



## **Personal Sales Skills for Customized Employment**

**Excerpted from: Cary Griffin, Dave Hammis, and Tammara Geary (2007). The Job Developer's Handbook: Practical Tactics for Customized Employment. Baltimore: Brookes Publishing.**

### Introduction

Applying the Customized Employment job development protocols offered throughout this book, the need to use a “sales strategy of job development” is significantly minimized. Still, affirming the employer’s commitment to hire remains a valuable skill once that employer is close to deciding favorably. The suggestions below will aid the employment specialist in securing mutually beneficially outcomes.

### Handling Objections

Perhaps the most difficult aspect of any employment specialist’s life is the rejection that occurs on a regular basis. The high unemployment rate for people with disabilities is certainly bolstered by the fragile systems of supports the rehabilitation industry provides and the images it uses to fund raise and promote services. Employers are the mirror held up to our face, reflecting the sometimes patronizing stereotypes emanating from our profession. For employers, hiring someone with a significant disability represents a risk, and risks often result in lost profits, and lost profits mean their children may not be able to afford college. All job developers need to

understand that hiring anyone is a tough decision, and that hiring a person with a disability demands circumspection on behalf of employers.

Wisely, many employment specialists do not hear objections or hesitations as employer disregard for people with disabilities. In fact, the vast majority of businesses donate to charities and community projects for those considered “disadvantaged.” Instead, competent job developers understand that objections are actually a symptom of the need for more clarity and information.

There are many tactics for handling objections (Cathcart, 1990), but two in particular help prepare the employment specialist and anticipate the most common concerns. The first strategy is called a Left-Hand/Right Hand analysis and was developed by Harvard Business School professor Chris Argyris (2004). The tool is simple, concise, and very effective; it can be used alone, or used to frame a role play with the job seeker or other members of the employment team. Using the Left Hand/Right Hand analysis simply involves dividing a piece of paper, or a computer screen, into two columns. In the left column the key phrases of the upcoming job development discussion are listed, and for each point, in the right hand column the employment specialist writes out the possible objections a specific employer may have. This process makes the job developer think about the future, anticipate the objections and even construct a causal script that anticipates concerns before they have had time to solidify in the employer’s mind. Preparation in sales is critical, and this process instrument provides an eloquent framework for forecasting issues and rehearsing effective responses. Below is a job carving example for a young woman starting out as a “produce waxer” at an indoor Farmer’s Market:

## Left Hand/Right Hand Analysis

<p>1. What did you think of the job carving proposal for Samantha?</p> <p>2. Perhaps I could provide you with some samples of other job carves we've done in other companies to show your boss? I would also be happy to sketch out a new job description using your format.</p> <p>3. I understand your concern about the table. We have possible funding through the state, and I checked into a hydraulic table that Samantha can adjust depending on the particular tasks she's performing. It will be good to have as you add other duties to her job, such as the wrapping of processed fruits and nuts, as we discussed.</p> <p>4. How about we shoot for a start date of Monday the 5<sup>th</sup>?</p> <p>5. I'll call you Thursday and see how your meeting went, and if you'd like me to be here, I'll be happy to attend.</p>	<p>1. I liked it. I think she'd be good at it. I am concerned that the Regional Manager will not accept another modification to a job description.</p> <p>2. That would be great! Another issue though is with the work table. We can't modify it; it's secured to the wall, and other people need to use it as well. We're a small operation and I really can't justify a new adjustable work table for a part-time employee.</p> <p>3. Sounds good. I'll get with the Regional Manager and iron this out.</p> <p>4. If the Regional Manager approves.</p> <p>5. Sounds good.</p>
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The second tool is known as Feel, Felt, Found. The power of Feel, Felt, Found is that it acknowledges the employer's viewpoint, and calmly, carefully provides a sound response. For instance, suppose an employer complains that Worker's Compensation or liability insurance will increase if an employee with a disability is hired. One response might be:

"I understand how you *feel*. No one would want harm to come to anyone and we would not recommend Beth for the job if we *felt* there were major safety concerns. Still, when I started working with companies, helping solve their recruitment and training problems, I *felt* these concerns needed investigation and serious consideration. What I, and our many customers, *found* is that Worker's Comp rates and liability insurance premiums do not increase. In fact, safety records for people with disabilities, according to several studies conducted by companies such as the DuPont Corporation, are actually as good as or better than those for people without disabilities."

Consider another all-too-typical job development scenario. The employer raises a concern during the interview that their entire operation will now have to be made wheelchair accessible or that outrageous expense will be incurred due to accommodations. The response might unfold in a conversational tone that iterates:

"I understand how you *feel* about the potential costs of accessibility. In fact, some smaller companies, and those not open to the buying public are not actually required to be fully accessible. Many retailers I have worked with, for instance, *felt* that with the passage of the Americans with Disabilities Act, their profits would suffer. But, what they have *found* is that

with minor expense, some of which can be off-set with tax credits that I can help you with, revenues increased. This is because of the number of new customers now able to access their stores. Let's face it, most of us are going to live long enough to require a walker or a wheelchair, and that means that millions of other folks, potential customers or star employees are waiting to benefit your business. And, actually, the cost of most accessibility measures or job accommodations is relatively small compared to the benefits. Why don't we investigate what it would take to make these changes possible?"

Certainly, no approach fits all circumstances. But, having a few rational negotiation devices at the ready helps the job developer organize her thoughts, remain calm, and present a cogent and logical counter to common objections. Job development does not need to be a brutal series of rejections. Instead, finding the common interests of all parties, and logically addressing concerns with honesty and the facts gets consistently good results.

### Sales Skills Summary

Every circumstance is different, therefore job development approaches must be customized to compliment the development of the employer/employee relationship. Customized employment is focused on creating relationships, and some general guidelines for sales conduct are important.

1. Preparation is crucial. Anyone developing jobs must know the job seeker's personal characteristics and be able to synchronize these with the employment marketplace.

2. Selling is personal. Customers want to know you care. This is not about intimacy, but rather about listening before helping the customer solve a problem.

3. Listening is more important than talking. Unless the employment specialist is hearing what the customers need, the wrong placement scenario is liable to be offered, thereby injuring the opportunity for lasting relationship.

4. Prospecting is an on-going process. Building a network of friends, suppliers, and business associates is crucial to finding new employers.

5. Initial contacts can make or break a customer relationship. Job developers should be aware of interfering. "Cold calls" or job development calls made without prior contact are seldom appreciated. Instead a "warm call" approach is generally greeted more favorably. A call is warmed up by sending out a letter of introduction; meeting a prospect at a professional or social gathering, and following up with a phone call later.

6. Use Leave Behinds. Each individual served should have representative materials such as portfolios or resumes, and each job developer should use business cards or other items that illustrate credibility.

7. Be prepared to handle objections. Employers new to hiring people with disabilities may doubt the viability of such an effort. Listen respectfully, but anticipate concerns and respond professionally.

8. Allow the employer to say no. Sometimes a business just does not need or want a new employee. Be respectful and polite. By walking away promising to be in touch later, the customer is relieved from making a decision they wish to avoid, and they may remember the job developer's graciousness later.

9. Stay in touch. Job development and even hiring is never final. Show customers, employers, and job seekers alike, their satisfaction is important.

10. Follow up. If an employer or job seeker asks questions the job developer does not know the answers to, make certain to find out and get back in touch with that customer. Maintain the relationship.

11. Be a Gracious Guest. Job development calls are typically on someone else's turf. Act like a good guest. Arrive promptly, be sociable but businesslike.

12. Be concise. Friendly talk is important to loosen up the situation. Comment on a picture in the office or ask about the employer's family, but keep it short and sweet. People are busy, and employment specialists should respect that.

13. Personal Behavior. Employment specialists dress respectfully and appropriately. When developing a job at a bank; dress as the bankers; when developing employment in the auto parts trade, dress like those behind the counter at NAPA or a little better, but certainly not in a 3 piece

suit. Be neat and clean; do not smoke, drink alcohol, or tell dirty jokes; do not overstay the set meeting time unless the employer makes it clear they want to hear more; do not talk politics or religion.

14. Ask for a referral. Whether an employment situation is secured or not, ask the employer for the name of someone else in a similar business or someone they believe might be interested in knowing about the individual job seeker.

15. Be kind. Do not attempt to develop employment by complaining about, slandering, or attacking another competing service agency or employer. Resorting to attacks in an effort to secure a particular employer offends and frightens. Focus on the qualities of the individual seeking employment and the match to this specific business.

16. Personal Management. Keep appointments; write up job analyses immediately; manage time, and do not miss deadlines.

17. Customer service. Make certain promises are kept; appointments are honored; training occurs as negotiated; and support is conveniently accessed by employer and job seeker alike. Make certain people answering the phones at agency headquarters are informed and courteous; make certain promises are honored with a minimum of customer frustration. Do not promise what the agency cannot deliver.



18. Get busy. Job prospecting is hard and demanding work. Design an individualized job development plan with each consumer, outline the employers to be contacted, target broadening personal networks to expand employment possibilities, document the efforts, and work with a team to provide support and advice (Griffin & Hammis, 2003; Griffin, Hammis, et al., 2001; Bivins, 1994; Underhill, 1999; Zyman, 2000).