

EMPLOYMENT RETENTION **Essentials**

Building a Retention-Focused Organization



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Developers, Writers and Funders

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Carol Clymer and Laura Wyckoff

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About *Employment Retention Essentials*

People are working, but . . .

Thousands of Americans work in low-wage jobs. They spin out meager paychecks, live in substandard housing and, although lacking insurance and monetary reserves, they somehow manage recurring child care, transportation, health or personal crises. These individuals may work steadily, but their lack of skills, training and knowledge about what it takes to get better jobs blocks the opportunity to better provide for themselves and their families. In addition, welfare reform has put many newcomers into the workforce. With few options other than to take entry-level, low-wage jobs, they seldom stay long enough to gain the skills or the job savvy necessary for better positions. Realistically, few have the time, energy or resources to set employment goals, seek out good employers, and shoehorn training and education into their economically precarious lives.

Some missing pieces

For employment and training organizations trying to help low-wage workers and those with erratic work histories and limited skills, the process is far from straightforward because:

- 1) Unlike other aspects of workforce development—such as skills training and job placement—few standard practices for employment retention exist.
- 2) Limited information is available about the effectiveness of most strategies, although government agencies, nonprofit organizations, public and private sector employers, and experts on workforce development recognize the importance of supporting low-income jobholders and helping them advance.
- 3) A central question has not yet been answered. Is employment retention the concern of the worker, the employer or the employment and training organization? The authors of *Employment Retention Essentials* believe that all have some responsibility.



What organizations are doing anyway

Nevertheless, many organizations are focusing not just on placing people in jobs, but on helping people maintain steady employment. Programs are restructuring to emphasize retention, and they are hiring, training or retraining staff to interact with participants in ways that help them keep jobs and advance to better ones. These retention-focused organizations foster collaborations with other organizations to provide additional support for participants with challenges to steady employment. And they educate themselves about the skills required by particular industries, companies and employers. By involving employers in their programs, organizations are better equipped to understand employer expectations, support employers' efforts to keep good workers and, in some cases, influence employment practices.

It's not easy

Of course, focusing an organization on retention is not easily accomplished. Although this is beginning to change, funding is often based on enrollment and placement, not on long-term employment. Participants come to programs expecting a job, not an ongoing involvement with an organization intent on helping them stay employed. Employers want qualified referrals from organizations, but may be reluctant to provide their expertise, advice and support beyond an occasional hiring. And the history and culture of an organization can discourage efforts to change its focus, programs and the way the organization's leaders and staff relate to participants, employers and one another.

How *Essentials* was developed

Employment Retention Essentials was developed for organizations that want to make a change. The information it offers is based on research about what helps people maintain steady employment and, more importantly, on interviews with experienced practitioners.

These retention-focused organizations are structured and staffed in diverse ways. Some have staff positions dedicated to retention. In these organizations, retention specialists, success advocates, career advisors, job coaches or mentors—they go by many titles—have as their primary responsibility keeping people employed and advancing. In many organizations, recruiters, job developers, trainers or other staff members are charged, along with their other duties, with helping people maintain steady employment.

Because vastly different organizations are interested in retention, *Essentials* offers not a single model for improving retention, but eight elements that organizations can incorporate into their policies, structures, program strategies and interactions with participants.



How it is organized and what it contains

Employment Retention Essentials has eight sections organized around the following elements:

- 1) Focus on Retention, Continuously
- 2) Develop Trusting Relationships with Participants
- 3) Involve Employers
- 4) Get People into Jobs They Will Keep
- 5) Help People Establish a Work History
- 6) Provide Opportunities to Develop Skills
- 7) Help People Deal with Challenges
- 8) Provide Ongoing Support

Each section includes information, examples and tools for the leaders of organizations, the organizations' program managers and front-line staff members, regardless of their job titles. Also included are "What If" questions with suggestions on how organizations can address difficult issues, often in cost-effective ways. The materials in *Employment Retention Essentials* can begin to focus an entire organization on supporting employment stability for job seekers.

How it might be used

Although some dedicated workforce development professionals might read *Employment Retention Essentials* from cover to cover, it can be used as a shared resource to strengthen the capacity of an entire organization:

- Leaders of organizations might use *Essentials* to help make decisions about focusing their organization on employment retention;
- Managers might use parts of the guide at staff meetings or training sessions. Information in *Essentials* lends itself to discussion and role-playing;
- Staff members might use it for ideas on how to infuse retention strategies into their roles and to assess themselves on their ability to form trusting relationships, interact effectively with employers and help people keep their jobs.

Employment Retention Essentials provides a framework for developing the knowledge, actions and behavior that make up effective employment retention strategies—and a feel for what it takes to be a successful retention organization.



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ELEMENT ONE

Focus on Retention, Continuously

A retention specialist says:

“I ask the participant: ‘Are you going to settle for what you have or are you going to aspire for more?’” Analia Narvaez, Success Advocate, Project QUEST, San Antonio, Texas

There’s a history that most employment and training organizations must overcome to become truly retention-focused. In many communities, organizations are regarded as placement programs both by job seekers and employers and, quite frankly, by their own staff members who work hard for placements and are delighted when a job seeker gets a job. ***Becoming an employment, training and retention organization is not just a matter of adding “retention” to the mix of existing services.*** It’s a metamorphosis—pupa to butterfly—with everyone having a part in the transformation.

Directors, CEOs, presidents and board members can ensure that their organizational goals, management structures and processes support both a program and a staff dedicated to steady employment for participants. They can provide the motivation to continuously analyze outcomes and improve performance. They can market the organization’s success at keeping people employed to the community, employers and funders.

Research suggests that obtaining good jobs with benefits and decent wages, establishing a work history, developing skills and dealing with challenges are important elements in maintaining employment. Management should provide training and services and encourage staff interactions with participants that address these elements. And they should ***make clear to the staff team and the participants that—opposed to just getting a job—getting a good job, keeping it and advancing are the goals.***

Information, examples and tools to help an organization focus on retention are found throughout this guide. This section deals with the organizational underpinning that can support steady employment. It suggests ways to infuse employment retention into the skeleton of an organization’s structure and into the “bones” of its staff.

In this section:

- Checklist for a Retention-Focused Organization
- Have the Right People
- Build a Retention Team
- Set Retention Goals. Analyze Outcomes
- Emphasize Retention from Day One
- What If . . .





Checklist for a Retention-Focused Organization

Use this checklist to consider whether your organization has the key elements to support steady employment for participants. These elements are discussed throughout *Essentials*.

Goals for wages, job retention and steady employment

The organization has specific wage and retention goals that are reported as monthly outcomes, monitored closely and considered as important as, if not more important than, job placements.

A staff working together to help people maintain their jobs

The job descriptions for all staff positions reflect a retention focus. Staff members are encouraged to form relationships with participants, employers and staff members of other agencies that help facilitate steady employment.

A management structure, processes, programs and strategies that enable staff members to help people stay employed

Recruitment, orientation, training, support services, job development and postemployment services support job retention. Staff work flexible hours in order to contact jobholders outside their jobs and to offer workshops, meetings and events scheduled when jobholders can attend.

Employers who understand the services and want to participate

The organization targets industries and cultivates relationships with employers who offer benefits and good wages—or jobs that are stepping stones to better jobs.

Effective marketing to the community, employers and other organizations

The organization has a strategy for communicating its retention services and continuously seeks opportunities to inform the community, employers and funders about them. Satisfied employers and successful participants help get the message out. All materials project a professional image.

Trainees, job seekers and jobholders who understand the organization's retention services

Recruiters emphasize not the organization's job placement services, but its commitment to helping people prepare for steady employment in good jobs—as well as the commitment needed from participants to be successful.



Have the Right People

Use this list of duties to assess potential staff, current staff or yourself on the ability to help people maintain steady employment. What needs improvement? What type of training would be helpful?

A retention-minded staff:

Offers empathetic and effective support to participants

- Listens well and responds nonjudgmentally
- Takes actions that “guide” and “assist” rather than “change” participants
- Communicates in a solution-oriented manner
- Models professionalism
- Respects participants

Maintains relationships with employers to learn required skills and preferences

- Is experienced with private sector
- Uses networking skills
- Can speak the “language” of business
- Is well-organized
- Delivers on commitments

Communicates regularly with other staff members to support a team-based approach to retention

- Practices open and healthy communication
- Is flexible
- Requests help from and provides help to colleagues
- Is cooperative

Helps participants identify and access opportunities to continue education, build skills and advance

- Can investigate, advocate for and motivate participants, job seekers and jobholders
- Uses common sense when helping with career planning and decision-making
- Encourages and promotes independent thinking and actions

Helps participants identify and use community resources in order to maintain steady employment

- Is familiar with other organizations, what they do and how they do it
- Recognizes own limitations and makes referrals to others when needed
- Provides appropriate follow-up to referrals



Build a Retention Team

Of course not every organization will have all these positions, but compare this retention team to the team in your organization. Are you doing your part to encourage steady employment?

Receptionist

"I heard you had a good interview. What's next?"

- Makes everyone feel special and welcome.
- Knows staff roles and how to reach the right person for the participant.



Job Trainer

"We're working with the latest software, but your employer might not have it. You've got to learn to figure things out."

- Conducts training as if the learner were already working.
- Encourages people to learn on their own.



Soft Skills Trainer

"Okay, you play the role of the supervisor dealing with the employee who is always late. The rest of the group be ready with feedback."

- Demonstrates the qualities of a "good employee."
- Sets up problems and helps people learn to solve them as a team.

Program Manager

"You can always talk to me about dealing with difficult people. We can figure it out."

- Clearly defines retention goals and works continually with staff to refine strategies.
- Helps staff analyze retention outcomes and identify solutions in problem areas.

Job Developer

"Seems like a good match to me, but you need to decide. Do you see yourself working there in six months?"

- Develops good jobs and makes good matches between job seekers and employers.
- Helps people find another job quickly when they lose one.

Executive Director

"We train and place people who stay on their jobs and can make a difference for your company."

- Commits the organization to retention and institutes strategies that lead to retention.
- Develops long-standing relationships with employers who strive for low turnover.



Retention Staff

"Hey, let's celebrate. Tomorrow it will be six months on the job. Can I take you to lunch?"

- Helps people learn to solve work-related problems and, when the time comes, advance to better jobs.

Management Information Staff

"We've got 89% of our grads still working after 90 days!"

- Facilitates collection of accurate data.
- Produces timely, accessible reports.

Volunteer Mentor

"Why don't you speak informally with the branch manager about it? That way she knows you're interested in other positions."

- Models success for the participant.
- Validates what the participant hears from the staff.

**Alumni Group Member**

"Ask questions. Your boss will know that you want to do it right. I did that and it worked."

- Shares experiences with those in similar situations about how to handle problems and seek opportunities.

Visiting Employer

"I need people who can get there on time and who want to do the job accurately."

- Gives accurate information about the work tasks and culture of the company.
- Offers insights about the skills, attributes and attitudes necessary to succeed.

Orientation Person

"Our organization is not just about getting that job. It's about keeping that job."

- Doesn't over- or under-sell the program and its services.
- Clarifies expectations and responsibilities of the organization and participants.

Job Seeker

"The company's got a good job that I didn't qualify for. You've got the kind of personality they'd like. Go give it a try."

- Supports fellow participants' efforts to find and keep their jobs.
- Once employed, stays in contact with staff.

Person from a Partnering Agency

"We can help you find dependable child care because once you start to work, you'll need to be there every day."

- Comes to training to meet participants.
- Knows how their agency can support job retention.



Set Retention Goals, Analyze Outcomes

Consider the following examples of goal setting and data analysis that can help your organization better focus on long-term employment.

Continually ask questions

- How many of our participants get jobs in occupations for which we train?
- How many appropriate jobs do we secure for our participants?
- How many are working at our target wage?
- What is keeping people in their jobs? What is causing them to quit or lose their jobs?
- What's changing in our community that affects steady employment? How well is our organization adapting to these changes?
- What is the cost per participant? Is our program a good investment?
- What do employers/job seekers/jobholders/other agencies say about our program?
- Are we putting enough resources here? There?



Continually gather and examine data to gauge effectiveness

INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY PROGRAM	GOAL	ACTUAL	
Recruitment	65	65	On Target
Placement			
Number of job referrals secured	70	65	Check It Out
Number of job placements	65	50	
Retention			Take Action >>>
Number employed 1 year after graduation	60	45	
Number employed 2 years after graduation	55	40	
Wage			
Average wage at placement	\$10.00	\$9.01	
Average wage at 1 year	\$10.50	\$9.66	
Average wage at 2 years	\$11.11	\$9.75	



Continually adjust, allow time for results and then compare performance

07-05-03

To:

STAFF

The "HOW WE ARE DOING AND WHY" Report

	Jan. – June 2002	Jan. – June 2003	Change	Possible reasons for the change
30-day retention	91%	91%	Same	
60-day retention	77%	89%	+12%	Began alumni support group
90-day retention	79%	91%	+12%	
180-day retention	71%	76%	+07%	Started TechCom try-out employment
average entry wage	\$9.01	\$9.66	+.65	Hired additional job developer

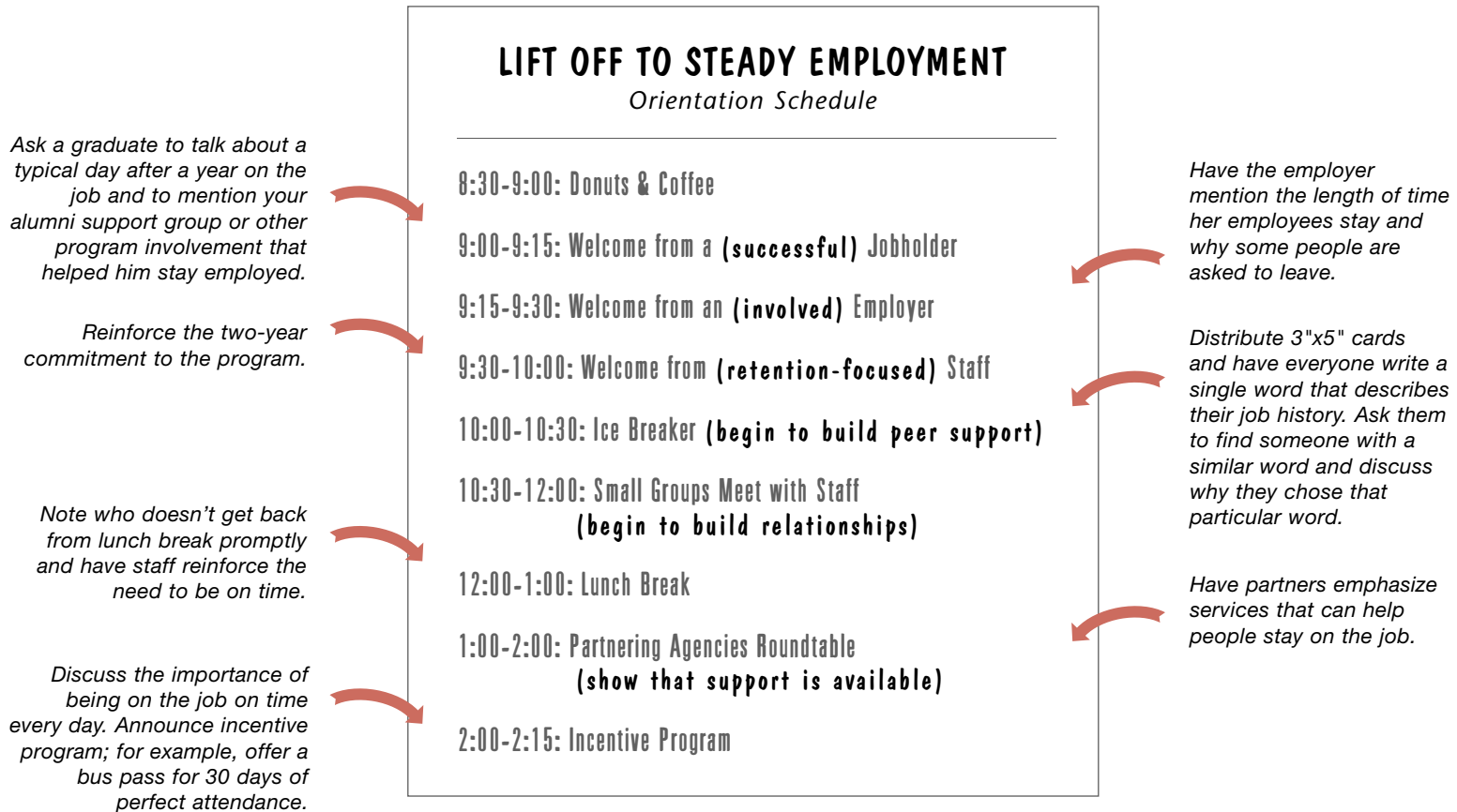
Continually train and support the staff

- Ongoing training and practice on inputting and accessing information on participants, placements, employers, wages, retention and advancement.
- Monthly/quarterly data review and goal setting for the organization and for individual staff members.
- Regularly scheduled staff performance reviews that assess success at helping participants stay employed.
- Informal check-ins by managers with staff to discuss workloads, ways to alleviate stress and forestall "burn out."
- Incentives—money, prizes, time off or public recognition—for staff members who meet or exceed goals for keeping people employed.



Emphasize Retention from Day One

First day in the door, participants should hear that maintaining steady employment is the goal. Use this example to consider whether you are delivering the retention message up front.



What If . . .

. . . your organization is made up of—or inherited—staff unfocused on helping people maintain steady employment? You might:

Hold focus groups of participants/employers to explore the idea of focusing on retention. Enlist interested staff to help restructure services and develop a plan to get everyone on board.

Emphasize the personal and professional benefits of becoming a retention-focused organization, including the opportunity for staff to develop new skills and build résumés.

Provide incentives for staff when participants with whom they are working stay employed for an appropriate amount of time.

Don't keep staff who fail to support retention goals. Don't transfer them to other positions—a retention-focused organization requires that all staff focus on retention.

. . . people come to your organization wanting training and a job but not other services that will help them stay employed?

Change your marketing strategies to let the community know who you are and what you do.

Have recruiters explain one-on-one to potential participants that they will be committing to a long-term relationship if they receive the organization's services.

. . . your organization does not have the resources or staffing for retention services?

With the resources you do have, prioritize activities and services that promote employment retention:

“Slant” routine activities toward retention; for example, CEOs and board members might discuss with funders the positive effects of employment retention for both employers and jobholders. Trainers might emphasize the skills that help people keep jobs; and job developers could redouble their efforts to make “good job matches.”

Reduce efforts unlikely to result in steady employment; for example, maintaining relationships with employers who tolerate high turnover or enrolling people who cannot convince your staff that they are committed to staying employed.

Use volunteers for activities that are likely to increase job retention; for example, have employers or community members recruit and train volunteer mentors and coaches for new jobholders. Or use volunteers to do routine tasks to free up staff to concentrate on retention efforts.

Partner with other organizations. Provide one or two elements of what keeps people working, such as preparing them for good jobs while your partners provide the other services; for example, child care, mentors or personal counseling.

Develop a “retention culture” among staff and volunteers by rewarding them for helping people stay on the job. Incentives could be time off, public recognition or gifts donated by businesses.

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ELEMENT TWO

Develop Trusting Relationships with Participants

A participant says:

“Even after graduating from the program, I still communicate with the Training, Inc. staff on a regular basis.”

Marland Jenkins, Graduate, Training, Inc.,
Newark, New Jersey

An opportunity to develop a work history. Effective training. Good matches to good jobs. All are important elements that help people stay employed; but for many individuals these are not enough—at least not served up as discrete activities and experiences. ***What is required is a trusting relationship with an organization and its staff.*** These relationships can allow honest communication about the individual’s motivation, aspirations and potential challenges to working steadily.

Relationships aimed at helping people keep their jobs are intentional and professional, but they are also personal. Why has the person come to the organization? What successes can he build upon? What has held her back? What type of job does he really want—and what compromises is he willing to make to get it? Is there a supportive spouse or someone in the wings waiting to sabotage her decision to work? Has she anticipated not receiving public assistance once she begins a job? Will legal issues require court appearances during work hours? Are there financial problems likely to cause wage garnishments or the repossession of a vehicle?

This is personal—very personal—information. Some individuals will never divulge what really keeps them from staying on the job, and few individuals are likely to share such information except with those who are trusted, helpful and caring.

For relationships to flourish, ***an organization needs to create an atmosphere of trust.*** Participants should know that staff will acknowledge and appreciate their strengths, help them deal with ongoing challenges and occasional setbacks, and that as long as they put forth their best effort, the organization will put forth its own.

Prior to coming to you, participants may have gone to similar organizations, enrolled in comparable programs and interacted with other workforce development professionals. What can make a long-term difference for people is confidence in themselves that they will get a good job, stay employed and have the ongoing support of people they can count on.

In this section:

I Am Not a Case

Relationships that Work

Conscious Communication

Create an Atmosphere of Trust

Develop Ongoing Relationships

What If . . .



I Am Not a Case

Do you interact with participants in ways that allow the honest communication shown in this conversation? How would you help a jobholder having similar difficulties?

Jamie Holley, new jobholder: It was a rough start.

Linda Larson, worksite development specialist for Steps to Success, Portland, Oregon: *Yes, really rough.*

Jamie: After I told Linda some of the problems I was having, she made an appointment for me with Russ.

Linda: *Russ is a learning disabilities specialist. He did an assessment of Jamie's learning style, and found that she learns best by having someone show her what to do, not by telling her.*

Jamie: My boss was telling me to do this and that and then when I didn't get it right or asked questions, he'd get impatient. For example, when I wanted to put information on a Rolodex™ so I could see it right there, he said I could pull all the information I need off the computer. Well, a lot of our customers are Hispanic or Russian, and they'd call and I couldn't get the first three letters of their names right so I couldn't find them on the computer. Russ suggested that I put a piece of paper by the computer with the name and phone number for these people. He also suggested highlighting the areas of the message pad that are important so I wouldn't forget to ask for a phone number and write down the time and whatever.

Linda: *The problem was a difference in learning styles. Once Jamie's boss understood and accepted this, things got better.*

■

Jamie: Linda helped me with the phone. I'd get a call and be talking and get another call and try to deal with it and then a third call would come in. She told me to put the first call on hold and then tell the second caller that I was on another line and could they hold. I'm handling the phones a lot better now.

Linda: *Where Jamie works, it's one-on-one. The employer is the supervisor and mentor. Sometimes that employer needs help with supervision.*

Jamie: I like working in a small business. You don't have to compete with other people.

■

Jamie: The part of the job I like best is talking with the customers. I get some pretty good conversations going. The other day my boss came out of his office when I was talking with someone and I said, "Oh, sorry, I guess I'm not doing my job." He said, "No you're doing your job."

Linda: *Jamie's great with people, you might have noticed.*

■

Jamie: I can trust Linda. I can talk with her about any part of my life, not just about what's going on with the job.

■

Jamie: I'm someone who doesn't like change. I like a routine. I get panic attacks sometimes when I get stressed. This job is not routine, but I try to do some of the same things every day. If I start getting a panic attack, I stop what I'm doing and start doing the routine things.

Linda: *Jamie's going to have some changes this month. She's completing the Jobs Plus program where her wages were subsidized and she's going to have to make a copayment for her child care.*

Jamie: I just have to accept that those changes are going to happen and try not to get upset.

Linda: *You'll probably be eligible for food stamps again. That might help offset the child care. Have you talked with your case manager?*

Relationships that Work

Think about your participant's needs and personality. What "hat" should you wear to be the most effective?

Working Colleague

"How's it going with that coworker? You know I had a similar situation when I worked in real estate. There was a woman in the office that would give me my messages and then say things like, 'You better call back immediately.' And at the end of the month, she'd always say, 'Be sure to pick up your check.' It got to where it annoyed me. The way I handled it was to tell her that I really appreciated her concern, but that I knew what I needed to do. I then made sure I was still friendly and polite to her. She got the idea. Maybe you could try what I did."



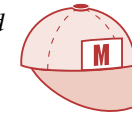
Interested Party

"Well you know that I'm interested in helping you stay on the job. Is there anything I can do as far as this problem with the coworker goes?"



Mentor

"Hmm, the way I see it you have three options here. You could go to the manager and ask to be reassigned. The danger there is that the manager might see you as someone who can't get along with coworkers. You could speak directly to the man and tell him that his telling you what to do all the time is not helping you learn the job. Or you could do nothing for, say, a week, and reevaluate whether he is still a problem and then consider taking one of those actions. Do any of those sound right to you?"



Friend

"Oh, man, that person really sounds irritating, and having to work next to him every day would get on my last nerve too. What are you thinking of doing? Yes, you're probably right, waiting it out seems like a good decision. How is learning that new software program going? Great, I was hoping to hear something at that job is going well."



Realist

"Sounds as if you've got several choices. What are you going to do about it?"





Conscious Communication

Here is a guideline and sample dialogue for communicating in ways that build relationships and develop confidence and self-esteem.



“Relationships develop from friendly interaction rather than supervision.”

*Becky Boyd, H.I.R.E.,
Norman, Oklahoma*

Listen carefully

without jumping in with comments or solutions.

Ask open-ended questions

that allow the person to explore and explain their perceptions and feelings.

Restate and clarify

what you hear so the person knows he is understood.

Speak in a supportive tone

but don't be overbearing or condescending.

Be honest and realistic

without being judgmental.

Be positive

about actions and behavior that work in the person's best interest.

Offer options

for the person's consideration.

Keep communication lines open

even when you don't agree with the person's actions or decisions.



*Listening carefully
Doesn't jump right in*

Employee: I'm quitting.
Staff Member: (Disturbed, but silent.)

Employee: I'm just fed up. I should have trained as a bank teller instead.
Staff Member: I didn't realize you were so discouraged. What's happened?

Asking open-ended questions

Employee: Nothing that wasn't happening all along. I'm just fed up with it.
Staff Member: (Empathetically.) Well, I know that working in a care facility has its downside.

Being honest and speaking realistically

Employee: (With irony and disgust.) Downside? I've got two hallways to monitor. Mr. K hits his buzzer a hundred times a day. There's no help lifting. And then they want me to come in on my day off. It's nothing like I thought it would be.
Staff Member: Tell me what you thought it would be.

Employee: I don't know. I guess I thought I'd have time to talk with people. I thought it would be more laid-back, like the place my grandmother was in. I knew there would be some dirty jobs, but I thought it would be more like a hospital where I'd feel like a professional instead of a slave.
Staff Member: Have you tried speaking to your shift supervisor or the manager?

Clarifying

Employee: (Vehemently). Hell, yes! But they can't do anything about it.
Staff Member: It seems to me that you might be unhappy with the place you are working, but not necessarily with health care itself. If you worked at a place that had adequate staff and you felt appreciated, would that change your mind?

Suggesting options

Employee: I doubt it. I'm sick of it.
Staff Member: Well, you can certainly quit. That's an option. But before you leave, you might think about getting a job in another facility. I can help with that. If you worked in another place and still felt the same way, then you could decide on a career change. Or you could tough it out right where you are until August, when you can get certified. That was your original plan. You could start applying at the hospitals in early June. That's only three months away.

Being positive

Employee: (Resignedly.) I know.
Staff Member: What can I do to help you?

Employee: I guess I just need to make a decision.
Staff Member: You're being smart to think it over. I'll call you tomorrow morning. Hang in there!

Keeping communication open



Create an Atmosphere of Trust

Walk into your organization with your “atmospheric sensors” on high. How would you describe the atmosphere? What can you do to create an atmosphere of trust like this one?

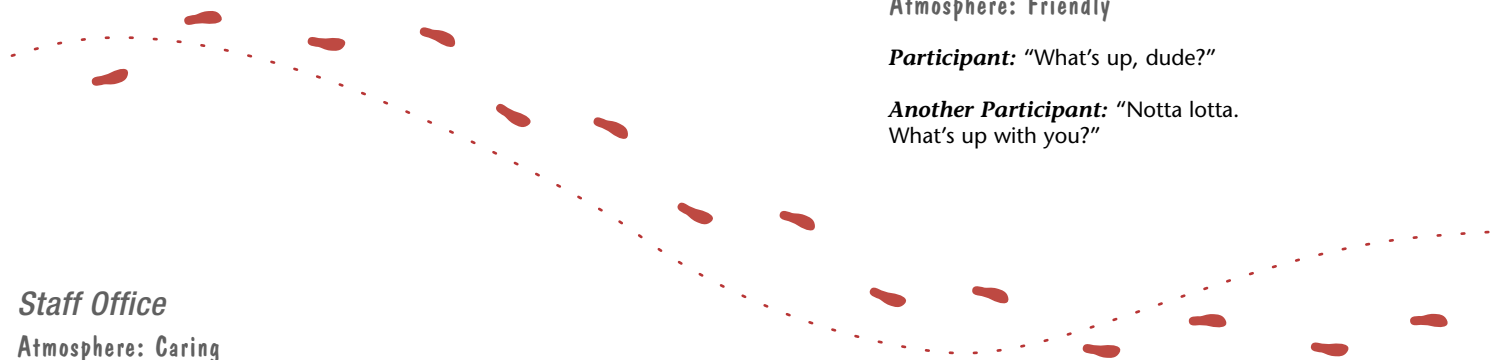
Lobby

Atmosphere: Welcoming

Receptionist: “Hey Carrie, welcome back. How’s it going?”

Participant: “It’s going good. I think they might offer me the job. Is Doris in?”

Receptionist: “You bet. I’ll buzz her and let her know you’re on your way.”



Staff Office

Atmosphere: Caring

Participant: “. . . and he said that there is no way a woman could do the job, and do you know what I said? I didn’t say a thing. I ignored him. Remember when I just couldn’t let things go? I did this time.”

Staff Member: “I love hearing that. I just love it.”

Job Skills Classroom

Atmosphere: Congenial

Instructor: “Okay, Team A, your sawhorse looks a little rickety. What happened?”

Team A: “Well you know that rule you told us . . . measure twice, cut once? Well, we only measured once and then had to trim down one leg and then had to trim another leg and . . .”

(Good-natured laughter from instructor and class)

Hallways

Atmosphere: Friendly

Participant: “What’s up, dude?”

Another Participant: “Notta lotta. What’s up with you?”

Soft Skills Classroom

Atmosphere: Personal

Facilitator: “The worst boss I ever had? I guess that was when I was a student. I was using a nail gun and accidentally nailed my foot to the floor joist and the foreman wouldn’t let me leave until the end of the day.”

Participant: “What’d you do?”

Facilitator: “I’ll tell you, but first you guys tell me what you would have done in my place.”





Break Room

Atmosphere: Supportive

Participant: "See there, what did we tell you. All of us, except Greg the Wonder Boy here, had trouble with metrics."

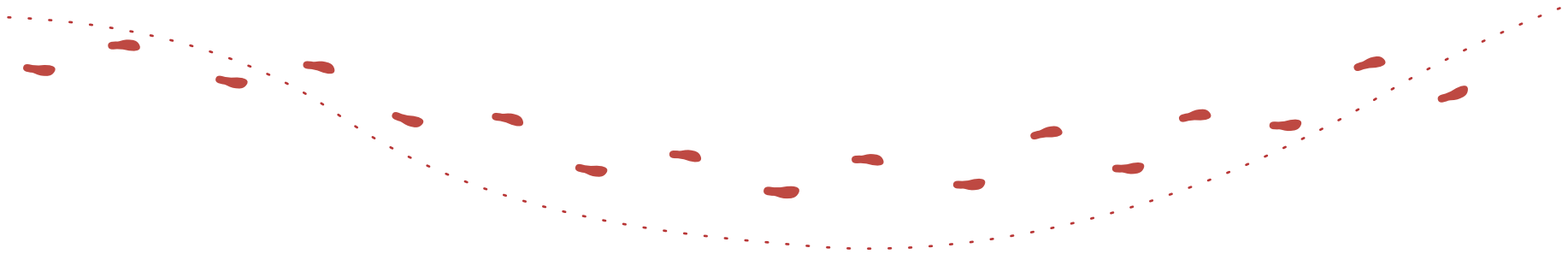
Greg the Wonder Man: "Mary, how many times do I have to tell you that I resent being called Wonder Boy. It's Wonder Man, Greg the Wonder Man."

Manager's Office

Atmosphere: Inclusive

Manager: "I just had a look at the 18-month outcomes. We're looking good. The thing that concerns me, though, is the lack of interest in the CAD training. Any ideas?"

Staff Member: "I think that we scheduled it at the wrong time. Let's offer it again in late fall when work slows down for the season."



Room where Guests Speak

Atmosphere: Realistic

Employer: "It's not whether you can lug a 4' x 8' piece of drywall up three flights of stairs. It's whether you put it down in the best place in the space so nobody has to work around it. The people I keep on think ahead. They are problem solvers and team members."

Staff Conference Room

Atmosphere: Concerned

Staff Member: "It's like he disappeared off the face of the earth."

Job Developer: "Listen, I think it might have to do with being in the first group laid off the job. We talked about this, but he isn't used to the fact that they start handing out the pink slips near the end of the project and new apprentices are first to go."

The Commons

Atmosphere: Joyous

(Sound of bell and then general hubbub as people gather)

Staff Member: Adrian was just hired by Katomi Construction.

(Applause as Adrian clasps his hands over his head in victory)

Participant: "Man, you must've been good at that interview. What was it like?"





Develop Ongoing Relationships

Use this sample time line to consider how staff members can develop mutually trusting relationships that support stable employment. Does your organization structure its programs to allow time for relationship building?

To Start (in the first month)

While Preparing for Employment

After a Time of Steady Employment



Do You

Get to know the participant well before he begins working?

Discuss your role in supporting his steady employment, being specific about what you can do?

Work out with the participant how you can be most helpful?

Inquire about personal and work-related goals and discuss steps needed to achieve them?

Help identify challenges to maintaining employment and take steps to minimize these?

Find out what other services the participant is receiving so you can coordinate efforts with other agencies or programs?

Accommodate the new jobholder's preferences for contact with you?

Encourage him to contact you whenever a problem is anticipated or occurs, especially if he is thinking of quitting? If he is fired, help him address issues that caused job loss—and find another job quickly?

Discuss training needs? If more skills are required to meet career goals or advance, help the person identify what type of training would be best? (Don't urge him to bite off more than he can chew.)

Believe that the person will maintain employment and advance?
Celebrate his success?



What If . . .

. . . participants want only minimal involvement with the organization and its staff? You might:

Recruit and train staff who can form relationships that foster involvement. Recruit participants who want to make a change in their lives and to be involved with an organization that supports such change.

Distinguish your organization from others that may carry a social stigma. Market your organization as an employment or training center as opposed to an organization that serves poor people.

Allow participants to gravitate toward those staff members with whom they feel most comfortable. Don't make "caseload assignments" from lists.

Have successful alumni discuss with participants the benefits of program involvement. Arrange activities during which new participants can observe relationships between long-term participants and staff.

Involve the whole family. Offer activities for children so parents can attend weekend workshops on topics that have immediate payoff, such as tax preparation, driver's education or CPR training.

. . . staff members are unable to initiate the types of relationships that allow honest communication about issues that threaten employment stability?

Make certain that staff meet participants early in the program and take part in activities such as orientation and career planning, so relationships can be developed before people are placed in jobs.

Hire a diverse staff with a variety of backgrounds, personalities and styles.

Encourage staff to discuss at staff meetings and among themselves the difficulties of their own job, and to seek advice from their colleagues.

Hire—and keep on—only staff who are able to relate to participants.

. . . staff does not have time to develop trusting relationships with participants?

Try to reduce the tasks staff must do aside from interacting with participants. Consider partnering with other service organizations in order to allow staff more time for participants.

Devise a system of triage. Identify participants for whom enough support might be a quick phone call or occasional site visit.

Allow staff to be "natural" and creative about how they interact with participants. Recognize that what seems to be "hanging out" with participants may be relationship building.

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ELEMENT THREE

Involve Employers

A director says:

“We have developed personal relationships with employers whom we cultivated; we built them, and they deepened over time.” Abby Snay, Executive Director, Jewish Vocational Service, San Francisco, California

Add value. That’s what a retention-focused organization can do for employers. Employers hire a new employee and they get a “package deal”—an employee plus an organization to help keep that employee on the job. What employer would turn down such a deal? Well, that depends. To be useful to employers and, therefore, useful to the jobholder, ***the organization and its staff need to see work—and all that work encompasses—from the employer’s point of view.***

Perhaps the most important service organizations can offer employers is a pipeline to job seekers prepared to work and to stay on the job. But an organization can offer more: insight about how to motivate individual jobholders or specific groups of people; ideas on how to improve job orientation or training; feedback on the style and actions of managers; and opportunities for employers to help people gain skills before they are hired.

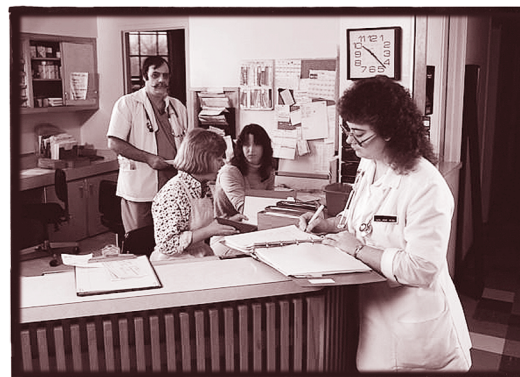
Engaged employers can serve on boards and advisory committees, advise the organization’s trainers on job skills and expectations, participate in job fairs and mock interviews and serve as teachers and mentors. And during these activities, they can scout, free of obligation, for prospective employees.

Of course, not all employers will be actively involved with an organization. Some employers offer competitive salaries, benefits and fair-handed, flexible management that promotes an environment where jobholders feel appreciated and accepted. Others may see turnover as simply a part of doing business and view involvement of an organization as unnecessary and intrusive.

In any case, ***the task is to learn about each employer’s needs and expectations,*** explain to the employer what services can be provided and then, if those services are desired, provide them in timely ways. Often an employer who initially did not want to be involved may reconsider after seeing that involvement is not just goodwill, but good business.

In this section:

- Become Employment Experts
- Communicate Effectively
- Create a Win-Win Relationship
- Checking with the Employer
- Provide Services
- What If . . .





Become Employment Experts

Use this information as an “action guide” to understand your local industries, jobs and employers.

For the Staff

1. Develop a strong working knowledge of the industries in which the jobholders are employed.

- *Resources: Employers themselves; trade associations, their publications and websites; industry trade journals; the business section of newspapers*

2. Identify the jobs and general requirements in the industries targeted by your organization.

- *Resources: Companies; trade associations and their publications; training institutions; industry skill standards; job announcements; job application forms*

3. Identify local employers and meet personnel involved in employee relations.

- *Resources: State employment services; One-Stops; economic development agencies; other government labor market agencies; the Chamber of Commerce; professional organizations*

4. Learn about job requirements and preferences at specific companies.

- *Resources: The employers; people in your organization; your network of other workforce development professionals; jobholders at the company*

For the Organization

Get a head start by hiring staff who have worked in the industry that the organization is targeting.

Join appropriate organizations; subscribe to relevant trade publications.

Consider hiring staff with experience in human resources at a private company.

Call in the experts—the employers themselves—to educate the organization about job requirements.



Communicate Effectively

Do you and your organization interact with employers in ways similar to those listed below?

- Communicate the same way that employers communicate. Don't use education or workforce development jargon. Respect the employer's time.

"We can fill every one of those 10 positions. We've completed driver's license checks already. We can pay for drug tests. We appreciate that you're trying to lower your turnover rate, and frankly we're interested in working with you because of your starting wage and your benefits."
- Market the organization professionally. Make certain that brochures and other marketing materials are error-free and well-designed. Speak with confidence about your services and participants.
- Craft presentations to emphasize how the organization can benefit a company. Don't approach employers with the idea that they should hire participants or interact with the organization for humanitarian reasons.

"Every one of our people has completed security training, including customer service, monitoring CCTV and maintaining a journal, but what sets them ahead of most other candidates is their maturity and good judgment—and the fact that we are right here if any issue arises once our people are hired."
- Offer statistics or other evidence that show how the organization can help reduce turnover. Offer testimony or references from other employers.

"Eighty-nine percent of the people we place in larger hotels such as yours are still there after a year. And 60 percent have been promoted. We've placed people downtown and in the airport area and they are at work on time every day."
- Check out receptivity for services.

"I can understand you don't have a lot of time to speak with me now. Let me give you my number and you can call me if I can be helpful."
- Fit in. Be part of the employers' own efforts to retain employees, including their strategies and design.

"Yes, that sort of work culture is appealing to many of the younger people we can refer to you. The espresso machine, posters and piping the music channel into the break room are good ideas. It all seems to work best when the employees themselves come up with their own ideas."
- Show interest in the job duties of the jobholder's supervisor and offer help or resources when appropriate.

"Our organization is planning a workshop on learning new skills in the workplace by solving real problems. Participating companies each identify a problem and our facilitator shows how their employees can increase skills by working on the solution. Would you be interested?"
- Assign a single staff member as the organization's contact so the employer will know whom she is dealing with and whom to call.

"Ms. Derek, this is Susan Hillman from Best Workers Inc. I've been working with Gary Luce, the foreman in packaging. He's hired many of our people, and I know that you're putting on a third shift next week. I'd like to make an appointment to talk to you about our services for the workers at your company."

Create a Win-Win Relationship

Here are examples of “win-win” situations for organizations and employers. How might your organization develop similar game plans? Which employers could you approach?

Bank of America

(503) 279-2876 for information on America/Works

Through Bank of America’s nationwide America/Works program, local bank staffing offices partner with local organizations to develop customized training programs to prepare low-income individuals for jobs with the company. The program provides a database of national strategic partners and a checklist to help bank staff choose local organizations that can assess, train and support individuals who meet the Bank’s hiring criteria. Bank of America has provided training space, equipment, program design, curriculum, materials, trainers, volunteer mentors and paid internships for customized pretraining programs.

Game Plan

- Contact companies to see whether they have in place a strategy/program for working with employment and training organizations.
- Consider assessing/adapting your organization/program using the standards required by local companies with a large number of entry-level positions.
- Consider partnering with other organizations to provide a steady flow of trained people for companies that provide good entry-level positions and opportunities for advancement.

Employers WIN

Because they get:

- Access to trained job seekers
- Support services for interns and new employees

Organizations WIN

Because they get:

- Employer validation of training
- A relationship with an employer experienced in partnering with employment and training organizations
- Job placements

Achieve

www.towardsemployment.com/achieve

The Achieve program, a pilot program being tested and evaluated by Towards Employment in Cleveland, Ohio, provides weekly on-site case management service, regular information sessions for employees and one-day training for supervisors. Achieve case managers (available 24 hours a day) work with entry-level employees to develop proactive solutions to concerns that, if ignored, could result in loss of employment. The regular information sessions, often held during lunch hours, cover topics such as financial planning, information on legal issues, soft skills and career development. Achieve's supervisory training assists supervisors in understanding and managing entry-level employees and the issues that many bring to the workplace. Often supervisors from different sites are brought together for the training to foster relationships and develop networks for sharing information.

Game Plan

- Research industries to determine hiring patterns, turnover rates and types of individuals employed.
- Develop marketing materials for employers and employees about the benefits of participation.
- Meet with employers to determine if services would be beneficial and appropriate on their site. Gather information on turnover, absentee and promotion rates.
- Introduce program to employees and encourage participation.
- Document contact with employees and follow up regularly with employers to gather information for tracking progress and program benefits.

Employers WIN

Because they get:

- Specialized training for supervisors working with entry-level employees
- Training and support for entry-level employees

Organizations WIN

Because they get:

- Access to both participants and their supervisors
- Opportunities to improve how participants are supervised



Checking with the Employer

Keeping in mind that not every employer will want to be involved, here are the basics for getting your foot in the door and positioning yourself to help both the employer and the jobholder.

What do you do first?

- Discuss how your services can benefit the employer—in person, if possible. Outline how you can support participants as they continue to gain job and interpersonal skills, adjust to the work culture and deal with problems that could affect their success on the job.
 - Explain how you have interacted with other employers. Offer statistics and testimonials from satisfied employers showing that your services improve attendance, reduce turnover and increase productivity.
 - Reach agreement on your involvement and the services you will provide. Confirm whom you should talk with, the best time to make contact and how often you will call or visit.
-

How do you know what's expected?

- Work through human resources, but try to meet supervisors and managers who can provide information on the job and feedback on the jobholder's performance and who have the authority to fire or promote.
 - Ask to see the orientation material for new employees. Discuss company policies/procedures and ask questions about the jobholder's duties. Find out what leads to job success—and why people quit or are fired.
-

What do you say?

- Ask questions that will help determine whether the jobholder is meeting expectations. Determine specifically how to capitalize on success or improve substandard performance. *How did Derek work out as team leader? What's his next step?*
 - Follow up on previous conversations. Don't avoid talking about problems. Offer suggestions and facilitate solutions that benefit both the employer and the jobholder. *Has she missed any more days? Good, I think that asthma medicine is really helping her daughter.*
 - Arrange a time for your next contact. Make certain the employer has your phone number and encourage her to call anytime. Be sure to help the employer whenever asked.
-



Provide Services

If your organization has space, expertise or partners, some of these ideas for strengthening employer relationships could be offered at minimal expense.

Space to:

- *Interview job applicants or hold meetings*
- *Conduct skills training or special classes for employees*
- *Hold employee recognition events or celebrations*
- *Sponsor special family activities*



Information about:

- *Support services and resources for jobholders and employers*
- *Education and training opportunities for employees and ways to fund them*
- *Tax credits for employers*
- *Simple retention strategies that the employer can use for every employee*
- *Ways to increase retention for employees with personal problems that might include domestic abuse, history of substance abuse or criminal records*

Direct services:

- *Training for supervisors, especially those who are supervising newcomers to the workforce*
- *Help in calculating the cost of turnover, especially for smaller companies*
- *Mediation with employees who are struggling with appropriate work behavior or lack of job savvy*
- *Mentoring or job coaching assistance*
- *A support group for new workers*
- *Skills upgrading for all an employer's entry-level employees*



What If . . .

. . . employers do not want to be involved in your retention efforts?

You might:

Discuss your services with employer friends and have them evaluate what you offer from an employer's point-of-view.

Have employers who are pleased with your services speak to their colleagues about the benefits of working with your organization. Find well-known members of the business community to serve on your board of directors or contribute in other ways.

Target employers who care about their employees, who want them to stay and advance, and who can use your organization's expertise.

Provide ongoing services or events not directly related to hiring or retention in order for employers to become familiar—without obligation—with your organization. For example, offer workshops on government regulations that affect business, or a series of speakers on topics that the employers identify as helpful.

Customize your services to the employer; for example, compute the cost of turnover for small and medium-sized companies with whom you want to place participants, or provide training for their staff on managing the type of person you could place with them.

. . . your staff is great with the participants, but almost clueless about how to effectively communicate with employers?

Hire a consultant to train your staff on the approaches and communication styles most likely to engage employers.

Hire staff with experience and backgrounds as employers or who have worked in business. Have them mentor other staff on the best way to communicate with employers.

Make certain that the organization's leaders model appropriate ways to communicate with employers.

. . . some retention staff members are ineffective in dealing with employers when jobholders make major mistakes or quit irresponsibly?

Offer training on how to manage occurrences that jeopardize relationships with employers. Include training on how to quickly defuse employer frustration, apologize sincerely and offer solutions. Involve employer partners in the training.

Debrief staff members about why jobholders have been fired. Look for patterns and institute ongoing solutions. For example, if a number of jobholders lose their jobs because they have stolen property or used drugs, consider conducting more complete background checks or providing bonding. Let employers know what you are doing to protect their interests.

. . . your participants are working in many different places and you can't figure out how to effectively work with so many employers?

Offer services to groups of small employers, perhaps in similar businesses or those employing specific populations of workers, such as non-English speakers or newcomers in the workplace.

Prioritize staff time to work with employers who hire consistently, provide the best jobs and have potential for expanding their workforce.

Provide some services on-line and over the phone, such as lists of resources, information on tax credits, evaluation forms and schedules for workshops.

Assign staff to jobholders working in close geographic proximity in order to make job site visits more cost-effective.



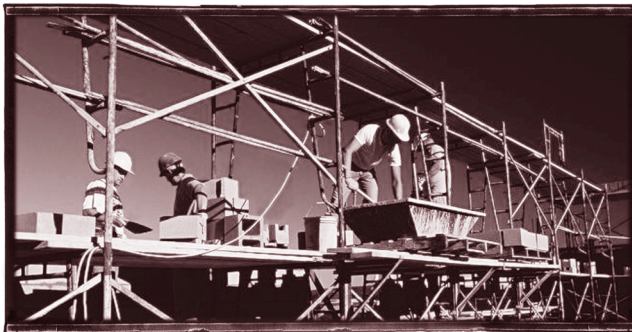
ELEMENT FOUR

Get People into Jobs They Will Keep

The research says:

“Working steadily initially, starting out in jobs with higher-wages and starting out in jobs with employer-provided benefits—holding other factors equal—are all linked to sustaining employment over time.” “Steady Work and Better Jobs,” by Julie Strawn, CLASP, and Karin Martinson, MDRC

Getting people into jobs they will keep is an analytical process—and a bit of alchemy. As research and common sense suggest, people are more likely to keep higher-wage jobs with benefits. **Organizations can increase chances of steady employment by targeting growth industries with entry-level jobs paying good wages or jobs leading to better-paying ones.** Information about industries, jobs and required skills is easily found. It is available from public agencies concerned with employment and economic development, and from trade and labor organizations. In addition to employment trends, **retention-focused organizations know about specific employers:** those who value their employees, want to retain them and will work with an organization to make this happen.



Identifying promising industries and committed employers is the analytical part. The alchemy comes with making the match. **People need the right good job, if they are to keep it.** A lesser-paying job within easy commuting distance from a child care provider might be the right job. A job with few benefits but with a hands-on, understanding supervisor might be the right job. In fact, much research and many informal polls indicate that **people in professional positions often rate job satisfaction higher than wages** when accepting or remaining on jobs. And recently, a survey of several hundred entry-level workers participating in programs studied by Public/Private Ventures shows that, although these jobholders rate health or medical benefits as most important, they value “a pleasant working environment” over “wages or pay.” Many factors go into helping a participant find, keep and advance to the right job.

Often participants are under financial, legal or personal pressure to take a job whether it pays well, provides benefits or offers a crumb of personal satisfaction. Although the need to take a job immediately may limit options initially, an organization’s staff can help people make informed decisions about the jobs they do take. And realistically, when people are not “work ready,” their best chance may lie in taking lower-wage jobs while working on the issues that prevent them from holding down better employment. When organizations **continue to help jobholders access training and advancement opportunities**, they can, gradually, help transform a history of low-wage, sporadic or unrewarding jobs into well-paid, steady employment.

In this section:

Target Good Jobs

Employers: Go for the Gold

Know the Right Job

Team Up with the Job Developer

Promote Good Decision-Making

What If . . .



Target Good Jobs

Although participants might take lesser jobs as stepping stones to good ones, it's important to identify the goal. Here's a process for targeting good jobs.

QUESTIONS	EXAMPLES	YOUR PROGRAM
<p>1 What is a good job?</p>	<p>One definition: A good job pays wages that support a family without additional subsidies, provides health insurance and offers job satisfaction.</p>	<p><i>Your organization's definition of a good job:</i></p>
<p>2 What is a family-sustaining wage for the area?</p>	<p>Family-sustaining wages vary across geographic regions. For example, a single parent raising one preschooler living in a large city in the Southwest needs a wage of \$13.60 an hour to be self-sufficient. The same family in a large East Coast city needs \$17.49; one in a rural Midwestern county needs \$9.55.</p>	<p><i>A family-sustaining wage in your area is:</i></p>
<p>3 What are the growth industries in the region?</p>	<p>According to state labor market statistics, growth industries in one Western state include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Public administration • Healthcare • Construction • Transportation 	<p><i>Growth industries in your area are:</i></p>
<p>4 Which jobs within growth industries could provide a family-sustaining wage and/or lead to better jobs for your job seekers?</p>	<p>According to 1) state labor market information, 2) skills standards and 3) ongoing assessment of program participants, healthcare (a growth industry in most states) might have the following jobs that could provide a family-sustaining wage:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Nurses' aides, orderlies, attendants • Pharmacy technicians • Veterinary assistants 	<p><i>Local jobs that could provide a sustaining wage are:</i></p>
<p>5 Who are the local employers with the jobs and which ones pay a family-sustaining wage with benefits?</p>	<p>Local labor market data, information from healthcare professional organizations and interviews with local healthcare-related employers might identify the good employers. Here's an example from a small city:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Personnel agency (always looking) • Government agency (cutting back) • 2 local hospitals • 2 nursing/personal care facilities 	<p><i>Employers in your area that pay family-sustaining wages and benefits:</i></p>



QUESTIONS	EXAMPLES	YOUR PROGRAM
<p>6 What skills/training/ experience is necessary to be hired for these jobs?</p>	<p>According to career information sources and local employers, the job of nurse's aide requires the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Customer and personal service skills w/service orientation • Listening/verbal/written communication skills • Time management/understanding of cost/benefits • Knowledge of techniques for diagnosing/treating injuries/disease • Understanding drug properties/interactions • Understanding preventive healthcare measures 	<p><i>Skills required by local employers:</i></p>
<p>7 What can your organization do to help people get these jobs?</p>	<p>Depending upon career interest assessments, interviews, skills assessments and personal factors, a typical organization might help participants access:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Basic skills upgrades • Employer presentations • Internships/work experience/site visits/job shadows • Medical aide certification • Interview/résumé/application prep specific to healthcare positions • Support services, including child care and transportation • Job development services • Retention services, including alumni support groups, short-duration workshops and case management for those needing it 	<p><i>Your organization might help its participants access the following training:</i></p>
<p>8 What about those participants who cannot realistically qualify for good jobs right away?</p>	<p>An organization might:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Partner with other organizations with expertise in helping those with ongoing challenges to steady employment • Know about and advocate for services and subsidies for low-income workers that could supplement their wages • Help participants understand that the first job is a stepping stone to a better one 	<p><i>To help those who cannot realistically qualify for good jobs, your organization could:</i></p>

Employers: Go for the Gold

Certainly not every employer meets these criteria, but identify the best by talking with the human resources staff, managers, employees and former employees as well as your fellow workforce development professionals. Then make it your goal to get your participants hired where employers:

Value their employees and want to retain their workforce. They will do some of the following:

- Offer competitive wages and provide benefits
- Seek out and appreciate diversity in their workforce
- Provide a thorough orientation that addresses terms of employment, job duties and work culture
- Make new employees feel comfortable; assign a coworker “buddy” to help guide the newcomer
- Give raises, promotions and other incentives on a scheduled basis using criteria understood by managers and employees
- Publicly recognize employee excellence
- Offer opportunities for professional development on the job, during working hours
- Encourage a caring, “family like” atmosphere in the workplace

Have good managers. These managers

- Are “active” supervisors, present when employees are working and not behind closed doors in their offices
- Clearly communicate their expectations
- Provide effective training, taking into account the employee’s learning style; for example, they demonstrate as well as tell employees what to do
- Offer immediate feedback on employee performance
- Are empathetic and flexible, but hold all employees to the same standards
- Build self-esteem and confidence by emphasizing the employee’s accomplishments
- Encourage employees to gain new skills and plan for advancement

Want to work with your organization. You’ll know because they will

- Offer feedback on employees and suggestions for how you can help when there are problems or opportunities
- Contact you when problems occur
- Alert you to situations that will affect employees, such as shift changes, layoffs, mergers, or major changes in technology or processes
- Be willing to help you prepare employees for their workplace, including participating in training, joining advisory committees, volunteering as mentors for your job seekers and serving as your reference to other employers

“We’ll pass a company over if the employee supervision is shaky, if we have the choice.”

– Steve Redfield
STRIVE, Chicago

Know the Right Job

What seems to be a good job to you might not be the right job for the participant. Use similar questions to help assess jobs on the basis of the individual's personal situation and preference.

How long is the participant's commute from home or, more importantly, from her children's day care? Is there affordable transportation or parking?

These are the stated requirements, but would the participant's coworkers be better educated or more skillful? If so, would this cause problems?

What exactly are the standards for performance? Can the participant meet these without feeling perpetually stressed out or inadequate?

Were the participant's duties similar on prior jobs? Are her skills transferable to this job?

STH State Teaching Hospital
Knowledge at Work for the Community

STH offers employees a comprehensive benefit and compensation package along with multiple employee-oriented programs and services.

Medical and Dental Care ♦ Retirement ♦ Paid Time Off
Sick Leave ♦ Vacation ♦ Bereavement Leave
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CNA (Certified Nursing Aide) Full Time
\$9.60-12.74 per hr
(plus pay differential for evening of +\$1.18 and night shifts of +\$2.00/per hr.)

Job 7951PP

- Requires high school graduate or equivalent and current State Board of Nursing CNA Certification. Prefers medical terminology and computer skills.
- Ability to prioritize multiple tasks and handle a high volume of interactions (phones, patients, etc.); communicate clearly with proper grammar and spelling; follow oral and written instructions and deal with diverse patient/family interactions; recognize and communicate problems promptly.
- Under the direction and supervision of a Registered Nurse and in accordance with hospital policies and procedures, the CNA provides basic care as a member of the patient care team. Patient care activities are related to measuring, recording and reporting patient information and performing simple treatments and procedures. The CNA recognizes and addresses age-appropriate needs when caring for patients. In addition, the CNA assists in maintaining the practice environment in a clean, orderly condition.

Is the work environment comfortable or at least tolerable?

Would the great benefits and good wages offset any negative aspects of the job, such as commuting distance or unpleasant job duties?

Would there be pressure to change shifts frequently? Would this be a problem even with the additional pay?

Is there a training period? What is the atmosphere? Who would be the participant's coworkers? Is she likely to make friends here?

Who is the supervisor? Is there more than one? Is the supervisor's "style" compatible with the participant's?

What type of personal satisfaction would the participant get from doing this job?



Team Up with the Job Developer

Some organizations have job developers who deal directly with employers. Use this checklist to assess the interaction between job developers and other staff members.

Do the job developer and staff members:

- Team up to market the organization's retention services**
"Instead of talking about placement first, I'll tell them about our retention services and then you talk about making the matches that lead to retention."
- Provide each other with ongoing feedback on employers**
"I know that employer told you that all her employees need is a little computer knowledge, but she's expecting them not just to weed out duplicate names, but to interface incompatible databases. You might check it out."
- Offer insight on job seekers—without divulging confidences or betraying privacy—that help keep people on the job**
"John is trying to stay away from the Heights where he used to operate. Are there openings downtown that you could send him to instead?"
- Respond promptly to any problems an employer has with a jobholder**
"I called Frank last night. He wasn't aware that he was supposed to make that last pickup even if it's after his usual quitting time. He's going to let the supervisor know that he understands now. Let's check into whether he's getting paid overtime."
- Alert one another immediately about the jobholder quitting, in order to provide good service to the employer**
"Jorge gave notice yesterday. He thinks Juan could do the job. It might be worth it to check with the trainer to see if Juan is ready to go."
- Speak well of and include one another in networks**
"I'm going to have our retention specialist call you. She's had some luck matching up mothers who work different shifts to do backup child care for one another."



Promote Good Decision-Making

Ask questions such as these to help participants make good decisions about taking jobs.

- ?** Does the job meet your needs? Does it pay enough? Does it have the benefits you need?

It's definitely a lower wage than the job you had before. What were you getting, \$11.75? Well, at \$10 an hour, you'll be making almost \$280 less a month. But then your former employer had cut back hours for several months before they went belly up, right? So maybe this is a comparable monthly wage? And it does have health insurance after six months, that's important, especially if your Medicaid ends in March.

- ?** If the job does not meet all your needs, do you have other resources that would allow you to take the job anyway?

Great! When did that happen? So he was working all along and not paying child support? That's going to really help out if your ex carries through.

- ?** Do you think you can meet the employer's expectations?

I feel the same way. You would basically be doing the same thing you did at the last place. Do you have any sense of whether this new place is better managed? Let's check with the job developer; he knows the employer personally.

- ?** Are you likely to feel comfortable at the workplace?

Right, seems like lots of people you know are working there. Martha? Ken?

- ?** How does this job fit into your short- or long-term career goals? What can you learn from this job?

So I guess the question is whether this job is going to help you get the office job that pays at least as much. One thing you might fit into your schedule is Working Women's Night Out. There are a couple of women who have moved from manufacturing to banking. Come on Thursday. There's child care. And food. I'm in charge of food, and I'm thinking chili.

- ?** Key Question: Do you personally want to do the job? What are you thinking? What is your gut feeling about taking the job?

"I ask people—what makes you different—unless you want a career in manufacturing, there's no reason to go down this path."

*Jacki Adams
Manager, Recruitment and Marketing
WIRE-Net, Cleveland, OH*



What If . . .

. . . it seems highly unlikely your participants could ever qualify for good jobs? You might:

Consider how your program motivates and encourages people. Check staff attitudes. Remind staff that all people can succeed. Offer examples of those with substantial challenges who have done well. Educate staff and participants about career ladders and sequences of jobs that can be stepping stones.

Make certain that participants train for and get the best jobs for which they can qualify. Try not to place even the least-qualified with companies who hire many employees and expect high turnover.

Help participants develop strategies and budgets for meeting expenses, if they must take low-wage jobs. Help them access services for low-income people, such as Earned Income Tax Credits, Section 8 Housing or help with utility bills. Encourage people to continuously look for better opportunities—and train for these.

Advocate for legislation that would raise the minimum wage and provide healthcare and educational opportunities to all people. Encourage employers to raise wages and provide benefits.

. . . participants are in situations that mandate getting a job, any job, in order to continue to receive assistance or as a condition of parole?

Make sure you understand the regulations, as there may be exceptions in the way policy is applied. If a person is currently receiving welfare and would benefit from training before taking a job, make certain you understand regulations governing allowable work/training activities and then advocate on the person's behalf.

Help participants get into the best possible job under the circumstances. Work with the employer to provide internships or mentors so individuals can develop skills that qualify them for advancement or warrant paying them more.

Assist participants to develop realistic, long-term career plans. Don't abandon them once they are employed. Regularly help them assess and update their plans.

Engage employers in a plan for managed turnover. Work with employers who will hire people in entry-level jobs with the understanding that they will stay an appropriate amount of time but will move on to better jobs after giving notice.

Advocate for changes in the "work first" or other policies that keep people from accessing training that could lead to higher-wage jobs with benefits.



. . . you have too many participants who quit irresponsibly and it is affecting your relationships with good employers?

Identify the reasons people are quitting and address these in your program orientation and training. Pick two or three key areas that you can improve and work on those.

Examine and improve your process for job matching. Make certain that job developers are aligning participant interests and needs with the job—and are not just making placements.

Explore the dynamics between individual supervisors, coworkers and your participants. Share your findings with employers. When appropriate, help them tackle issues such as poor supervision or racism in the workplace.



ELEMENT FIVE

Help People Establish a Work History

The research says:

“The early work experiences of low-skilled women who make the transition to steady employment are characterized by early entry into the labor market and relatively quick reentry after periods of joblessness.” “Against the Odds: Steady Employment Among Low-Skilled Women,” by LaDonna Pavetti, a Report to The Annie E. Casey Foundation

Retention-focused organizations realize that **helping people establish a work history is a process**, not a single, quick-fix event. These organizations plan for the long-term. Although retention begins on day one of the program, it doesn't end on the participant's first day on the job—or first week or month. To ensure retention, the organization stays involved until participants are practiced at keeping jobs an appropriate amount of time and transitioning to better jobs in a responsible way. And the organization strives to enroll people who are ready to be responsible about their own work history.



Participants with erratic work histories have quit jobs for many, many reasons. Some jobs don't seem worth keeping. They pay poorly, don't offer benefits and lead nowhere. Helping people get into the good jobs described in the previous section is part of the solution. Even so, people can quit or lose their jobs repeatedly because of poor work ethics. They may be unable to take directions or respond positively to feedback. They may not show up on time, and then, one day, don't show up at all. To help people learn and practice behaviors that lead both to better jobs and job longevity, organizations can model values and teach appropriate responses and actions. Many organizations **are arranging volunteer work experiences, internships and subsidized employment**, but the real learning takes place when people are on the job and have support that helps them problem-solve as real issues arise.

Helping people establish a work history is more than helping them develop a résumé without gaps. Developing a work history also includes **helping people develop a plan** for making history in which they take jobs intentionally and quit them responsibly to take better ones.

In this section:

Plan for the Long-Term

Work on the Work Ethic and Interpersonal Skills

Check the Preparation

Develop Job Savvy

Emphasize Responsible Job-Leaving

What If . . .



Plan for the Long-Term

A retention-focused organization is involved after people are employed. Staff help jobholders through setbacks, place them in second or third jobs and encourage them to upgrade skills. How does your organization prepare participants for the long-term? How does it help staff support new jobholders and avoid major pitfalls—including taking on too much?

Beginning



To do with the participants

Emphasize steady employment during recruitment/assessment and orientation.

Try to enroll only those who are committed.

To make it work for the staff

Train staff to assess participants—not only for skills, aptitude and barriers, but for commitment.

Set realistic goals that reflect the time and support necessary for helping people maintain steady employment.

Major pitfalls

Pressure to serve those unwilling to commit to long-term involvement.

Overstating what the organization can do.



Preemployment



To do with the participants

Help minimize challenges that can keep people from being steadily employed.

Help participants develop their own plans for gaining the skills to get into good jobs.

Provide access to soft/job-specific training.

Insist that people take responsibility for preparing themselves to work steadily.

To make it work for the staff

Have a teamwork approach for dealing with participants having difficulties—and difficult participants—which includes brainstorming strategies and reinforcing one another's actions with the participants.

Major pitfalls

Ignoring challenges that will sabotage employment later.

Offering job training that is not readily accessible or tailored to participants' needs and skills.

“Doing” for people, instead of helping them “do” for themselves.



Retaining the job**To do with the participants**

- Support participants during job search and match them with good employers in jobs where they are likely to succeed.
- Provide follow-up for all participants at the beginning of a new job.
- Help individuals with setbacks and continue follow-up for those needing it.
- Provide quick placement in new jobs for those who quit or lose theirs.
- Sponsor events that help maintain connection to your organization.
- Provide incentives for staying employed for specific amounts of time.

To make it work for the staff

- Balance the responsibility for jobholders who require intensive support with jobholders likely to succeed and be pleased with their jobs.
- Have flexible time so staff can contact jobholders outside of their working hours.
- Provide a budget for taking people to lunch to discuss their jobs, iron out issues and celebrate success.
- Refer jobholders for support to other reliable organizations, when appropriate.
- Encourage staff to “pace themselves,” periodically assess whether they are “overworked” and discuss how to prevent “burn out.”
- Provide incentives to staff to keep people employed.

Major pitfalls

- Encouraging job seekers to take jobs they are likely to lose in order to meet the organization’s placement goals.
- Lack of resources to support jobholders because the organization has expended everything up front.
- Staff “burn-out” because they are supporting too many people with intensive needs.

Advancing**To do with the participants**

- Encourage people to assume increased responsibility on the job.
- Help people update their career plans as they gain skills and experience.
- Provide information about better jobs and access to more skill training.
- Help people quit responsibly to take better jobs.

To make it work for the staff

- Provide information on employment trends, job openings and how and where jobholders can gain skills for better jobs.

Major pitfalls

- Losing touch with participants.
- Pushing advancement too soon.



Work on the Work Ethic and Interpersonal Skills

Many organizations teach “soft skills,” but the connection with what actually happens on a job is sometimes tenuous. Use this worksheet to consider whether your program addresses these skills, what standards it uses and what opportunities it provides for practice.

Work Ethic	Program Standards	Skill Practice
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Get to work on time <input type="checkbox"/> Get to work every day <input type="checkbox"/> Return from breaks and lunch on time <input type="checkbox"/> Call in if going to be late <input type="checkbox"/> Call in sick only when necessary <input type="checkbox"/> Arrange ahead to take time off <input type="checkbox"/> Focus on job tasks and responsibilities <input type="checkbox"/> Complete tasks in allotted time <input type="checkbox"/> Produce quality work <input type="checkbox"/> Use skills, talents and knowledge for an employer’s benefit <input type="checkbox"/> Accept feedback on performance and use it in positive ways <input type="checkbox"/> Strive to improve skills <input type="checkbox"/> Be willing to learn new tasks and accept additional duties and responsibilities <input type="checkbox"/> Choose the ethical course of action <input type="checkbox"/> Demonstrate an interest in a company and know how one’s job contributes to its success <input type="checkbox"/> Stay on the job—and working—until quitting time <input type="checkbox"/> Leave a job by giving proper notice and only after securing another position 	<p><i>Example: Taking time off is arranged two days prior to an absence</i></p> <p><i>Any document viewed by an employer is error-free</i></p> <p><i>Participant receives a satisfactory assessment on participation in a group project</i></p>	<p>Example: Request time off from trainers in person or by email</p> <p>Design or update written and electronic materials used to market the organization to employers</p> <p>Develop and produce résumés and cover letters</p> <p>Design a group project, including developing job descriptions for all positions</p> <p>Arrange informational interviews at two companies and give an oral presentation on whether they would like to work there and what they could contribute</p>



Interpersonal Skills	Program Standards	Skill Practice
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Request assistance when needed <input type="checkbox"/> Respond appropriately to both positive and corrective feedback <input type="checkbox"/> Take responsibility for one’s performance <input type="checkbox"/> Communicate clearly, respectfully and courteously with supervisors, coworkers and customers <input type="checkbox"/> Steer clear of rumors and gossip <input type="checkbox"/> Respond to others positively, even when they are negative or critical <input type="checkbox"/> Be part of a team—helping out when needed even if it’s not one’s job <input type="checkbox"/> Participate actively to solve problems <input type="checkbox"/> Offer suggestions and feedback in an appropriate manner <input type="checkbox"/> Cope with difficult supervisors, coworkers or customers <input type="checkbox"/> Avoid conflict, but when it occurs, resolve it without damaging relationships <input type="checkbox"/> Adapt to the workplace culture: the unwritten, accepted “way of doing things” <input type="checkbox"/> Inspire the confidence of supervisors and coworkers <input type="checkbox"/> Contribute to a positive atmosphere by projecting an “I’m glad to be here” attitude 	<p><i>Participants use a professional vocabulary that may be different from how they communicate with family and friends</i></p>	<p>During soft skills training, identify lapses in good communication and then role-play better ways of stating the message</p> <p>Serve as receptionist on a rotating basis</p> <p>Greet guests at events, take part in orientations and introduce speakers</p>



Check the Preparation

How do you know when a participant is ready to work steadily? Here are some critical questions, positive signs and red flags to help assess job readiness—and some helpful responses to positive and negative attitudes and behaviors.



“People can’t go to the job just for the money. Something else must be there for them.”

*Tina Rodriguez
Denver Workforce Initiative*

Does the person see himself as successful already?



Positive Signs

- Recognizes that he has skills to offer
- Responds appropriately to both positive and corrective feedback
- Expects appropriate recognition for accomplishments
- Handles setbacks well



Red Flags

- Claims no skills*
- Crushed by constructive feedback*
- Sees setbacks as confirming his unworthiness*
- Accepts a pattern of sporadic employment as routine, normal behavior*
- Begins having attendance problems toward the end of training*



Helpful Responses

Acknowledge people’s successes:

“In two months of coming here, you learned enough English to get yourself a job and get your kids enrolled in school. That’s amazing!”

Reinforce skills developed in other situations through work-related opportunities:

“Okay, you were in prison so you probably know a thing or two about crowd control. We’ve got a contract to set up for the Cactus Spine concert. Do you want to give it a try?”



What is motivating this person to go to work?

+	🚩
<p>Positive Signs</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ready for a change Work fits with interests, abilities and personal goals Wants a better life for the children Has a strong network of support for working from family and friends 	<p>Red Flags</p> <p><i>Resents having to take a job because of circumstances outside one's control; for example, a divorce, layoff, termination of public assistance or work as a condition of parole</i></p>
!	
<p>Helpful Responses</p> <p>Acknowledge and reinforce positive motivation: <i>"It's hard at first, the change. But the potential for earning more than you received on welfare is there. And your kids are so proud of you. It really shows."</i></p> <p>Suggest the positive aspects of working without ignoring personal situation or feelings: <i>"I can understand how you feel forced into taking the job, but can you still offer the customer service the employer wants while you learn the computer skills you'll need for the job that you really want?"</i></p>	

What is motivating this person to take a particular job?

+	🚩
<p>Positive Signs</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Understands that the job is appropriate at this time Matches or closely reflects results from vocational assessment Fits into career goals Trained for the job Had a successful internship/successfully held a similar job Chose the job from among other options 	<p>Red Flags</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>Figures this job is as good as any</i> <i>Just wants to make some money</i> <i>Job seems to be the only choice</i> <i>Took the first job offered</i> <i>Afraid of interviews that might not lead to being hired</i> <i>Has rotated through other programs and views your organization and the job as one in a series</i>
!	
<p>Helpful Responses</p> <p>Acknowledge and reinforce positive motivation: <i>"Right, it's a first step. You'll be working with cars and you'll be in an environment similar to a mechanics shop, so when the next training cycle starts you'll know for certain whether you'll want to study auto repair."</i></p> <p>Offer an opportunity to rethink the decision: <i>"If you land another job and give two weeks notice, you haven't burned any bridges."</i></p>	

Develop Job Savvy

Here are six actions you can take to help jobholders develop job savvy.

- 1** Discuss “job savvy” up front, specifically and prior to employment:

“The last time someone lost a job at this company was because the employer felt he had an attitude problem. Above all, the employer wants her sales associates to project an ‘I’m glad to be here’ attitude. What are some things you will do to show that you are ‘glad to be there?’”

- 2** Recruit employers to interact with participants and “tell it like it is”:

“Why have I let people go? Usually for one of two reasons. They didn’t show up for work or they didn’t show up on time. I need dependable people working for me.”

- 3** Encourage people to see their performance or behavior from the employer’s point of view:

“Okay, you make \$8 an hour. You said that your daughter calls you twice a day, maybe three times. If you talk for, say, five minutes each time that’s 15 minutes a day and an hour and 15 minutes a week. Your employer has paid you \$10 a week to talk with your daughter. But maybe it’s not about money. Can you put yourself in your employer’s place when she hears you on the phone again? What do you think she is thinking?”

- 4** Encourage people to see their coworkers’ points of view:

“If the manager is allowing you time off for appointments and to deal with personal issues, how is this affecting your coworkers? What do they think when they see you leave early?”

- 5** Role-play:

“You want to try it? Okay, you take the role of Mr. Beesley and I will be you. I’m going to react to Mr. Beesley the way you did when he told you that you weren’t following directions. If you think it’s helpful, we can practice some other responses you could make and discuss how Mr. Beesley might respond differently.”

- 6** Seize the teachable moment:

“Your manager apologized for being impatient and said she was overworked. What might you consider next time you need to ask her a question? Is there an opportunity here for you to make yourself more valuable?”

“I had a person call once to let me know she couldn’t go to work because it was raining.”

Darlene Fritz
Chemeketa Community College, Salem, Oregon

Emphasize Responsible Job-Leaving

Everyone leaves a job eventually. Consider taking these actions to ensure responsible job-leaving.

Ask questions so jobholders get the most out of quitting or losing a job.

Questions for Those Thinking about Quitting

1. Why are you quitting?
2. If you have a new job to go to, why is it better than the one that you are quitting? When does it start?
3. If you don't have a job lined up, have you considered that it is usually easier to get hired elsewhere if you are currently employed?
4. How much notice is appropriate? Who at the job should be told first?
5. Who will you ask to give you a reference? What can you add to your résumé that you learned on this job?
6. What would have to change in order for you to keep the job? How could this change be brought about?
7. If you are quitting without a job to go to, how will you pay the bills?

Questions for Those Who Quit

1. When did you first think about quitting? Did something specific happen?
2. What was your reason for quitting?
3. What would have kept you at this job?
4. What skills did you learn on this job that you could discuss in a job interview or add to your résumé?
5. What did you learn personally from the job?
6. What will you look for in your next job that is different from the one you quit?
7. How will you handle inquiries from future employers about this job experience?
8. What is your next step for finding employment? How can I help?

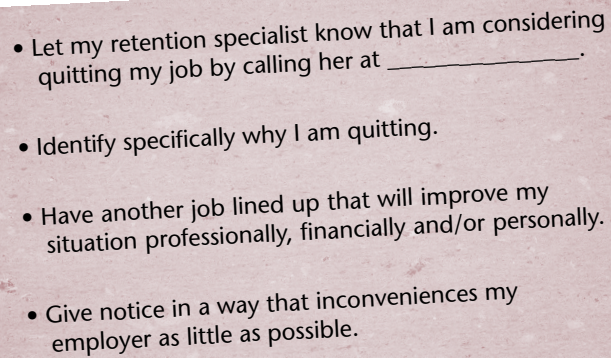
Questions for Those Who Were Fired

1. When did you first suspect you might lose your job? Did something specific happen?
2. What was the reason your boss gave for letting you go? Do you agree with this reason? Why do you think you were let go?
3. Is there something you could have done to keep the job? If so, what was that?
4. What skills did you learn that you could discuss in a job interview or add to your résumé?
5. What did you learn personally from the job?
6. What will you look for in your next job that is different from this one? What would you like to be similar?
7. What will you say about this experience in your next interview?
8. What is your next step for finding employment? How can I help?

>>>

Emphasize Responsible Job-Leaving, cont.

Give new jobholders a card to remind them of what to do when quitting a job.

- 
- Let my retention specialist know that I am considering quitting my job by calling her at _____.
 - Identify specifically why I am quitting.
 - Have another job lined up that will improve my situation professionally, financially and/or personally.
 - Give notice in a way that inconveniences my employer as little as possible.

Talk with the employer to gain insight and control damage.

Staff can help maintain credibility for the organization by contacting an employer soon after a jobholder quits or is dismissed.

If the jobholder has been fired or left without giving proper notice, acknowledge the inconvenience and, depending upon your relationship, ask whether your organization might refer someone else for the position.

Although company policy might forbid disclosure of why employees are dismissed, try to discuss the situation in general terms so you can better understand the employer's expectations.

What If . . .

. . . participants insist on leaving the program to take jobs before you believe they are fully prepared to maintain employment? You might:

Assess whether your program and services meet the participants' needs. For example, participants may be struggling with training content or have hidden challenges to completing the program, such as drug abuse, domestic trouble or criminal records. Train staff members to help or refer people to other organizations with more expertise. If participants are leaving early for financial reasons, consider helping them get part-time jobs or provide paid internships or cash subsidies (for performance) until they are prepared for good jobs and steady employment.

Help people consider the benefits of further preparation, including the personal and economic advantage of receiving more training. If possible, illustrate your claims with outcomes from the organization's data, such as higher wages for those who complete the program.

Be diligent about keeping in touch with early leavers in order to offer advice, assistance and/or continuing training or services if they lose their jobs.

Enlist graduates who have benefited from a long-term involvement to talk with participants about what the organization has done to help them keep their jobs or get better ones.

. . . participants seem to understand the need for interpersonal skills and job savvy, but are unable to practice skills and savvy on the job?

Review your preemployment training for effectiveness. Provide ways to practice interpersonal skills and job savvy in the classroom. Assess whether you have created a worklike environment and provide worklike tasks. (See the report and training video *Hard Work on Soft Skills* published by P/PV.)

Provide "lower stakes" volunteer or subsidized work experiences during which participants can practice their interpersonal skills and receive job coaching before being hired.

Have participants take the position of manager for projects or activities in order to develop a management viewpoint.

Invite employers/supervisors to speak about the interpersonal skills required at their workplaces and to participate in training.

Encourage employers to assign "buddies" or mentors to the new jobholders in order to help them "learn the ropes" and negotiate the work culture.

Sponsor a monthly support group for employed participants so jobholders can learn from one another's experiences and receive ongoing peer support.

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ELEMENT SIX

Provide Opportunities to Develop Skills

The research says:

“Programs may be able to help low-income parents develop skills in advance of employment that equip them to better handle the demands of the workplace. Soft skills, entry-level job skills, and life skills all appear to be important to job retention.” “Steady Work and Better Jobs,” by Julie Strawn, CLASP, and Karin Martinson, MDRC

Although a work ethic and interpersonal skills are necessary to keep any job, **well-paying jobs, even at the entry level, require job-specific skills:** using customized software programs, maintaining expensive equipment, backing a truck against a loading dock or finding the right vein the first time. In order for participants to gain these skills, organizations need to know which skills are required for which jobs and how and where these skills—and certificates, licenses and diplomas that verify them—can be gained. Helping participants access training prior to employment is only a start. In order **for new jobholders to advance, they need to continually learn and upgrade skills.**



Unless the organization is in a position to provide the job training itself, it is important to build partnerships with secondary schools, training institutions, community colleges and employers. **Often organizations serving lower-skilled, entry-level participants must advocate for accessible training.** This could include adding language training that incorporates an employment vocabulary for those who do not speak English or short-term training that is available during evenings or weekends.

Once the organization's staff understands what job skills are required and where training can be obtained, they can **encourage new jobholders to gain more skills.** This can involve more than helping people fill out application forms or applying for tuition reimbursements for formal training. Staff can point out opportunities to build skills on the job. They can encourage jobholders to ask questions, assist coworkers, volunteer for cross-training or special projects and continuously inquire of themselves, **“What can I learn on this job that will make me even more employable?”**

In this section:

- Promote Skill Development Planning
- Offer a Skill-Building Program
- Arrange Internships
- Provide Access to Training
- What If . . .



Promote Skill Development Planning

A skill development plan is an ongoing process of self-assessment, information gathering and goal setting. Here are actions you could suggest to help people plan for steady employment.

"I knew right away that I wanted to do my internship in the heart unit because I have had heart problems myself. In the interview, they said that if I could work in telemarketing, well, I could work here."

*Anita Meyers-Green
Administrative Assistant,
and former participant with Jewish Vocational Service,
San Francisco, California*

Actions to Suggest

Whenever you are enjoying yourself, think about how that activity could relate to a job.

Ask family, friends and counselors what they see as your strengths and skills.

Complete assessments/interest inventory and decide whether the results really describe you.

Research job duties of professions that match your skills, interests and values, including salaries, working conditions and forecasts for employment.

Interview people doing jobs that interest you. Find out what they do and how they got the job.

Try out jobs through volunteering, part-time jobs or internships.

Know what skills, training, certificates or diplomas are required.

Make a written plan with short- and long-term goals and a time line.

Find an employer mentor at the job or in the industry.




Jacky Morton's Skill Planning

Gain Self-Knowledge	Explore Job/Career Possibilities	Make Decisions/Commitments/Goals
<p>Interests: <i>cooking; singing in church choir; scheduling choir appearances</i></p> <p>Skills: <i>cooking, organizing people and time</i></p> <p>Values: <i>being with others; lively place to work—supervisors at least as old as I am</i></p> <p>Lots of people said to get a union job because it pays more</p> <p>Pastor thought I should work in a nursing home, but I'd like working downtown with tourists who are having fun.</p> <p>Talked with friend who schedules travel and collects receipts for expenses. She said I'd be good at that because I'm organized.</p>	<p><i>Line Cook: Watched line cooks during dinner shift. Now I think that what I like about cooking is that my family likes what I cook. Cooking in a restaurant doesn't seem the same because you start out as a salad maker or line cook and just follow a formula recipe and make sure it all looks and tastes the same. And the work schedule changes all the time. To be a chef takes training and lots of experience.</i></p> <p><i>Hostess: The restaurant hostess job looked interesting and I'm sure that I could do that, but it only pays \$7 plus part of the tip pool. The better paying jobs that it leads to, like waitress or dining room supervisor, aren't anything I want to do.</i></p> <p><i>Group Reservations Coordinator: \$12.00</i> <i>I talked to a Maggie Martinez who shows people around The Naples and makes reservations for corporate groups and conferences. Good job for me, but I would need computer training and at least one year of experience making reservations.</i></p>	<p>Learn more about the front desk jobs, especially the hours because of child care.</p> <p>Get a copy of my high school diploma and grades from the term that I went to voc training so I can start my résumé.</p> <p>Sept. 7-Dec. 7, 2003: Take the Intro to Computer course and Orientation to the Hospitality Industry.</p> <p>Fridays during Sept./Oct.: Train with the program receptionist on how to make appointments.</p> <p>Volunteer: Update mailing list at church to practice data entry (before Christmas).</p> <p>During Oct./Nov.: Job shadow at two more downtown hotels and then at the resort.</p> <p>Jan. 6 for 3 mos. until I get a job: Do internship and learn reservation software.</p> <p>Middle of January: Update my plan. Work with the job developer.</p>

Offer a Skill-Building Program

For participants with limited work experience, education or skills, preemployment training can lead to better first jobs. Here's an outline of a four-month program designed to prepare participants for steady employment. Are there elements you could incorporate into your program?



LIFT OFF

TO SUCCESS

*Train for Steady Jobs
Metro Area Training*

Week 1

Focus: Orientation/Prepare for Successful Employment

Orientation to Program: Communicate in 1,000 ways the expectation of maintaining steady employment. Have participants meet retention staff. Enroll those committed to training for long-term employment.

Orientation to Career Training Options: Begin the ongoing assessment of interests, attributes and skills.

Orientation to Work Experience Option: Explain how participants who want to gain work experience may interview for various roles in the program, including receptionist, facilities manager and event planner.

Welcoming Lunch: Invite employers and alumni to speak.

Get Organized for Employment: Get child care, transportation and appointments squared away.

Introduction to Soft Skills: Include presentations by employers, successful graduates and job developers about employer expectations. Explain that getting to work on time, dressing and communicating appropriately and getting along with coworkers will be discussed, practiced and assessed during all activities.

Job Search: Help those who require employment during training find part-time jobs.

Weeks 2-7

Focus: Establish a Work Routine/Build Skills

Skill Training: Have the instructor relate to participants as a supervisor. Teach subjects in the context of how they are used on the job. Provide basic skills instruction/tutoring to those needing it. Use employer volunteers when possible.

Skill Training: Provide a worklike environment driven by the same expectations that employers have. Provide “hands-on” experiences using equipment that will be used on the job. Reinforce learning, including soft skills, continuously. Begin periodic performance reviews.

Breaks/Lunch: Make certain that participants behave and communicate on break as they should on a job and that they return to “work” promptly.

Skill Training: Computer Applications: As participants build skills, require that assignments—including career plans, cover letters and résumés—be produced using word processing, desktop publishing, databases and spreadsheets in business formats such as memos, emails and reports. Devise team projects.

Job Search/Go to Part-Time Job.

Weeks 8-10

Focus: Skill Building/Transition to the Workplace

Preparation for Internships: Help participants develop résumés and interviewing skills. Set up mock interviews with employers to provide helpful, critical feedback. Tour facilities similar to those where participants will intern and eventually work; encourage questions, observations and self-assessment in regard to different jobs. Update career plans.

Skill Training: Continue to infuse soft skills into job training by expecting participants to work in teams and solve work-related problems. Connect what occurs in the classroom to what is expected on the job. Continue performance reviews.

Skill Training: Computer Applications: Use up-to-date equipment. If possible, train on software with procedures used by facilities where participants will intern and work.

Go to Part-Time Job.

Weeks 11-15

Focus: Internships/More Skill Building

Internship: Seek out internships with employers committed to teaching skills and reinforcing attitudes that will help participants obtain good jobs. Orient and train supervisors and stay in touch during the internships. Make certain that work experiences last long enough to practice dependability, enhance résumés and result in good references from supervisors—if not job offers from employers.

Job Club: Help participants research jobs, complete applications and prepare for interviews. Engage employers for workshops, presentations, one-on-one mock interviews and mentoring. Encourage job seekers to develop a peer network to continue after they are employed. Announce job placements as they occur to celebrate success and motivate job seekers.

Coaching and Training Extras: Offer coaching and additional training, not only for those needing special help, but for those for whom extra attention could result in a better first job.

Go to Part-Time Job.

Week 16:

Focus: Graduation, Celebration and Ongoing Support

Graduation: Invite employers, including those who might not be fully engaged with the organization, and seat them next to enthusiastic supporters. Encourage current participants, graduates, alumni and employers to network through calculated introductions. Make graduation feel more like a beginning than an end.

Lunch with Retention Specialist: Set up times to meet and talk on a regular basis.

Job Club: Continue for those not yet employed.

New classes begin every three months. Call 777-777-7777 for more information.

Metro Area Training

Arrange Internships

Internships are an effective means for participants to develop skills and make mistakes in an environment safer than a regular job. Here is an outline of actions, materials and advice to consider when arranging internships.

Recruit the Employer

Utilize your board members and employers who have hired participants to advocate for internships at their companies.

Ask employers who provide internships to refer you to other companies, and satisfied supervisors to speak to their peers about accepting interns.

When time allows, develop internships through cold calling employers to meet specific needs. *“We have an individual especially interested in children’s rights. Is it possible for him to do an unpaid internship with your firm?”*

Advice

Organize a focus group of employers to help develop an effective recruitment strategy if your organization is just beginning to arrange internships.

Keep in mind that asking new employers to provide internships can be an effective marketing tool. Internships can expand the organization’s exposure and provide a comfortable way to engage employers.

Develop an ever-increasing pool of willing employers whom you can contact on a rotating basis for internships.

Provide

- A fact sheet about your organization, the training you offer and what is expected of companies that participate
- Information about fair labor standards that address unpaid internships and an agreement outlining who is liable for accidents or the interns’ actions
- Assurance that the internship can be terminated at any time if it becomes problematic

Prepare the Supervisor

Meet the supervisor at the job site to discuss what training the intern has received and what tasks she could do.

Advice

Provide up-front orientation and training for supervisors. Problems occur when supervisors have little information about the program and process.

Seek internship with “concrete,” well-defined jobs such as data entry, processing documents or materials or helping with specific projects. These are better options for lower-skilled interns than ones that require knowing options and making decisions.

Place interns with organized, supportive, patient managers who take time to arrange projects and real work tasks and who can serve as role models.

Provide

- A schedule of when the intern will be at work, including days of the week and hours with start and end dates
- A written agreement outlining expectations that might include:
 - Exposing the intern to a professional work environment
 - Opportunity to practice skills learned during training
 - Honest feedback so interns can improve skills and the organization can improve training
 - Written recommendations for interns to serve as a reference, if all has gone well

Prepare the Participant

Describe the company, supervisor, coworkers and work environment and provide observations that can get the person off to a good start.

Advice

Don't raise the participant's expectations. Offer a realistic idea of what tasks the intern might do. In the best situations, interns are asked to photocopy, file, tidy up and do other mundane jobs.

Arrange a schedule that includes continued training at your facility during the internship. This allows participants to discuss their experiences with their peers and staff, to continue to learn skills while applying them on the job and to stay in touch with your organization.

Strive for a good match where the participant feels comfortable, respected and useful.

Provide

- The same information that you have provided to the supervisor so that there is no misunderstanding about schedules or what is expected.

Manage the Experience

Stay in touch with both the supervisor or human resources department and the participant.

Follow up on negative feedback from the supervisor. Decide with the supervisor whether or not you need to be involved in corrective actions.

Debrief the participant during individual or group conversations to help identify what was learned about working, the job and himself. Through conversation or a feedback form, debrief the supervisor to reinforce the value of the intern and decide how to make the process run more smoothly in the future.

Advice

Stay in regular touch, but also make it easy for the supervisor to contact you. Respond immediately when contacted.

Effectively support the participant so that the internship offers a positive introduction to employment. Effectively support the supervisor so that she can facilitate a realistic learning experience—and so that the employer will continue to provide internships.

Provide

- An attendance form that the intern completes, the supervisor signs and the staff member reviews
- A performance evaluation form for the supervisor to complete, including assessment of the internship experience itself. Consider providing an electronic form to make this easy



Provide Access to Training

Here are six ways that your organization might provide access to job-specific training. As a starting point, consider the questions under each. For more information, see the description of retention-focused organizations at the end of the guide.

1 Offer training yourself

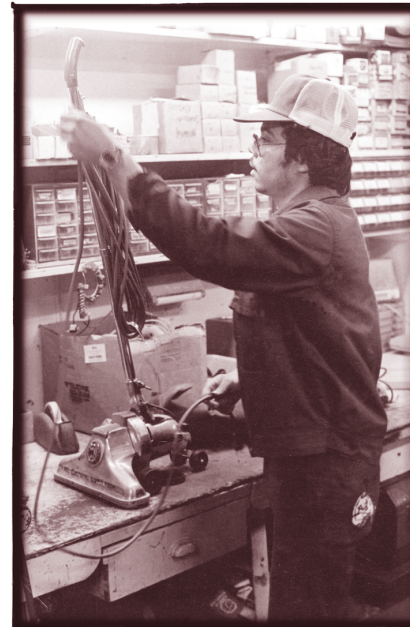
Could your organization realistically provide better accessibility and instruction than what is now available to participants?

Training, Inc., YMCA of Greater Boston, MA
www.traininginc.org

2 Run a business

How would you move people from the organization's business into jobs for which they've trained? Would your training program result in the certification, licensing or credit toward a degree, if that is required or useful for advancement?

Rubicon Programs, Inc., Richmond, CA
www.rubiconpgms.org



3 **Pay or facilitate payment for training**

Do you have expertise in “traditional” funding for students, such as scholarships, grants, work/study jobs and loans? Do you know who is eligible and how your participants apply? Can you help participants “think through” offers of loans from private training institutions, the need to plan for paying back student loans and the possibility that they will be liable for tuition if they drop out or fail to get a specific grade when using employer tuition reimbursement?

Westside Industrial Retention and Expansion Network (WIRE-Net), Cleveland, OH
www.wire-net.org

4 **Offer customized training for employers**

Is your capacity to develop training strong enough that employers will pay for it? Can you make certain that the participants, as well as the employers, profit from the training?

Jewish Vocational Service, San Francisco, CA
www.jvs.org

5 **Offer support during training**

Do you have an understanding of the services needed during training and resources for obtaining tutoring, child care and transportation? How would you provide support without being intrusive or giving the impression to instructors or staff at a training facility that your participant is “different from” or less capable than other students?

Project QUEST, San Antonio, TX
www.questsa.com

6 **Provide input on training that allows participants better access**

Do you know how best to advocate for accessible, effective training for your participants in ways that create a win-win-win situation for the participant, the college/facility and your organization?

Instituto del Progreso Latino, Chicago, IL
www.uic.edu/~schorsch/sessions/instituto



What If . . .

. . . secondary schools, community colleges and other public training organizations in your community are not offering accessible skill training for the type of participants that your program serves? You might:

Find “champions” in the schools, institutions and training organizations who value providing education and training for all and who will advocate for its accessibility. When possible, engage board members or administrators who can make this happen.

Offer models from other schools or organizations to convince decision-makers that effective training with appropriate curricula can be offered at times and places where your participants can attend; for example, at work sites before or after work or on the cusp of shifts.

Talk “bottom line,” especially if your organization can pay for the training or help its participants access money for tuition and fees. When you can provide a steady flow of students, remind public institutions that increased enrollment increases the amount of state education money the school receives.

. . . your participants do not have the basic skills or a command of English that allows them to benefit from training for well-paying jobs?

Teach or provide access to classes where basic skills or English language skills are taught with materials linked to occupations.

Assess the learning styles of participants, especially those who have previously have been unsuccessful at gaining basic skills, and encourage teachers to use a variety of instructional methods.

Encourage non-English speakers to take jobs where they can practice and improve their language skills, instead of working where there are many other non-English-speaking employees or where the foreman gives instructions in their native language.

. . . well-paying jobs require a degree?

Discuss with employers their policies of requiring degrees for entry-level jobs if the skills necessary could be gained through prior work experience or on the job.

Try to arrange for participants to receive college credit for their classes and training. Amassing a few credits can motivate people to continue working toward a degree.



ELEMENT SEVEN

Help People Deal with Challenges

The research says:

“Helping individuals with barriers succeed in employment will require both service strategies that address the barriers directly, for example, through counseling or treatment, and labor market strategies that identify or create employment opportunities in which individuals with barriers can succeed.” “Beyond Work First: How to Help Hard-to-Employ Individuals Get Jobs and Succeed in the Workforce,” by Amy Brown, MDRC

Think about your own job satisfaction. Why were you attracted to a job helping people with one of the most important aspects of life, their livelihood? Employment and training organizations are frequently made up of “helpers”—people wanting to solve problems that keep others from earning a decent living for themselves and their families. And these problems are many: child care, care for children with special needs, elder care for parents, getting to jobs where public transportation doesn’t exist, literacy and language barriers, ongoing medical issues, substance abuse, domestic abuse, lack of family or social support for working, mental health issues, legal problems and financial crises. Realistically, who can provide the expertise to tackle all these issues? Perhaps another challenge for organizations—and especially for

the people working in them—is acknowledging that they cannot do it all.



Organizations might be most effective—and helpful—in three ways. First, by concentrating on what they do best—recruiting those needing jobs, perhaps, or offering services to a specific population, or providing training in interpersonal skills or for specific industries.

Second, they can be effective by *continuously encouraging staff members to form relationships with participants so they can help them identify challenges* and anticipate problems that threaten steady employment.

And third, organizations and their staff should *know when and where to refer participants* to others with more resources, experience and specific expertise. Helping people with challenges, however, is more than handing them off to another organization. The staff to whom people are referred must be as trustworthy, knowledgeable and effective as you are—and, ultimately, as focused on helping people maintain steady employment.

In this section:

Tame the Demands of Working, including:

Making the Transition

Preparing for the Cost of Working

Facing Cultural and Economic Differences

Coping with Insufficient Family or Social Support

Respond to Clues that Spell Trouble

Develop a Community of Partners

Know the Real Resources

Make Successful Referrals

What If . . .

Tame the Demands of Working

Making the Transition

The job duties themselves are not always the most difficult part of working. The following pages suggest what you might do to help new jobholders successfully adapt to the workplace.

1

Prior to the job

Help the job seeker anticipate the general demands of working:

- Relentlessness of going to work every day
- Necessity of being on time
- Less control of how one's time is spent
- Less personal and family time
- Stress of doing something new or unfamiliar
- Fatigue from work schedule

Help anticipate the demands of the particular industry, employer and job:

- Expectations of the supervisor and coworkers
- Physical demands of the job
- Mental demands, including dealing with customers and coworkers while maintaining a positive attitude

Encourage the job seeker to develop personal strategies for meeting demands that most affect them. For example, taking a fitness class to build up stamina for a physically demanding job or asking family for 30 minutes "recovery time" after work.

2

Once the job begins

Be alert to how new jobholders manage demands and workplace expectations. During your follow-up, ask questions about the demands most likely to affect the individual.

Be prepared to refer the jobholders to support services such as child or elder care resources, housing or personal counseling to help them better manage the job.

Encourage the person to find a mentor in the workplace who can advise on workplace culture, politics and issues and who will offer advice and constructive feedback.

Offer sincere, positive, confidence-building feedback on the jobholders' efforts to meet job expectations.

For retention-focused organizations, participants are still participants when they go to work.

Basic Tenet of Retention

Tame the Demands of Working

Preparing for the Cost of Working

1

Prior to the job

Preview a pay stub. People often anticipate receiving their hourly rate times hours worked and are surprised and dismayed when wages are withheld for taxes, social security and insurance.

Help anticipate costs for:

- Clothing
- Transportation
- Child care
- Lunches, snacks, coffee breaks
- Collections/contributions at the workplace

Help identify supplementary sources of income or programs that help offset expenses:

- Earned Income Tax Credits
- Child care supplement
- Health insurance (CHIP programs)
- Food Stamps
- Subsidized housing

Help plan a realistic budget: Use a spreadsheet. Along with practicing computer skills, the jobholder can then visualize the effect of working more or fewer hours, receiving raises or quitting the job.

2

Once the job begins

After a few paychecks, inquire about the financial realities. If the jobholder is struggling and if your relationship allows, offer to review the budget and make suggestions.

Encourage your organization to offer workshops on money management, debt reduction, taxes, home ownership and investing.

Help problem-solve shortfalls by referring the jobholder for housing assistance, financial counseling or transitional help with living expenses, if appropriate. Consider providing one-time, short-term grants to those who could keep their job with a little help.

Don't assume that your spending habits or financial priorities are the same as the jobholder's. Be realistic about the cost of working, but sensitive to different priorities. Buying a monthly bus pass might make sense to you, but you may not have a teenager longing for new athletic shoes.

>>>

Tame the Demands of Working

Facing Cultural and Economic Differences

1

Prior to the job starting

Discuss ways the person can capitalize on differences, such as speaking a language other than English or understanding the needs of customers from a cultural background similar to his own.

After the person has been offered a position, but before she accepts the job, suggest that she meet with her future coworkers and become acquainted with the work site.

Invite jobholders with cultural or economic backgrounds similar to the job seeker's to speak about their experiences handling differences in the workplace.

Invite human resources staff to discuss policies and work culture in their companies.

Help the person identify workplace situations that could cause discomfort. Role-play how the situation might be handled; for example, being invited to lunch with coworkers when one doesn't have the money to eat out, or having the radio tuned to music that grates on one's nerves.

Discuss the desirability of tolerance for supervisors or coworkers who may be culturally insensitive.

2

Once the job begins

Be alert for problems caused by cultural and economic differences. Encourage the jobholders to join an alumni group that discusses ways to handle differences on the job.

Encourage the person to make friends on the job and avoid isolating himself. Offer specific suggestions on how to interact with coworkers, such as showing interest in their families, hobbies or sports teams, joining others at break time or volunteering for committees. Talk about projecting friendliness in ways that are understood by those of other backgrounds.

Arrange for/encourage the person to seek a mentor. Try to help the person identify someone in the workplace who could be helpful. Work through the human resources department, or refer the person to organizations that provide mentors.

Help people clarify what they might perceive as discriminatory. Help brainstorm possible responses to individual situations. Advise on regulations, policies and legal action addressing discrimination, if necessary.

>>>

Tame the Demands of Working

Coping with Insufficient Family or Social Support

1

Prior to the job

Discuss the attitudes of the job seeker's family members and friends. Encourage her to identify those who are supportive of her working/career plans.

Include the job seeker's spouse or partner in celebrations, workshops and meetings with you, when appropriate.

Know that domestic violence affects a person's ability to keep a job.

- Develop the type of caring relationships that will allow people to reveal abuse.
- Educate yourself about the complexity of abuse and be prepared to make referrals, if this is not your field of expertise.

Understand that younger people entering the workforce may be especially susceptible to pressure from unemployed friends. If possible, encourage them to take jobs with workplace cultures that appeal to young employees and with coworkers who affirm their decision to work.

2

Once the job begins

Be alert for problems caused by negativity or lack of support from family or friends.

Ask the jobholder about how family members are reacting to their working. Help them with responses to negativity, such as discussing how working can improve the family's economic situation.

Offer positive feedback for job success and encourage others close to the jobholder to do so. Send cards to the house congratulating jobholders on getting jobs, staying at the job or receiving a raise so these can be shared with family.

Help new jobholders identify ways their children can feel included and proud about their working. You might suggest scheduling family time to share stories from the workplace.

Help new jobholders identify support systems of working friends. Encourage jobholders to join an alumni group—or organize a group for those dealing specifically with uncooperative spouses or partners.



Respond to Clues that Spell Trouble

How do you know when there are problems on the job? Here are some examples of clues to:

Lack of Enthusiasm

If the jobholder says: "It's a job."

You could: **Probe for details**

You might say: "You don't sound too enthusiastic. Is there a problem with the job? What could make it better for you?"

Failure to Fit in; Chronic Lateness

If the jobholder says: "I'm supposed to be there at 8:30, but everyone spends the first half hour talking about football anyway."

You could: **Confirm employer expectations, offer insight, teach job savvy**

You might say: "Eight-thirty is the time you need to be there. The football talk is an example of workplace culture that we talked about in training. If you aren't interested, just listen for a polite amount of time."



Lack of Confidence; Lack of Skills

If the jobholder says: "I was hired to take care of the patients, not to make notes every time anyone coughs or has a bowel movement."

You could: **Empathize, confirm employer expectations, offer options and solutions**

You might say: "I know you are great with the patients, but making notes is part of the job too. Have you asked your supervisor to explain exactly what needs to be noted? We have software on medical terminology you can borrow. Would you like to try that?"



Failure to Make Work a Priority

If the jobholder says: “I had a doctor’s appointment this morning and it made no sense to try to go back to work.”

You could: **Confirm employer expectations, teach job savvy**

You might say: “Here’s a rule of thumb: Make doctor appointments on your day off. If that’s not possible, make appointments early so you can get back to work, or late in the day so you can work as long as possible before leaving.”

Lack of Support for Working

If the jobholder says: “I like my job, but my boyfriend doesn’t think it’s worth it for me to work.”

You could: **Empathize, offer options, refer for solutions**

You might say: “It’s important to have your boyfriend’s support when you’re starting out on a career. Is your boyfriend employed? Maybe we could help him find a full-time job too. Also the people at Family Services have helped lots of couples work out issues like this one. There’s a woman named Angie there who is really helpful. I can give you her phone number.”

Lack of Confidence; Problem with Authority

If the jobholder says: “All I said was that it isn’t in my job description.”

You could: **Build confidence, teach job savvy**

You might say: “You learned a skill that you could add to your résumé, and it seems to me it could fit with your goal to work in advertising. Also keep in mind that a job description doesn’t cover all duties. I’ve got to water those pitiful plants in the office and take messages for my coworker. That isn’t in my job description, but it’s part of my job.”

Develop a Community of Partners

Compare your community of partners with the community described below by Gloria Day, Employer Services Coordinator of the Texas Workforce Center, Pleasanton, Texas.

You ask about partnerships? Yes, the Texas Workforce Center here in Pleasanton does have some strong partnerships. I should explain that our organization not only handles the usual state services for employers and people looking for jobs, but serves people eligible for employment-related services through WIA and TANF funding. In rural communities, we do it all. And we need partners to make it work.

First of all, let me tell you about our Inter-agency Council. It was established to knit together all the agencies in our county who provide any services to our residents. The Council has grown from 12 to almost 60 agencies. We meet monthly and begin with a presentation from staff members of new agencies that describes the types of services they can offer. Other Council members let us all know about any new funding streams and eligibility criteria for receiving services. The Council is a good place to learn where people can be referred. And it's a good way for agencies to get to the people they can help. In addition to the meetings, a lot of networking goes on among the staff of the various agencies on a daily basis, which helps insure that clients with specific needs don't fall through the cracks.



Our biggest partner is the local Education Service Center. That agency provides services to the area's school districts, including running GED classes. This partnership came about several years ago. The GED classes being offered at that time were not appropriate for our people who were reading at, maybe, a third or fourth grade level, so with the help of ESC, we set up a computer-assisted learning center right here in our center. These classrooms now have teachers and offer a curriculum that includes life skills, parenting skills and job search classes that are funded by TANF dollars.

We have other close partners too.

There's a child care agency on site, but funding for child care is an issue. What we've done is to encourage some of our clients who are good with children to start their own child care services in their house. We've been able to help people with the licensing requirement, insurance and, in some cases, with equipment. In a way, our former clients have become our partners because they are providing services for our clients who are going to school or working.

And, it's true, not all our partners are agencies. For example, a financial investment counselor gave a six-week money management course for our clients, and a mental health professional offers free counseling to some of our clients. These are community members who want to help. In a small community like ours, you see the same people every day on the streets and in the grocery stores and you really feel the need to help make a difference in their lives.

Know the Real Resources

Referral to effective, empathetic people—not just to another organization—is the key to helping participants get the assistance they need. Has your organization developed relationships with other organizations that provide quality services? Do you have relationships with people and “insider” information similar to that in the examples below?

Type: **HEALTH** *Connie White Owl in women's health teaches strategies for managing PMS (great sense of humor that Connie!!)*

Company Information:
Native American Health Clinic
 9021 E. Main (555) 777-6745

Eligibility: Enrolled member or person with two descendencies of Federally recognized tribe of American Indians/Alaskan Natives

Time: M-F 9am-5pm

Services: Physical exams, limited p WIC nutrition, counseling, women education, confidential HIV testing

Other Information: Bus #2 and #91

Type: **Childcare** *Faster to call day care providers, see Kayla's list.*

Company Information:
Kinder Child Care Clearing House
 88 12th Avenue (555) 777-2437

Eligibility: Anyone. Sliding fee.

Time: Mon-Fri 9-5. Evenings by appt

Type: **LEGAL**

Company Information:
Felix County Community Corrections
 4595 NE 9th (555) 777-9545

Eligibility: Probation and Parole; Court Remanded; Families

Time: M-F 9-6; Emergency Unit

Services: Alcohol and drug dependency, employment referrals, mental health subsidy; subsidy assistance (short-term); GED/Alternative HS Diploma; anger management groups; life support groups; volunteer services

Other Information: Buses #27 and #6

Services only through parole officer referral.

Referral, sliding scale fees
 Certification and licensing
 offering home-based day care.
 Kingsway

Make Successful Referrals

When participants are referred to other agencies:

- Know what agencies already provide services to the jobholder.
 - Use agencies that have formal arrangements with your organization and a history of success with participants similar to yours. Make referrals to those agencies that can most likely provide enough support in time to help.
 - Refer jobholders to agencies and organizations with frontline staff who are well-informed, empathetic and committed. For example, if services will affect the individual's future eligibility for TANF assistance, staff at the agency should clearly explain this and help the jobholder plan ahead for changes.
 - Understand eligibility guidelines and whom the agency targets for its services. Don't send a Serbian man to Salud por Mujeres for his medical checkup.
- Give enough information so that the jobholder is comfortable with contacting a new agency, organization or individual. Provide a contact name and a realistic idea of what the agency might require and provide.
 - Encourage individuals to develop their own skills for getting help. Depending upon the person and the need, suggest general resources such as guides to community agencies, or the blue pages of the phone book.
 - Follow up on the referral. Have the jobholder call you about the outcome. Call the jobholder if you don't hear back.
 - Follow up with the agency to see whether the person contacted them and who helped the person. Because of confidentiality issues, get your information about what actually happened from the jobholder himself.
 - Invite partners to events at your site. Acknowledge them publicly.

What If . . .

. . . well-paying jobs with benefits do not exist in the neighborhoods in which your participants live?

You might:

Make accessible transportation a priority for your organization. Place participants with employers who provide transportation or transportation subsidies. Convince local government to provide affordable public transportation on schedules coinciding with starting and quitting times for all shifts. Put participants in touch with programs that help them purchase cars.

Work with government entities to convince companies with good jobs to relocate to your community.

. . . many people who seek services from you have addiction and mental health problems and are subjected to recurring crises that cause them to leave or lose their jobs?

Hire or train staff members who can form relationships that allow participants to discuss addiction, mental health issues and other challenges to employment and who can help individuals prior to placing them on the job.

Hire or contract for the services of a counselor who specializes in mental health or addiction.

Form partnerships with organizations and agencies that are effective in helping people overcome or manage addiction and mental health problems.

Train and place participants in jobs that are least likely to trigger crises—jobs that are not stressful and those where coworkers are unlikely to abuse alcohol or drugs.

Work with employers who provide benefits that cover treatment for addiction and psychological problems.

. . . your participants who are receiving public assistance will have their child care and other benefits drastically reduced or eliminated once they start earning a certain wage?

Target employers who provide benefits.

Learn about TANF regulations and policies in order to help participants plan. Inquire about Individual Development Accounts and savings plans so that individuals can start saving for child care.

Lobby government to liberalize welfare policies to provide some benefits for those who work steadily but neither receive health insurance nor can afford decent child care.

Form relationships with other agencies that provide affordable child care and help participants access other services, such as low-cost medical care. Look for child care that might provide scholarships for those in need.

Consider starting a child care facility for employed participants, or helping interested, entrepreneurial participants begin their own child care businesses.

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ELEMENT EIGHT

Provide Ongoing Support

The research says:

“Programs should attempt to tailor services to meet client needs and target clients appropriately for different types of job retention services.” “The Struggle to Sustain Employment,” by Anu Rangarajan and Tim Novak, Mathematica Policy Research, Inc.

In the workforce development community, the terms “ongoing support” and “case management” have been synonymous. When people went to work, they were assigned to a postemployment caseload and could expect a periodic telephone call inquiring how they were doing and whether they still had their job. Participants who had formed tighter relationships with staff members might call on their own to request advice, access resources or relay a success story.

Organizations emphasizing retention are still using “call and check-up” strategies, but they are implementing additional options for keeping in touch. They offer, for example, *special workshops to increase job-specific skills* or to provide information helpful to working parents or those starting bank accounts or paying taxes for the first time. They *organize social events or sponsor alumni groups* in which the jobholders themselves provide support to their working peers. When participants have held a job long enough to make working routine, develop skills and feel ready to take on new responsibilities, organizations are helping them advance to better positions.



In retention-focused organizations, staff members are not robotlike dialers of phones and recorders of contacts simply providing statistics for funding. Instead they are *actively engaged with the careers of people* with whom they have developed relationships. When the inevitable occurs, when people quit or lose their jobs, the staff is there to help determine what happened and why, and whether it could have been—or should have been—prevented. And then to help the person find a new job, quickly, and keep on working.

In this section:

Manage the Workload

Plan for Retention Time

Check with the Jobholder

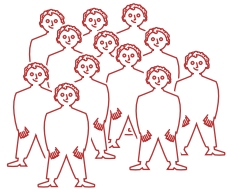
Creative Contact

Do You Have What It Takes?

What If . . .

Manage the Workload

How many jobholders can a single staff member effectively support? There is no definitive number. In large part it depends upon the ability of staff to stay in touch and effectively help people solve problems—and not “burn out” trying. Here is one way to look at balancing responsibilities.



Many Jobholders

Jobholders who are steadily employed but who might be ready for advancement could benefit from continued networking with peers and could serve as role models for less experienced participants

Jobholders who are staying employed after six months or so but who can still benefit from monthly, bimonthly and then quarterly contact as well as attending group events and/or alumni support groups

New jobholders who should get weekly contact for two or three months or until they establish a work routine



Fewer Jobholders

Jobholders with ongoing challenges

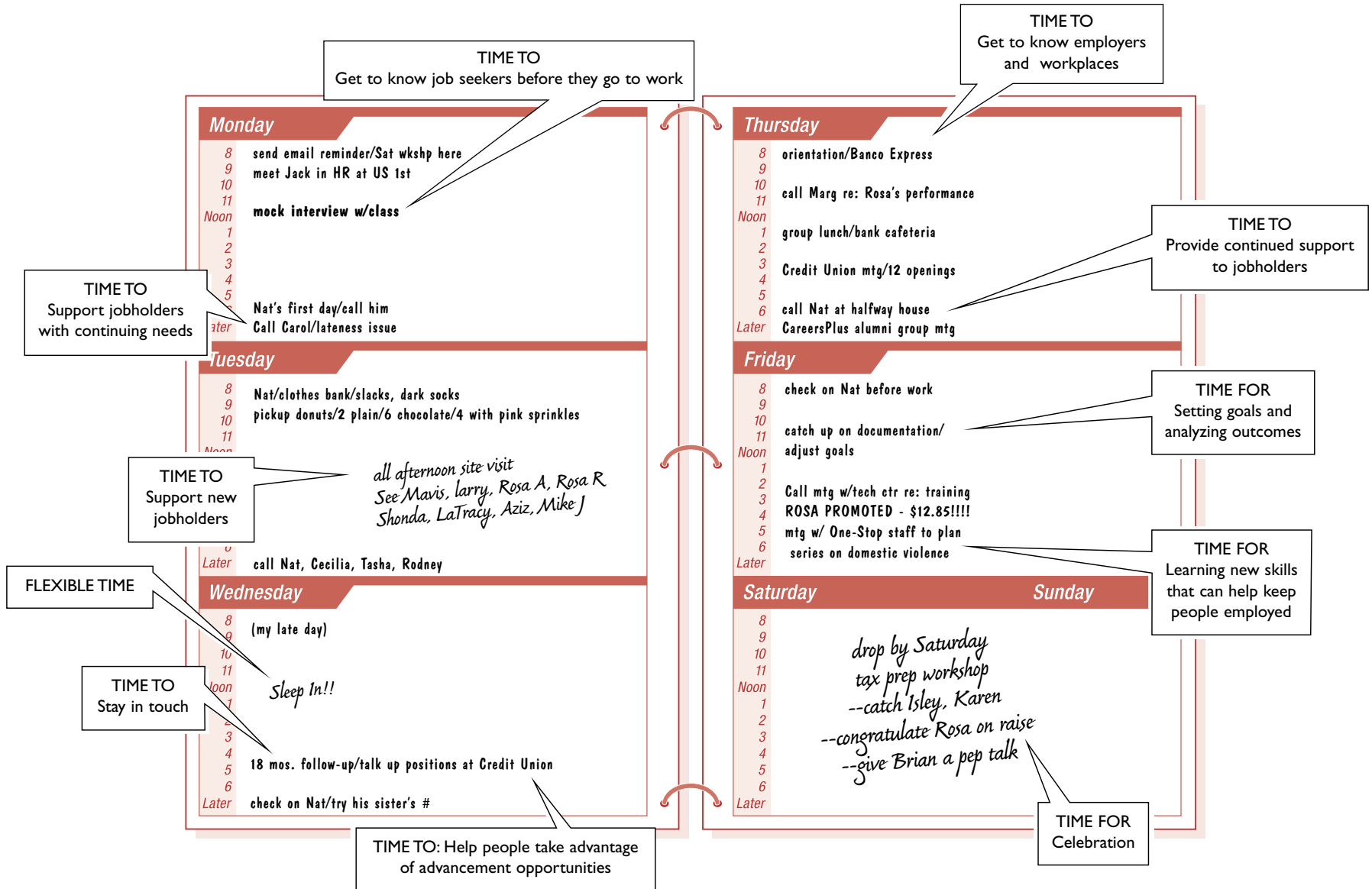
- Try to balance the number of new jobholders likely to need less support with those having these challenges:
- No recent work history
 - History of job-hopping
 - Shaky basic skills
 - Untested work ethic/interpersonal skills
 - No job-specific training
 - A cultural/economic background different from coworkers and manager
 - Little family/social support for working
 - Any of the challenges in the next box

- Too many participants with these challenges make it unlikely staff can provide support in a timely manner:
- Unreliable child care
 - Unreliable transportation
 - Lack of confidence/self-esteem
 - Working at low wages with few or no benefits
 - Working in a workplace with high turnover offering poor orientation and supervision
 - In a part-time/seasonal job
 - In a job with a nonstandard/frequently changing schedule
 - History of substance abuse
 - Recurring medical/mental health problems
 - Domestic violence

With input from their staff, managers should continuously monitor the number of participants in each category to keep the workload manageable.

Plan for Retention Time

Compare your calendar to this one. Do you have the time it takes to help people keep their jobs?



Check with the Jobholder



“Don’t wait for the jobholder to contact you. Contact the jobholder.”

Darlene Fritz
Chemeketa Community College
Salem, OR

When do you do it?

- Immediately after an employee’s first day on the job and then again at the end of the first week.
 - At prearranged times convenient for the jobholder: before work, during lunch time, after work or on weekends, but usually not during work hours.
 - Weekly for the first month, depending on individual needs; monthly thereafter, and then less often when the jobholder is stable and succeeding; more often if issues arise.
 - Coinciding with performance reviews, if possible, so you know about needed improvements or pending opportunities.
-

What do you do?

- Contact by phone or in person. Leaving a phone message is not effective follow-up!
 - Avoid using a list of scripted questions. Instead, ask questions specific to the individual and the job. You might begin with a general query such as, *“How’s it going?”* but don’t take *“fine”* or *“okay”* for the final answer.
 - Follow up on previous conversations and action plans. Know the issues and make certain that challenges are being managed: *“Did you ask about cross-training on the LAN?”*
 - Discuss and support the jobholder’s own professional and personal goals: *“Did you receive tuition assistance for the class?”*
 - Express sincere enthusiasm for accomplishments: *“Six weeks without missing a day? Way to go!”*
 - Schedule the next contact, soon if there is a pending issue.
-

How do you do it?

- With the sincere intent of helping the jobholder succeed, being prepared to address problems and staying vigilant for cues that might indicate trouble.
- Through practical problem-solving and appropriate referrals: *“Okay, here’s the name of an insurance agent who can help you find coverage.”*
- By agreeing on actions that will solve a problem or result in advancement: *“The qualifying test is next month. We’ve got some practice materials. Come and have a look.”*

Creative Contact

Here are some ideas for staying in touch that can be inexpensive. Make certain that events are:

⇒ *Meaningful*

- Ongoing support groups: working parents, recovering substance abusers
- Money management, counseling classes
- Special interest groups: women in the trades, noncustodial fathers, gays or transsexuals in the workplace
- Workshops on programs such as TANF, Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC), Food Stamps, State Children's Health Insurance Program (SCHIP)
- Information on child support enforcement
- Workshops on tax preparation
- Recognition banquet for retaining jobs or receiving promotions
- Skill building workshops: math brushup, software classes, computer-aided learning
- CPR training
- Driver's education classes
- Test prep: GED pretesting, government exams, licensing tests, workshop on beating test anxiety
- Orientation for college or training school
- Time management workshops
- Trip to the bank to set up an account

⇒ *Fun*

- Reunions of program graduates
- Ladies' night out: beauty presentation, free manicure, dressing tips
- Social events: holiday parties, "February" birthdays
- Ice Cream and Resource Night: serve "portable ice cream cones" so participants can visit information booths manned by agencies offering services that help keep people working
- Cooking demonstrations by food banks or county extension services
- Cultural events
- Open computer lab night
- Community events and fundraisers: food drive, Race for the Cure, blood drive

> > >



Creative Contact, cont.

⇒ *Easily Attended*

- At or near the workplace: breakfast or lunch meetings, workshops on-site
- At neighborhood sites: meeting or rec room in housing projects, community centers or parks; meeting rooms at shopping malls or local churches
- Weekends, with transportation provided or accessible by public transportation and activities for children

"I take the young person out for a business lunch which is paid for by VFI. We meet at a restaurant near the workplace and discuss how the job is going."

*AnLaVonne Respass
Career Advisor, VFI*

⇒ *Family-Friendly*

- Provide child care for evening and weekend meetings, classes and workshops
- Provide activities for children while parents are in workshops or attending social events
- Invite family members and friends to recognition ceremonies, social events and other presentations, when appropriate
- Food, really good food if the organization can afford it. Not just chips and dips, but sandwiches and potato salad, pizza and chicken wings and coleslaw and desserts that would pop a person's eyes out!

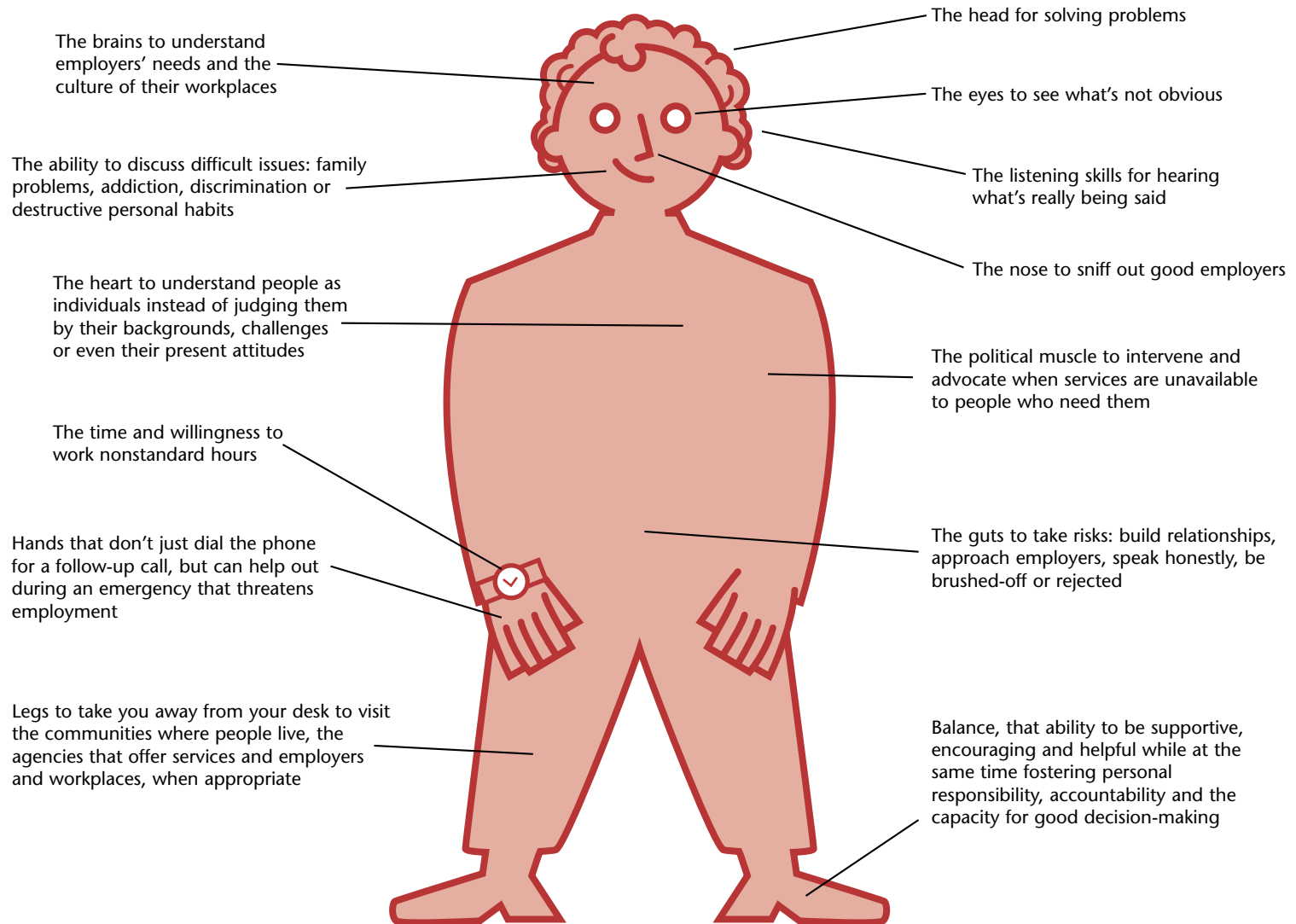
⇒ *Enticing*

- Offer prizes and incentives: phone cards, bus passes, gift certificates
- Hold the event in an unusual place: riverboat, historic building
- Invite local celebrities or dignitaries
- Take and post photographs of participants
- Involve the job seekers and jobholders in planning events



Do you have what it takes?

Helping a person new to the workplace succeed may sound easy, but the job requires both skill and special attributes. Do you have what it takes to “do retention”?





What If . . .

- . . . the staff and organization seem to have good relationships with participants prior to their beginning employment but once they are hired, the organization has trouble keeping in touch? You might:**
 - Survey participants or form a focus group of alumni to help the organization decide how best to stay in touch.
 - Look for ways to stay in contact that are not intrusive. Don't visit at work if jobholders don't want you to. Have beepers so people can get in touch with you when it is most convenient for them.
 - Provide incentives, such as a gift certificate or a bus pass, for participants who contact the organization when they move or change jobs.
- . . . some of your participants have become dependent upon the organization and staff?**
 - Avoid hiring people who are likely to foster or tolerate dependency. Insist that all staff have high expectations of what participants can accomplish on their own.
 - Organize peer interaction and activities that require team work so that people can gain confidence in their own decision-making without staff input.
 - Wean dependent participants by helping them build confidence to think and do for themselves. For example, staff might role-play with participants reflecting situations where they feel uncomfortable, insecure or unsure and offer positive feedback when participants take action on their own behalf.

- . . . other organizations seem to have been successful at organizing peer support groups, but yours is poorly attended and not especially effective?**
 - Seek input from participants on when to meet and what should happen at meetings. Have them choose the topics for discussion and organize their own agendas.
 - Get a small group of interested participants invested in the group's success and train these leaders to facilitate discussion.
 - Provide food and child care. Schedule meetings at convenient times and in accessible places. Always hold the event at the same time—the first Wednesday of every month, for example. Never change the time or place.
 - Have active group members speak to newcomers about the benefits of participation. Post the group's activities or publicize them in the organization's newsletter. Have participants begin attending meetings as job seekers. Treat membership as an advancement or "promotion" within your program.



Employment Retention, in Short

Helping people achieve steady employment is an evolving practice. Yes, there has been some investigation of the subject. We know, for example, that starting out in jobs with higher wages and employer-provided benefits can keep people working. We know that getting a new job quickly after quitting or losing one is important to employment stability. And we know that job retention can be improved by helping people gain skills prior to employment. In some ways what has emerged from the research seems common sense. Who wouldn't leave low-paying, unpleasant jobs again and again? Or be more likely to keep a higher-paying job with benefits and a bit of personal satisfaction?

The strategies that retention-focused organizations have developed seem commonsensical also. Setting goals for better wages, working with employers, targeting jobs that pay well but are within the reach of those with little experience or education, and providing accessible training—all sound practices. What has materialized from both research and current practice are the eight elements cited in *Essentials*. These eight elements can help guide the leaders, program managers and staff of organizations as they tackle the retention issues their participants face.

The devil, of course, is in the details. Along with the eight elements, *Essentials* offers suggestions for specific actions. Hire staff from the industry the organization targets. Include employers in the training. Help participants anticipate the cost of working. Organize alumni support groups and stay in touch with jobholders who need support well past their first months on the job. Contact jobholders through phone calls, personal contact and creative events. Above all, develop trusting relationships with participants, employers and the staff of partnering agencies.

The atmosphere of a retention-focused organization is also important: high expectations tempered by realism and honesty; a feeling of respect and concern; an overall sense that problems can be solved and that circumstances can change. Hope permeates the lobby, offices and classrooms of organizations focused on helping people provide for themselves and their families. Hope is a great motivation for organizations, their staff and participants.

Inevitably, and thankfully, more will be learned about how to help people maintain steady employment, but at this time we can do the following:

For the leaders of employment and training organizations:

Let policymakers, funders, employers and your staff members and community know that steady employment for many people is a lengthy process. Let them know that earning a decent wage is a result of gaining skills and experience, dealing with life's challenges and, for some, the ongoing support that your organization is prepared to provide.

For program managers:

Every day, be certain that you have given your staff the information, flexibility and encouragement to help participants gain skills and make changes that result in good jobs and steady employment. Reward staff for their success.

For frontline staff members:

Be empathetic with the circumstances of participants, but realistic and straightforward about issues that can keep them from maintaining steady employment. Use your expertise to help when help is needed. And show that you truly care about their well-being and success.

Some Retention-Focused Organizations

Instituto del Progreso Latino

2570 Blue Island
Chicago, IL 60608
P (773) 890-0055
www.idpl.org

Instituto del Progreso Latino took action on behalf of Chicago's inner-city Latinos who were unable to achieve the required scores on the TABE test in order to enroll in the City Colleges of Chicago's machining training. Staff solicited the support of a new college administrator who was concerned that the Colleges' Westside Technical Institute would be taken over by the public school system and closed to adults in the community. With support from employers who had hired Instituto's graduates, the Director of Workforce Training and the college administrator convinced decision-makers to allow the development of a bilingual curriculum that enables non-English speakers to learn job-specific English for machining and the skills to successfully complete training and obtain employment.

Jewish Vocational Service

77 Geary St., Suite 401
San Francisco, CA 94108
P (415) 782-6261
F (415) 391-3617
www.jvs.org

JVS provides customized training when employers have critical hiring needs. Staff meet with the employer to design the training and make joint decisions about hiring the instructor and selecting the participants. Training is usually offered at the work site and includes targeted English as a Second Language instruction when needed.

The organization also offers internships through its Legal Employment Action Program, LEAP, a collaboration with the Bar Association in San Francisco. The program trains and places welfare recipients in entry-level legal positions after a two-week appraisal period to determine their interest and eligibility, followed by eight weeks of hard- and soft-skills training. Participants then interview with law firms that are interested in employing a LEAP intern. Interns are paid \$9 an hour by the law firms and work three days a week while continuing classroom training. Firms that employ interns are expected to consider participants for full-time, permanent work at the end of the 12-week internship.

Project QUEST

301 S Frio, Suite 400
San Antonio, TX 78207
P (210) 270-4690
F (210) 270-4691
www.quests.org

As part of its commitment to area employers and the local community, Project QUEST of San Antonio, Texas, recruits low-income people for long-term training for hard-to-fill occupations. QUEST assists participants in navigating the community college system with a wide range of emotional, personal and family supports. Program counselors tutor, speak to instructors and run weekly, mandatory groups where participants receive program updates, share their successes and air their concerns. Counselors also help participants deal with spousal abuse, low self-esteem and parenting challenges that interfere with training, and make referrals to community resources. In addition, participants receive advice on budgeting and information on accessing financial aid through QUEST, other public and private sources and Pell Grants.

Some Retention-Focused Organizations, cont.

Rubicon Programs, Inc.

2500 Bissell Ave
 Richmond, CA 94804
 P (510) 235-1516
 F (510) 235-2025
www.rubiconpgms.org

Rubicon operates a number of enterprises, including a wholesale premium dessert bakery, that generate revenue as well as offering program participants work-based training and entry-level employment. Participants in the bakery training program receive 13 weeks of instruction on-site in the bakery facilities alongside the permanent bakery staff. Upon graduation, participants receive a certificate that documents the proficiencies they have achieved. They are then placed in entry-level jobs in the bakery or with other employers. Depending upon their skills and interests, individuals can move into decorating positions, driving/delivery or management.

Steps to Success/East

1415 SE 122nd Ave
 Portland, OR 97233
 P (503) 256-0432
 F (503) 256-5503

Steps to Success/West

5600 NE 42nd Ave
 Portland, OR 97218
 P (503) 943-2266
 F (503) 281-4216

Through a contract between the Oregon State Department of Human Services, Mt. Hood Community College and Portland Community College, Steps to Success provides TANF recipients with a variety of training from two to ten weeks, including office occupations, call center training and classes applicable to jobs in the medical field. Stand-alone classes in computer software applications are also available.

In addition to classroom training, Steps to Success offers internships with private businesses and public not-for-profit agencies. Workforce development specialists provide ongoing support for both the intern and their supervisors that includes phone calls, work site visits and weekly performance evaluations. The staff assists participants in job search, continues contact after employment and encourages ongoing skill upgrades. The program has extended hours on Wednesday evenings and Saturdays to accommodate its employed participants.

Training, Inc., of the YMCA of Greater Boston

294 Washington St., Suite 340
 Boston, MA 02108
 P (617) 542-1800
 F (617) 542-1811
www.traininginc.org

Through a simulated work experience at the YMCA of Greater Boston, Training, Inc., participants prepare themselves for steady employment in office and accounting support positions across a variety of industries. "But it's the employers who make our training come alive," a staff member explained. The organization engages over 100 employers, many of whom serve as tutors, mentors, software instructors, internship supervisors and workshop presenters. Along with job-specific skills, participants practice soft skills, including teamwork and problem-solving. Training, Inc., also provides internships for participants.

Some Retention-Focused Organizations, cont.

Vocational Foundation, Inc.

One Hanson Place, 14th Fl.
Brooklyn, NY 11243
P (718) 230-3100
F (718) 636-2248

Vocational Foundation, Inc. (VFI), hires a diverse cadre of career advisors who can balance the expectations of employers with the needs and circumstances of the young people who come to VFI. The organization looks for people with experience in the private sector who have a personal mission to work with at-risk students with limited or no work history. Career advisors at VFI are people able to develop relationships and discuss difficult issues. They have high standards for the students (as participants at VFI are called) and encourage them to move ahead by knowing when to challenge and when to support. VFI's Career Advisors are practical problem-solvers. Because advisors work nonstandard hours, they are flexible, yet can maintain a sense of balance in their own lives. The organization allows the Career Advisors to carry out their responsibilities in their own way, but they are held accountable for meeting organizational goals for retention.

WIRE-Net Manufacturing Training Initiative

6515 Detroit Road, Suite 3
Cleveland, OH 44102
P (216) 631-7330
F (216) 651-5096
www.wire-net.org

Low-income residents of Cleveland's Westside are recruited for training for entry-level positions in the machining industry. The process includes a careful interview to ensure interest in precision machining work and motivation to complete training, testing of basic skills, selection of the appropriate training program, and completion of paperwork to qualify for a Pell Grant and/or Workforce Investment Act (WIA) vouchers. WIRE-Net staff work closely with four different training institutions to help enrollees obtain financial assistance. Job placement and employment retention services are available for all graduates. Occasionally, employers help graduates continue training by paying tuition for apprenticeships in higher-skilled positions.

Keep Up with New Ideas

Knowledge about employment retention is increasing and constantly changing. Check these websites and their links for information updates, research and resources on employment retention and related issues.

The Annie E. Casey Foundation
www.aecf.org/jobsinitiative

Descriptions of effective programs and online issues of the Foundation's "Jobs Initiative" newsletter.

The Aspen Institute
www.aspeninstitute.org/dsg

Strategies for meeting the changing nature of work.

Center for Law and Social Policy
www.clasp.org

Research and information on how to help low-income parents sustain employment and advance in the workplace.

Center on Budget and Policy Priorities
www.cbpp.org

Information on government policies and programs affecting low- and moderate-income people, including information on the Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC) and the State Children's Health Insurance Program (SCHIP).

Manpower Demonstration Research Corporation
www.mdrc.org

Research on how to improve the well-being of low-income people.

Mathematica Policy Research, Inc.
www.mathematic-mpr.com

Research, data and other information on healthcare, welfare, education, employment, nutrition and early childhood policies and programs.

The National Economic Development and Law Center
www.nedlc.org

Information on enhancing the economic security of low-income community residents, including initiative and program descriptions. Go to the Jobs, Income and Assets division of the website.

National Governors' Association: Center for Best Practices
www.nga.org

Databases containing profiles of state initiatives, including employment and training programs.

Public/Private Ventures
www.ppv.org

Publications on work-related issues for youth and low-income people.

United States Department of Labor, Employment & Training Administration
www.doleta.gov/eta

Links to sites addressing workforce development issues.

Welfare Information Network
www.welfareinfo.org/retention

Information on welfare reform, including strategies for helping people maintain employment.

The Workforce Alliance
www.workforcealliance.org

Information on federal policies that affect low-income and unemployed people, and workers seeking advancement.



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P/PV

Public/Private Ventures is a national nonprofit organization whose mission is to improve the effectiveness of social policies, programs and community initiatives, especially as they affect youth and young adults. In carrying out this mission, P/PV works with philanthropies, the public and business sectors, and nonprofit organizations. We do our work in four basic ways:

- We develop and identify social policies, strategies and practices that promote individual economic success and citizenship, and stronger families and communities.
- We assess the effectiveness of promising approaches and distill their critical elements and benchmarks, using rigorous field study and research methods.
- We mine evaluation results and implementation experiences for their policy and practice implications, and communicate these findings to public and private decision-makers and community leaders.
- We create and field-test the building blocks—model policies, financing approaches, curricula and training materials, communication strategies and learning processes—that are necessary to more broadly implement effective approaches. We then work with leaders of the various sectors to implement these expansion tools and to improve their usefulness.

P/PV's staff is composed of policy leaders in various fields; evaluators and researchers in disciplines ranging from economics to ethnography; and experienced practitioners from the nonprofit, public, business and philanthropic sectors.

Working Ventures

Working Ventures, a P/PV initiative, seeks to improve the performance of the workforce development field by providing practitioners and policymakers with the knowledge and tools needed to operate effective employment programs. We support the field by documenting effective employment strategies and practices, convening practitioner workshops and providing resources to encourage program innovation.