilities will be successful in open employment. These criteria are:

1. the job seeker's motivation to work;
2. support for the job seeker from significant people in his/her life;
3. the ability to make a realistic career choice;
4. access to on-the-job-training (Lewis, Robertson, Lawn and Roberts, 1991: 17).

The first purpose of job search is to ascertain whether these prerequisites are met.

Job search activities are organised into two stages. First, the prospective service user is interviewed and registered with the agency. This is used as an opportunity to gauge the job seeker's occupational preferences, and to assess his/her motivation to work in open employment. A broad screening process is followed here to identify possible occupational matches and mis-matches and to assess any physical barriers to certain types of work. In addition, "significant others" in the job seeker's life, such as parents, are encouraged to attend the interview to "affirm their preparedness to support the job seeker in the pursuit of his or her occupational goals" (Lewis, Robertson, Lawn and Roberts, 1991: 17).

In the second stage, a Marketing Consultant initiates job search to locate an employment position which suits the needs, requirements, preferences and abilities of the service user. A number of strategies may be utilised, including:

1. contact with the Commonwealth Employment Service;
2. cold canvass of employers;
3. sources of advertised vacancies;
4. identifying and pursuing job leads through the service user's own networks of family and friends;
5. referrals from other employment agencies;
6. employer-initiated leads;
7. openings generated by "repeat business".

The "repeat business" strategy refers to "new positions that are created within companies that currently employ, or have previously employed, a worker through the agency". (Lewis, Robertson, Lawn and Roberts, 1991: 40). These may arise unsolicited or through follow ups initiated by the agency. Table Seven shows the sources of jobs located for service users in 1990-91 and 1991-92. The majority of jobs were generated through repeat business for both years.

TABLE SEVEN: SOURCES OF JOBS LOCATED BY PE PERSONNEL 1990-91 AND 1991-92

STRATEGY	% 1990-91	% 1991-92
Repeat Business	48	48
Employer Initiated	2	1.6
Family/Friend Network	9	21
Job Seeker Generated	7	0
Employer/Cold Canvass	8	11
Employer Canvass with Referral	0	1
Targeted Industry	4	0
CES	14	9
Advertised Vacancy	4	1
Agency Referral	1	3
Business Associations	0	3.4
Not Known	3	1
	100	100

3.6.2 JOB SUPPORT

Once a service user is placed in employment, a Job Coordinator takes responsibility for maintaining the worker in that position. This involves two main tasks, training on the job and ensuring sufficient and stable support networks.

i) On the Job Training

The Job Coordinator learns and performs the job in order to understand its requirements; analyses and breaks it down into smaller component tasks; looks at ways of adapting the task or environment to make it more suitable for the person concerned; and structures and implements on-the-job training to enable the worker to learn and fulfil the requirements of the job.

ii) Support Networks

The Job Coordinator's task is to ensure the development of a network of linkages and support to help maintain the worker in his or her job. The agency aims for a "four-way partnership" between the service user, the employer, the family and the agency (Lewis, Robertson, Lawn and Roberts, 1991: 73).

The Job Coordinator's support is initially provided full-time and as the worker becomes accomplished and settled in the job, the level of support is decreased and the natural networks become the prime source of support. The Job Coordinator maintains periodic contact with the worker, according to individual need, throughout the duration of the job in case additional support is required.

In addition, the Job Coordinator has to ensure the development of co-worker support for the worker and the integration of the worker into the broader work environment. To this end, *PE Personnel* provides a two-day co-worker training course to enable co-workers to develop the skills necessary to support the workers with disabilities. In 1991-92, more than 28 co-workers participated in co-worker training courses.

3.6.3 DIVERSIFICATION OF AGENCY ACTIVITIES

Since its inception, the range of activities undertaken by *PE Personnel* has expanded into a variety of areas. The diversification has occurred through the agency taking on "projects" from other agencies and through the development of new initiatives by *PE Personnel* itself.

i) Agency Projects

The various projects undertaken by the agency have typically been performed by experienced staff members who would be replaced in their usual roles by the recruitment of additional, temporary staff members to the existing team. Examples of the types of project undertaken include:

- a) an HH&CS funded project to assist people with disabilities to make the transition from sheltered employment with ACTIV Foundation and Spastic Welfare Association to open employment;
- b) a contract with the Association for the Blind to assist their clients in securing and maintaining open employment;
- c) a research grant from the Education Department to develop service models to locate, secure and support work experiences for students with disabilities who attend Education Support Schools, Centres and Units;

- d) the secondment of an Account Manager to the Authority for Intellectually Handicapped Persons to secure work for people with disabilities within the AIH.

ii) *PE Personnel Initiatives*

Major activities in this area involved the agency using its experience and expertise to contribute to the development of similar services throughout Australia. These initiatives included direct assistance and participation in the establishment of new agencies such as *Project Employment* (now known as Forrest Personnel) and *Peel Personnel*, locally incorporated, competitive employment agencies in the south-west of W.A., and new services such as *BIZLINK*, a service to find employment and develop vocational skills for school leavers with disabilities, plus the provision of consultancy, publishing and training activities.

Consultancy activity was primarily the provision of training and support for staff and management of employment agencies.

Publishing activity was largely focused on the production of training manuals for use by employment agencies. In June 1992, *PE Personnel* registered the name *ProEm Publications* as a commercial arm to produce and sell training publications. Examples of manuals produced in 1992 included:

Job Hunting: A self-help guide for families of job seekers with disabilities.
Finding a Job, Keeping a Job (Second Edition).
Getting the Job Done: A co-worker training manual.

Training activity is summarised in Table Eight which lists the range of training courses provided by *PE Personnel* for staff of employment agencies in 1992.

TABLE EIGHT: PE PERSONNEL TRAINING COURSES IN 1992

COURSE TITLE	DURATION	NO. COURSES	NO. CONSULTANCY DAYS
Finding a Job, Keeping a Job	5 days	7	35
Employment Brokerage	1 day	7	7
Managing an Employment Agency	3 days	7	21
Integrated Work Experience	4 days	4	16
Total	13 days	25	79

The total number of 79 consultancy days is equivalent to more than a 0.33EFT and demonstrates that a significant proportion of *PE Personnel* staff time is allocated to training.

Consultancy, publishing and training activities generated revenue which was invested into administrative and infrastructure resources for the agency. The amounts are not insignificant. For example, *ProEm* was projected to earn \$30,229 in the 1992-93 financial year (Performance Report 1991-92).

3.7 Funding

Sources and amounts of revenue for 1991-92 and projected for 1992-93 are shown in Table Nine.

TABLE NINE: FUNDING AND REVENUE SOURCES 1991-92 AND 1992-93

FUNDING SOURCE	1991-92 (\$)	1992-93 (\$) (projected)
AIH	473,000	473,000
HH&CS	256,708	256,708
HH&CS (Transition Program)	191,227	193,923
HH&CS (Lapidary Employment Project)	30,842	31,679
Association for the Blind	18,030	18,030
Lotteries Commission	19,125	22,509
Pro-Em		30,229
TOTAL	988,932	1,026,078

During 1991-92, *PE Personnel* was funded to the amount of \$988,932 in grants, constituting a cost per worker with a disability of \$4,395 (Performance Report 1991-92).

3.8 Assumptions and Purposes

A number of crucial assumptions and purposes can be drawn from the description of the agency's activities.

A strong assumption underpinning the agency's operations was that work is of fundamental importance for people with disabilities. In addition, that work should be in the open workforce and conditions of employment, including payment, should reflect appropriate employment awards.

A related assumption emphasised the interdependence and mutual responsibilities of the principal stakeholders — people with disabilities, employers and the community. This assumption clearly challenged the traditional charity model of service provision for people with disabilities.

The agency adopted essentially a "no reject" approach that is based on the assumption that all people with disabilities who meet a set of explicit criteria which are unrelated to the extent of their impairments are capable of working in open employment. This assumption explicitly asserts very high, positive expectations for people with disabilities and the community and confronts many long-held assumptions of both the service sector and the community, that people with more significant impairments can only manage in sheltered employment.

The agency was initiated and developed according to a service type which was explicit and well-researched and utilised a set of service methods and technical processes which were tested and known to be relatively effective with non-disabled people as well as people with disabilities. There was a definite assumption that this vocational service type was more effective than other, more traditional approaches.

From the beginning, the agency adopted a proselytising approach that has meant it has seen as part of its purpose, the reform of existing vocational services for people with disabilities.

A further important assumption built into the agency was the central role of the so-called business or private enterprise model. This reflected a commitment by the agency to ensuring that its methods and processes were those of an employment agency. From one perspective, the adoption of this model is clearly culturally valued and appropriate to the service purpose. From another perspective, the adoption of the model challenges traditional human service models for people with disabilities.

Finally, *PE Personnel* clearly determined that its central purpose was finding jobs for people with disabilities and supporting them in those jobs. This meant that the service purpose also addressed the more general purposes of work in our culture which includes the provision of economic security and valued roles for people that come from their work and careers.

PE Personnel has adopted a set of assumptions, purposes and a service type which are inherently challenging of many traditional assumptions and practices regarding people with disabilities. The explicit, high expectations which are reflected in the agency's documentation and practices constitute considerable challenges to all stakeholders.

4.0 AGENCY STRENGTHS

The evaluation team spent considerable time focussing on the strengths of the agency. All services have strengths but they can be easily overlooked if there is a preoccupation with problems. This can lead to strengths not being appreciated and perhaps even discarded in order to solve some other concern. Strengths need to be celebrated and safeguarded, and one of the first safeguards is to be conscious of the strengths.

PE Personnel has many very impressive strengths. Some of the major ones are listed below.

4.1 Values Base

One of the most impressive characteristics of the agency, and one that the evaluation team thought was critical to the quality of the service provided, was the clear and explicit values base. The values were prominently displayed on the walls of the agency and through the agency's documentation, but more important, they were reflected through the agency personnel. Proposed actions were considered in relation to the agency values, the values were modelled very consistently by senior staff and all staff were seen to reflect the values. The strong impression gained by the evaluation team was that the agency held positive opinions about the service users, valued them as individuals and were enthusiastic about presenting them very positively to employers and co-workers. The evaluation team thought the values that permeated the agency were a very powerful influence on service quality and provided an important safeguard for the continuation of that quality.

4.2 Personal Knowledge of Service Users

PE Personnel provided a personalised service to all of its people in jobs, and considered this to be an important part of the service. When a member of the evaluation team asked about a particular worker, it was found that senior staff from the Managing Director onwards could relate personal information about the individual, indicating a depth of personal knowledge of service users that the team found very impressive. Individual job support and job search personnel would also discuss individuals in a way that indicated that they had an appreciation of their talents and strengths and had a personal knowledge that went considerably beyond work-related characteristics. This focus on individuals was seen by the evaluation team as being a major contributor to the quality of the service for workers and to the overall success of the agency.

4.3 Consciousness of Importance of Image for Service Users

Staff of *PE Personnel* through all levels of the agency showed a very high consciousness of the importance of a positive image for people with disabilities. Considerable effort was spent on addressing the personal impact of a job seeker at interviews in terms of appearance and manner, and this concern was followed through into the workplace. The agency promotional material provided a very positive image for the people in terms of appearance and competence, and there was a high consciousness throughout the agency of the need to avoid any images that conformed with negative community stereotypes of people with disabilities. There were no instances found of the agency promoting itself at the expense of people with disabilities. Relatedly, staff were always presented in a way that was likely to convey positive images about the people they were supporting. The team found this

concern with a positive image for the people very refreshing as it is unfortunately often overlooked or considered to be of low importance by service agencies in the field of disability, with quite negative consequences for the people receiving a service.

4.4 Expectations for Service Users and Service

One very common characteristic reflected in services for people with disabilities is low expectations for service users. These low expectations frequently result in a "self fulfilling prophesy", where low expectations are accompanied by low powered teaching with inevitably poor outcomes. With *PE Personnel* staff, there was a strong expectation that they can get a job in the open workforce for any person with a disability and that that person can hold such a job. This expectation resulted in very focussed and effective teaching of people with a disability. The impressive results of the agency in finding and keeping jobs is a strong testimonial to the power of the positive expectations held by the agency about people with a disability. Moreover, the strong expectations led to staff of the agency taking responsibility for the success or failure of the service users, with minimal instances of service users being blamed if they were not successful in gaining or keeping a job.

4.5 Committed Staff

The evaluation team members spent quite a lot of time with agency staff and came away with a strong appreciation of the commitment of staff at all levels of the organisation. In short, they seemed to care a lot about the people that they worked with and gave the impression that it was more than just a job. The commitment was reflected in personalised attention given to service users and their families, staff working long hours, and extensive constructive discussions of agency issues in staff breaks and outside of work hours. The team felt that this concern and commitment of the staff was a major strength of the agency and contributed substantially to the quality of the service.

4.6 Board Strengths

PE Personnel consciously set out to structure a Board made up of people with business expertise plus an interest in the advancement of people with a disability. Board positions were structured so that individuals with particular expertise — for example in financial or legal issues — have been sought out and brought on to the Board. This development of an expert Board has meant that the Board has the capacity to provide clear direction and expert advice. In addition, the individual interest and commitment of Board members, many of whom have a personal involvement with a person with a disability, has meant that the values base of the organisation has been supported with a focus on outcomes for the service users. The evaluation team considered that the use of an expert Board filled a strong role in the agency by providing accountability; expertise in the business area; a progressive, innovative direction; and valuable links into the business sector. The team felt that

if the more common approach in the disability field had been taken — of a Board comprised largely or solely of representatives of stakeholder groups — the Board would likely be less effective.

4.7 Business Proficiency

PE Personnel looks and feels like a well run business. From the reception on entry, telephone contact or meeting with any of the agency personnel, there is a focus on professionalism, service and business-like image. Whenever data was requested by the evaluation team it was found readily and the recording and information management of the agency appeared to be very efficient. The agency is planning to improve this in the future with extension of the computerised data management systems. Overall, the evaluation team felt that not only was *PE Personnel* operating as an employment agency in a similar way to agencies in the business sector, it was performing well in terms of business proficiency.

4.8 Problem-Solving Orientation

PE Personnel came across to the evaluation team as a "can do" agency. There was a strong belief running through the agency that if there was a problem then it was their responsibility and within their capacity to solve it. There was considerable flexibility seen in the methods used to solve problems, together with an impressive willingness to think laterally.

4.9 Energy and Enthusiasm

Linked to the commitment of staff was a great energy and enthusiasm. Staff were always willing to help a service user, showing interest and clear enjoyment in their work. The regular opportunities for staff to get together socially almost certainly helped to maintain this energy and enthusiasm, but it also reflected well on the style and support of senior management.

4.10 Outward Looking

PE Personnel frequently looked outside of the agency for ideas and directions. This was most obvious in the focus on business for ideas but it also involved regular monitoring of research publications, conference reports and visiting experts. This meant that the agency continually adapted and incorporated new ideas and strategies from outside. The team felt that this outside orientation was one of the key factors in the agency's maintenance of a position as a leader in the field.

5.0 IDENTIFIED ISSUES AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The following are the major issues identified by the team as a result of the evaluation process. Each of the eight issues is presented by first describing the general issue and detailing some of the likely impacts of that issue and closely related issues. Finally, recommendations are stated that flow from the analysis of the main issue. This is followed by a description of the PASSING ratings which were utilised in the evaluation. Issue 5.1 was considered to be the most important for the agency, but the others are not presented in any order of importance.

It is important to state that none of these issues is simple or straightforward. In fact, as one peruses the issues, the enormous complexity, the considerable demands and the challenges which go with providing a competitive employment service become obvious. Whilst being mindful of this, the team felt it needed to do justice both to people with disabilities who rely on the agency for so much, and to the high standards and expectations which *PE Personnel* sets for itself.

5.1 "Jobs for People" or "People for Jobs"?

5.1.1 THE ISSUE

It is clear that *PE Personnel's* primary purpose is to provide job search services to people with disabilities with the objective of obtaining employment which meets the needs of individual service users. The "*jobs for people*" scenario reflects the struggle to ensure the high quality of a service user-job match by seeking the right job for the individual job seeker.

The current economic climate has affected the availability of job openings and also narrowed the range of employment vacancies making it more difficult to place service users and even more difficult to find jobs which suit individual needs. In this climate, finding employment through usual methods such as newspaper advertisements, cold canvassing and the Commonwealth Employment Service requires considerable effort for limited returns in terms of job starts.

As a result, a significant proportion of *PE Personnel's* job placements (48% in the 1991-92 financial year) are generated by "*repeat business*" whereby current employers contact the agency with a job vacancy and *PE Personnel* responds by recommending an individual to fill the position (the "*people for jobs*" scenario). The repeat business strategy can allow greater access of job seekers with more significant disabilities to particular employers. Although repeat business fulfils an employer's immediate needs for a new staff person and also reflects positive employer attitudes towards *PE Personnel*, this strategy is less satisfactory from the perspective of service user-job match quality and also has additional potentially negative consequences.

Whilst acknowledging both the importance of *PE Personnel* maintaining its good relations with employers and the impossibility of influencing the broad

economic environment, it may be possible to minimise the effect of some of these consequences.

5.1.2 THE IMPACTS

a) Maintaining a Large Register of Job Seekers:

As the strategy of providing "*people for jobs*" increasingly influences the activities of the service, it becomes necessary to maintain a large register of job seekers to ensure there is a choice of job seekers from which to select an appropriate individual. This is not the only influence on the practice of having a large job seeker register, but it is a significant influence. An additional major influence on the size of the job register was the agency's unwillingness in its early years of operation to refuse to register applicants seeking the agency's services. In June 1992, the register of job seekers contained the names of 559 people. Some of the consequences of having a register of this magnitude include the following:

- i) It becomes increasingly difficult for the service to know each service user on an individual basis and in turn, makes it more difficult to identify the individual's capabilities, skills, needs and goals and to find a job which satisfactorily matches these. This is a clear threat to what was identified as a strength of *PE Personnel*, the individual focus of the service;
- ii) Frequency of contact with job seekers is adversely affected because the total number of service users exceeds the agency's capacity to service them all adequately. Some job seekers who were interviewed expressed a wish for more frequent contact and more information about *PE Personnel's* efforts specifically on their behalf;
- iii) The agency generally gives higher priority to people who were placed originally by the agency, subsequently experienced job separation and then wish to seek re-employment. Thus candidates for job vacancies are sought from a priority list of separated job seekers and the remainder of the register considered if the priority list does not generate a suitable individual. The priority for separated job seekers may be appropriate, but the lower priority accorded to people who have not been placed in a job by the agency means they can receive little service for extended periods;

- iv) A large register generates unrealistic expectations that the agency will be able to find jobs for everybody who registers. This turns into dissatisfaction if people subsequently receive little actual service;
- v) The perception that people are on a register (or waiting list), may influence the involvement of referring agencies and other vocational services. Placement on the register may be equated with the person's needs being addressed. Relatedly, job seekers themselves may wait for services and not adopt alternative strategies for finding a job.

b) The Quality of the Job Match:

The "*people for jobs*" scenario has a direct influence on the quality of the job match. This in turn will significantly affect retention and turnover rates in jobs. The problem of job turnover is reflected in a recent survey carried out by the agency and described in a staff seminar on 31 July 1992 which showed that less than 50% of those placed in a job were still employed in that position 6 months later. Clearly, quality of job match is not the only influence on job turnover; for example, the general economic climate is a major factor. However, quality of job match is a significant influence.

There are additional consequences if job seekers are not placed in jobs which reflect very high job match quality.

- i) Experience of the job and possible subsequent job loss may have a particularly negative impact on the motivation and self esteem of individuals, some of whom are already in a vulnerable position.
- ii) High job turnover and/or job retention for short time periods has a predictable effect on the perception of stakeholders and the public generally on the capabilities and suitability of people with disabilities for employment.
- iii) These will also influence the perceptions of people as to the reputation and capacity of the agency to fulfil its mandate.
- iv) Selecting a service user for a job rather than finding a job to suit the service user may result in career development being subsumed by the more pressing need to meet the employer's immediate needs.

5.1.3 RECOMMENDATIONS

- 5A *PE Personnel* should give the highest possible priority to a "jobs for people" strategy rather than a "people for jobs" strategy.
- 5B *PE Personnel* should limit the number of service users on their register to (say) 300 workers or job seekers, with a further (say) 100 service users in the transition group (see section 5.5A on Transition) in order to streamline the size of the service user base and allow better focus of resources.
- 5C Four options are suggested to review the register and reduce the service user base:
- i) contact all job seekers to verify their interest in remaining on the register;
 - ii) provide information to service users about other services that they may wish to apply to;
 - iii) refer service users back to the referring agency whilst informing them that there is little likelihood of results in the short term;
 - iv) consider advocating for another agency to be established to take the excess numbers.
- 5D Consideration should be given to having one staff member, preferably the Managing Director, who carries out a preliminary interview with people who may become new registrants. This will provide one permanent staff member who knows each client personally, ensures a single point of entry to and oversight of overall service activities and also provides good modelling for staff and other agencies.
- 5E The agency should be prudent in agreeing to find a worker to fill a particular employer's job opening, at least until the characteristics and suitability of the job have been assessed vis a vis job seekers on the register; consideration has been given to the capacity of the agency to offer support; and the potential for a successful long-term placement has been determined.
- 5F Because a key requirement of successful job placement is knowledge of the needs and capabilities of each individual, every service user on the register should be allocated to a particular Job Coordinator who will be responsible for knowing them. As it is possible to know well only a relatively small number of people, each Job Coordinator should be responsible for a maximum of (say) 30 service users.
- 5G Job Coordinators should develop specialised expertise in particular industry sectors such as retail or production and, where possible, service users on the register allocated to them on the basis of employment interests in the particular industry sector. This will

enhance the agency's knowledge and expertise in key areas of employment.

- 5H When a job is found or referred that is not associated with a particular service user, specific procedures should be adopted to enhance the quality of the job match.

5.2 Job Selection

5.2.1 THE ISSUES

The evaluation team identified three issues related to job selection for service users that it wished to highlight. The first two issues are related particularly to the impacts on the image of service users when they are involved in some jobs. In view of the clear importance that *PE Personnel* accords to image, both its own and that of service users, these are important to mention.

First, there is a need to widen the range of areas and variety of jobs found for service users. In the current economic climate, this is a difficult task, but nevertheless, needs to be a high priority. It is a common perception that only some jobs such as manual work or trolley collecting are appropriate for people with disabilities and *PE Personnel* needs to continue to counter this.

Second, a number of service users have been placed in jobs in the disability services sector. Although there are undoubted benefits to service users in such jobs, the evaluation team was concerned about the negative impact on their image both from the strong association with disability and from the possible perception that this is the only option for them.

Third, an analysis of data supplied by *PE Personnel* indicated that for the period 1/1/84 – 30/6/92, the average earnings of female clients placed in jobs by the agency were only 86% of those for male clients (derived from *All Workers in All Jobs, PE Personnel, 6/7/92*). Although this situation may approximate the earnings of women in the broader community, it indicates the need for the agency to continue to address this discrepancy on an ongoing basis.

These issues depend on the effectiveness of job finding, job matching and career development activities of the agency.

5.2.2 RECOMMENDATIONS

- 5I *PE Personnel* should continue to review job selection practices with attention particularly paid to the endeavour to widen the range of jobs; to image issues around utilisation of disability-related jobs; and to possible sex biases in jobs.

5.3 Job Training and Support

5.3.1 THE ISSUE

Generally, the on-the-job-training and follow-up support provided to service users by the agency's Job Coordinators was highly regarded. There was considerable praise from a number of service users, families and employers for the comprehensive and thorough support provided. However, in a few cases, doubts were expressed about the suitability and adequacy of support provided to workers and their colleagues.

There was some evidence from stakeholders that when a Job Coordinator is replaced for whatever reason, there may be a decline in the extent of job support.

Another issue relates to the difficult balance between providing over-support and too much intervention — thus preventing service users from developing greater independence — and providing insufficient support.

A key need was identified to place more emphasis on co-worker training. This was seen to be a powerful strategy with benefits beyond the support that may occur for service users in the employment situation. For example, good support for co-workers influences the development of positive attitudes towards people with disabilities and the agency.

5.3.2 RECOMMENDATIONS

- 5J In order to maximise the effectiveness of job support, Job Coordinators should know the service users well, consult with the worker on the nature and amount of support they desire and require and ensure that negotiations with the employer allow sufficient time to ensure all aspects of training can be addressed. In this regard, there needs to be more consistent approaches to job support.
- 5K Co-worker training should continue to be emphasised as a particularly powerful strategy and co-worker training practices continuously updated and improved.

5.4 Agency Diversification

5.4.1 THE ISSUE

In addition to its primary task of job search and placement, *PE Personnel* engages in a range of consultancy, training and publishing activities. These activities represent a diversification of the primary agency purpose and appear to be closely related to them. For example, consultancy activities relate to the establishment of similar competitive employment services both within Western Australia and elsewhere and training activities are related to

the development of skills required to provide such services. The provision of external training resulted from in-house training and requests from other agencies wanting access to it. Consultancy, training and publishing activities also reflect the agency's private enterprise ethic. Such diversification has obvious benefits for the agency and the field generally, but there are also a number of possible disadvantages that are more likely to occur without some safeguards.

5.4.2 THE IMPACTS

These additional activities serve a number of beneficial functions, including:

- i) The agency's generally-acknowledged position as a "leading edge" employment service for people with disabilities is maintained;
- ii) The agency itself is energised and renewed by its leadership role and the constant interaction with people outside the agency who have shared objectives;
- iii) The agency makes a significant contribution to the development of high quality employment services for people with disabilities.
- iv) Opportunities are provided for staff to enhance their skills and involvements;
- v) Additional income is provided which contributes to the financial viability of the agency.

The possible disadvantages include the following:

- i) Diversification could lead to the development of activities which are less closely related to the primary purpose of the agency. In management theory, this is well known as the phenomenon of "goal displacement" and can lead to a loss of focus within organisations;
- ii) The demands of diversified activities require resources, particularly those of the more experienced and crucial staff. This may have an impact on staff performance and efficiency in tasks which are the primary focus of the agency. This is of particular importance in regard to the high levels of supervision and support staff require from more experienced and senior staff;
- iii) The image presented by the agency may be affected if it is perceived to engage in activities which are clearly beyond its primary purpose.

5.4.3 RECOMMENDATIONS

- 5L *PE Personnel* should continue to consider carefully diversified activities not directly related to the primary purpose of the agency, specifically in relation to their coherency with and impact on the agency's job

placement and support activities, and their influence on the agency's image.

- 5M Diversified activities such as consultancy, training and publishing should be clearly identified and partitioned in financial and management terms from the primary functions of the agency. This would mean, for example, that a consultancy arm would pay to use the time spent by *PE Personnel* staff in this activity.

5.5 External Activities

This section addresses three sorts of additional activities in which *PE Personnel* engages: work with people in sheltered workshops who are in "transition" to open employment; contracts with particular service agencies to place people with disabilities in open employment; and the establishment of vocationally-related support services.

A. TRANSITION SERVICES

A.5.5.1 THE ISSUE

PE Personnel has a commitment to HH&CS to undertake job search and placement activities for approximately 100 job seekers who were employed in Activ Industries but are in the process, under the agency's direction, of making transition to open employment.

People with disabilities in the transition group present particular needs, both different and additional, to the needs presented by most of the agency's usual service users. For example, sheltered workshops often fulfil a range of functions for the workers and their families of which work-related activity is only one. They are often a major source of friendships, security and stability for the workers. Parents are provided with a reliable day activity for their sons and daughters. A job in the open workforce may have many benefits, but may also be seen to jeopardise the address of these other needs.

In addition, many people attending sheltered workshops have utilised that option for many years, sometimes decades. This may provide particular challenges in regard to the development of various attitudes, skills and behaviours which are appropriate to open rather than sheltered employment. The great preponderance of experience in sheltered rather than open employment for people with disabilities by their families and service workers provides another set of challenges in gaining their understanding and cooperation. It is not uncommon that sheltered employment operations depend on more productive workers and may question the transition process from the perspective of loss of productivity.

It must be stressed that these are not arguments against addressing the challenges but rather support the claim that this group presents particular needs.

A.5.5.2 THE IMPACTS

It is our view, which reflects the experiences of some team members, that the transition group requires more comprehensive intervention than other service users on the register and more intensive efforts to prepare them for open employment. A significant element of this effort would need to be addressed to the sheltered services within which these people are located. It is apparent that many of these job-related issues which need to be considered may not be part of *PE Personnel's* usual purview or service methods and processes. For example, persons in transition may require pre-work training or job sampling to enable skills to be assessed and to provide work experience particularly from the perspective of influencing attitudes and beliefs of people with disabilities, families and service workers towards open employment. At the least, job search and job support activities are likely to be considerably more time consuming for this group. Work may need to be done with the sheltered employment service.

Success with this group is likely to be achieved with more difficulty and to require considerable resources and additional expertise. We believe that *PE Personnel* should reconsider its role in relation to this group.

A.5.5.3 RECOMMENDATIONS

5N *PE Personnel* should closely examine the issues associated with transition activities in order to identify the various job-related issues which are not part of the agency's usual purview, methods and processes and which emerge as a result of the particular needs of this group of service users. Some issues which are relevant include:

- i) the personal attachments that develop in sheltered workshops and influence the consideration of the individual or family of open employment;
- ii) the job security offered by sheltered workshop employment;
- ii) the skills of those in transition;
- iv) the need for transport training;
- v) the need to encourage the "work ethic";
- vi) the need to unlearn some behaviours which may contribute to lack of success in open employment.

- 50 The needs of the transition group should be addressed through a separate agency or at least as a separate operation within *PE Personnel* so that additional resources, activities and efforts can be devoted in a way that the other priorities of *PE Personnel* remain unaffected.

B. AGENCY PROJECTS

B.5.5.1 THE ISSUE

PE Personnel has entered into arrangements with other disability agencies to place a certain number of their service users in jobs for a particular fee. This fee enables *PE Personnel* to employ additional staff to replace experienced staff who take on the actual task.

B.5.5.2 THE IMPACTS

Although resources come with these projects, there still is an impact on the quantum of work for which the agency is responsible. This particularly applies to the more senior and experienced staff. It is clear that the service should not disadvantage itself by taking on tasks which put pressure on finite resources.

These contracts have an obvious impact on the total number of service users for which the agency accepts responsibility.

Because these are specific agency agreements involved, it is possible that this will influence *PE Personnel's* overall priorities and draw some focus away from the primary group of service users.

Finally, there is a need to continue to ensure that these activities reflect *PE Personnel's* primary purposes.

B.5.5.3 RECOMMENDATIONS

5P Acceptance of external contracts with other disability agencies should:

- a) be subject to realistic costing;
- b) be coherent with the agency's purposes;
- c) serve to enhance and sharpen the agency's capacities and competencies;
- d) consider the impact on the overall number of service users on the register.

C. VOCATIONALLY-RELATED SUPPORT SERVICES

C.5.5.1 THE ISSUE

PE Personnel is considering taking on additional roles and responsibilities which are not directly concerned with job placement and support. The agency has applied for funding to establish a day support service for people on the register who are without employment in order to provide them with meaningful activity.

It is a reflection of the agency's commitment to people with disabilities and to the people for whom they have accepted responsibility that they are seeking to address the needs of people on the agency's register who do not have employment. However, it is the view of the evaluation team that this activity is outside the primary area of responsibility and expertise of the agency.

C.5.5.2 THE IMPACTS

The team considered that it is common in human services for organisations to begin with a clear purpose and purview and then to be subjected to many pressures to expand that area of primary responsibility. This leads to attempts being made to address widely disparate needs, some of which lie outside the capacity of the organisation. In management theory and practice this is referred to as "goal displacement" and in human services it is associated with over-protective services.

In making these comments, the evaluation team acknowledges the pressing needs of people who do not have employment and the commitment of the agency. However we also believe that the quality of the agency's services are to a considerable extent a reflection of its particular expertise and focus in the area of competitive employment. Developing services beyond that focus may risk the quality of the entire service.

C.5.5.3 RECOMMENDATION

5Q *PE Personnel* should continue to advocate for the establishment of support services for people with disabilities who do not have employment and possibly could support such efforts, but the agency should not attempt to establish such services itself.

5.6 Accountability

5.6.1 THE ISSUE

PE Personnel was accountable to its funding bodies in regard to the results and outcomes of the agency's activities. For example, the agency was accountable to HH&CS for the number of service users it placed and maintained in employment and for the appropriate expenditure of its

financial resources. In addition, the agency kept a wide range of data on its performance and reported these in considerable detail to its Board on a monthly basis.

These mechanisms for measuring the performance of the agency ensure its formal accountability for fulfilling the tangible outcomes of its responsibilities. Overall, the level of accountability of the organisation in this area exceeds the norm for most human service agencies and there is strong support for the concept of accountability within senior management and the Board.

The second major component of accountability encompasses the maintenance of the strong emphasis on the agency's values base which is service user-oriented and on accountability to service users and their families. This is addressed by a number of mechanisms within the agency including the composition of the Board through members' direct interest in people with disabilities, staff orientation and training and the focus on service user outcomes. The evaluation team identified here the importance of developing a range of processes which would provide additional safeguards to the values, content and direction of *PE Personnel's* activities.

5.6.2 THE IMPACTS

The focus of the agency on its *mission* includes both the efficient and effective devotion of its resources on positive service user outcomes, and the continuing influence and direction provided by its values base. Both elements need to be strengthened and safeguarded because the passage of time and the associated distractions and pressures make maintaining the focus increasingly difficult. The evaluation team recognised the fundamental importance of service user-oriented values to the quality of *PE Personnel's* services. In this regard, we believe that it is important for the agency to strengthen its processes for communicating with and receiving feedback from its principal stakeholders, especially service users and their families.

5.6.3 RECOMMENDATIONS

5R *PE Personnel* should develop a wider range of specific processes for communicating with and receiving feedback from key stakeholders, particularly service users and their families. These measures should include:

- a) routine agency practices such as meetings with members in addition to the annual members' meetings;
- b) surveys of stakeholders' views and concerns;
- c) external involvements such as regular external reviews of the agency;

- d) "renewal" activities that bring together a range of interested people to further develop and affirm the agency's values, directions and practices.

5.7 Organisational Issues

5.7.1 THE ISSUES

There are a number of issues relating to the organisation and structure of *PE Personnel* which need to be addressed to improve the agency's efficiency, particularly with its core activities.

- i) There is an unwieldy range of job titles, roles and descriptions which is confusing to people outside the agency and may lead to lack of clarity about various staff responsibilities.
- ii) A related issue is the need to ensure job search and job support staff roles are clearly delineated to avoid overlapping activities.
- iii) There were indications of staff dissatisfaction attributable to the lack of a promotion and career structure within the agency. This was in spite of there having been 13 promotions for 11 agency staff members in the last two and a half years, and the availability of multi-skilling opportunities which enabled staff members to participate in marketing and consulting activities.
- iv) The increasing demands on staff from diversified activities and the resources devoted to the development of the wide range of agency documentation, whilst necessary and providing important functions, must be monitored to ensure that core activities are not unduly compromised.
- v) During the evaluation, it was commented on several occasions that management staff are often too busy to provide support to staff as much as staff would wish.
- vi) The agency has 5 staff members with formal training in marketing. With the great importance of marketing activities in *PE Personnel's* services, the evaluation team believes that the agency needs to continue to foster additional marketing skills in relevant staff.

As a comment on the organisation's recruitment policies, the evaluation team is of the view that it is important, but not obligatory, for staff to have experience in working with people with disabilities. More important, however, are the values and attitudes of staff towards people with disabilities. Positive attitudes, high expectations and sensitivity to the relationships between people with disabilities, their families and friends, formal human services, and the broader society are of paramount importance. These capacities can exist in people who have not worked

in the disability field and they may also be fostered by agency practices including training. The evaluation team supports *PE Personnel's* recruitment policies as they reflect these priorities.

5.7.2 RECOMMENDATIONS

5S The following recommendations have been made which relate to various organisational issues.

- i) Agency job titles and roles should be examined with the aim of reducing the total number and clarifying the respective duties.
- ii) It is clearly important for the agency to continue to develop strategies to counter the limited number of senior management positions available in the agency. These could include, as well as multi skilling, involvement in training and time-limited secondments to other agencies.
- iii) The range of measures relating to staff performance should be reconsidered to encompass specific staff outcomes and to improve staff supervision and access to management.
- iv) Monitoring of time spent on diversified activities and activities not directly related to core functions should occur to ensure priorities are being maintained.
- v) Staff recruitment policies should continue to reflect a preference for prior experience in working with people with disabilities and continue to clearly state the priority of positive values and attitudes.

5.8 Coordination with other Agencies

5.8.1 THE ISSUES

It was suggested on a number of occasions throughout the evaluation that there has been a significant growth in the number of new agencies in the field of competitive employment and that there is an associated lack of inter-agency coordination. This is exacerbated by new service types which primarily are concerned with addressing non-work needs of people with disabilities but which inevitably are drawn into work-related issues. In addition, traditional vocational service agencies are increasingly moving into the competitive employment area.

There are a number of impacts of this situation. An employer may be approached by several employment agencies, each looking for jobs for people

with disabilities. This could give the impression of an uncoordinated and possibly even an inept effort.

It is inevitable that a degree of "territorialism" will develop that may result in conflict and wasted resources.

On the other hand, a degree of competition in this area is probably helpful and a number of small agencies may provide some duplication which can benefit service users and their families through added choice. In addition, experience shows that smaller agencies tend to be leaner administratively and often more closely aligned to service user issues.

It is clear that communication, cooperation and coordination between agencies with a similar brief is very important, and as a leader in the field, *PE Personnel* has some responsibility to support this.

5.8.2 RECOMMENDATION

5T *PE Personnel* must continue to play a central role in encouraging communication, cooperation and coordination within the field of employment services for people with disabilities. However, competition for jobs in the open workforce should not be discouraged.

5.9 PASSING Ratings

A number of PASSING ratings were considered by the team. Three members of the evaluation team had experience with PASSING, but overall, the team had insufficient experience with the instrument to be able to use it fully as an evaluation tool. However, discussion on the ratings raised and clarified various issues for consideration. All of the major issues raised have been canvassed above, but some additional comments on ratings-related issues are provided below.

- i) The service was found to be both relevant to the needs of service users and quite powerful in addressing their needs. Both relevance and power were judged in relation to the agency's "purview" or legitimate area of responsibility — that is, the provision of employment services. It should be noted that this is not common for a human service and says a great deal about the agency's focus and the minimal goal displacement occurring. Where the agency was lacking in this area was in relation to service users on the register who were not receiving services. Obviously, the agency was not effectively addressing these service users' needs and in fact may have been influencing access to alternative services.
- ii) Grouping of service users was seen to be a particular strength of the service. This occurred through the use of one-to-one support and other service practices which avoided grouping numbers of people with disabilities together and also through the grouping of workers with

valued members of the community, particularly in work settings. On the downside, the fact that the agency only provides services for people with disabilities and the utilisation of disability agencies as employers reflected negative grouping practices.

- iii) The evaluation team was very impressed with the skilled work done by staff in facilitating the integration of service users. Some stories told by service users were very positive. There was evidence, however, that more support was needed for co-workers.
- iv) Staff attitudes and agency practices were very supportive of the individuality of service users and promotion of service users' socio-sexual identity was seen as appropriate.
- v) Staff interactions with the public were very positive as was support for positive interactions between service users and the public.
- vi) The issue of agency purview through what is known as "*separation of program functions*" is addressed above. In essence, this issue is critical of the agency taking on non-work related functions and is supportive of maintaining a clear focus on competitive employment.
- vii) The accessibility of the agency was very good for public transport, parking, traffic density outside of peak hour, footpaths etc.
- viii) Although the agency fits in harmoniously with the up-market business image of West Perth, there is some proximity to other human services such as the AIH, Rheola Street services, and Princess Margaret Hospital. This issue is considered as an important influence on the image of service users.
- ix) Both the external and internal appearance of the office was considered to be very appropriate and aesthetically very pleasing. Obvious attention had been given to ensuring that the premises reflected the purposes of an employment agency. Overall, the quality of the physical environment provided a model for other human services. The only problems from this perspective were a number of "disability pictures" which, although portraying positive stories, also drew attention to disability. Physical comfort was very good generally apart from access to the toilets and kitchen area, and the high front counter which would be difficult for a person in a wheelchair to see over. Quite a lot of attention had been given to individualising features of the office such as provision of privacy and specialised equipment to facilitate communication.
- x) The use of language in such areas as program names had been chosen carefully to convey positive images. The agency's logo was seen to convey both positive and negative images.

what are they?

6.0 SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDATIONS

- 5A *PE Personnel* should give the highest possible priority to a "jobs for people" strategy rather than a "people for jobs" strategy.
- 5B *PE Personnel* should limit the number of service users on their register to (say) 300 workers or job seekers, with a further (say) 100 service users in the transition group (see section 5.5A on Transition) in order to streamline the size of the service user base and allow better focus of resources.
- 5C Four options are suggested to review the register and reduce the service user base:
- i) contact all job seekers to verify their interest in remaining on the register;
 - ii) provide information to service users about other services that they may wish to apply to;
 - iii) refer service users back to the referring agency whilst informing them that there is little likelihood of results in the short term;
 - iv) consider advocating for another agency to be established to take the excess numbers.
- 5D Consideration should be given to having one staff member, preferably the Managing Director, who carries out a preliminary interview with people who may become new registrants. This will provide one permanent staff member who knows each client personally, ensures a single point of entry to and oversight of overall service activities and also provides good modelling for staff and other agencies.
- 5E The agency should be prudent in agreeing to find a worker to fill a particular employer's job opening, at least until the characteristics and suitability of the job have been assessed vis a vis job seekers on the register; consideration has been given to the capacity of the agency to offer support; and the potential for a successful long-term placement has been determined.
- 5F Because a key requirement of successful job placement is knowledge of the needs and capabilities of each individual, every service user on the register should be allocated to a particular Job Coordinator who will be responsible for knowing them. As it is possible to know well only a relatively small number of people, each Job Coordinator should be responsible for a maximum of (say) 30 service users.
- 5G Job Coordinators should develop specialised expertise in particular industry sectors such as retail or production and, where possible, service users on the register allocated to them on the basis of

employment interests in the particular industry sector. This will enhance the agency's knowledge and expertise in key areas of employment.

- 5H When a job is found or referred that is not associated with a particular service user, specific procedures should be adopted to enhance the quality of the job match.
- 5I *PE Personnel* should continue to review job selection practices with attention particularly paid to the endeavour to widen the range of jobs; to image issues around utilisation of disability-related jobs; and to possible sex biases in jobs.
- 5J In order to maximise the effectiveness of job support, Job Coordinators should know the service users well, consult with the worker on the nature and amount of support they desire and require and ensure that negotiations with the employer allow sufficient time to ensure all aspects of training can be addressed. In this regard, there needs to be more consistent approaches to job support.
- 5K Co-worker training should continue to be emphasised as a particularly powerful strategy and co-worker training practices continuously updated and improved.
- 5L *PE Personnel* should continue to consider carefully diversified activities not directly related to the primary purpose of the agency, specifically in relation to their coherency with and impact on the agency's job placement and support activities, and their influence on the agency's image.
- 5M Diversified activities such as consultancy, training and publishing should be clearly identified and partitioned in financial and management terms from the primary functions of the agency. This would mean, for example, that a consultancy arm would pay to use the time spent by *PE Personnel* staff in this activity.
- 5N *PE Personnel* should closely examine the issues associated with transition activities in order to identify the various job-related issues which are not part of the agency's usual purview, methods and processes and which emerge as a result of the particular needs of this group of service users. Some issues which are relevant include:
- i) the personal attachments that develop in sheltered workshops and influence the consideration of the individual or family of open employment;
 - ii) the job security offered by sheltered workshop employment;

- iii) the skills of those in transition;
 - iv) the need for transport training;
 - v) the need to encourage the "work ethic";
 - vi) the need to unlearn some behaviours which may contribute to lack of success in open employment.
- 5O** The needs of the transition group should be addressed through a separate agency or at least as a separate operation within *PE Personnel* so that additional resources, activities and efforts can be devoted in a way that the other priorities of *PE Personnel* remain unaffected.
- 5P** Acceptance of external contracts with other disability agencies should:
- a) be subject to realistic costing;
 - b) be coherent with the agency's purposes;
 - c) serve to enhance and sharpen the agency's capacities and competencies;
 - d) consider the impact on the overall number of service users on the register.
- 5Q** *PE Personnel* should continue to **advocate** for the establishment of support services for people with disabilities who do not have employment and possibly could support such efforts, but the agency should not attempt to establish such services itself.
- 5R** *PE Personnel* should develop a wider range of specific processes for communicating with and receiving feedback from key stakeholders, particularly service users and their families. These measures should include:
- a) routine agency practices such as meetings with members in addition to the annual members' meetings;
 - b) surveys of stakeholders' views and concerns;
 - c) external involvements such as regular external reviews of the agency;
 - d) "renewal" activities that bring together a range of interested people to further develop and affirm the agency's values, directions and practices.
- 5S** The following recommendations have been made which relate to various organisational issues.
- i) Agency job titles and roles should be examined with the aim of reducing the total number and clarifying the respective duties.

- ii) It is clearly important for the agency to continue to develop strategies to counter the limited number of senior management positions available in the agency. These could include, as well as multi skilling, involvement in training and time-limited secondments to other agencies.
- iii) The range of measures relating to staff performance should be reconsidered to encompass specific staff outcomes and to improve staff supervision and access to management.
- iv) Monitoring of time spent on diversified activities and activities not directly related to core functions should occur to ensure priorities are being maintained.
- v) Staff recruitment policies should continue to reflect a preference for prior experience in working with people with disabilities and continue to clearly state the priority of positive values and attitudes.

5T *PE Personnel* must continue to play a central role in encouraging communication, cooperation and coordination within the field of employment services for people with disabilities. However, competition for jobs in the open workforce should not be discouraged.

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