



HOW TO GUIDE: Job Finding & Employer Engagement

Introduction

Within the Supported Employment process, Job Finding and Employer Engagement are at stages 3 and 4 of the process that connect the job seeker with potential employers. A job seeker's skills and abilities are viewed in terms of their relevance and requirement in the open labour market and therefore there is a matching of the job seeker's employment needs with those of the employer's needs.



Why Engage with Employers?

Without best practice in the Job Finding and Employer Engagement stages, the model of Supported Employment would not function effectively and efficiently. Employers play a central role in ensuring that the job seeker has the opportunity to enter the labour market. Employers should therefore be viewed as a customer of the Supported Employment service provider, and as such their needs, concerns and questions need to be addressed effectively. The employer engagement process requires the service provider to be professional and to be at all times mindful of the need for the employer to meet their business agenda, and to run their business in an efficient manner.

The Process and Methodology

Within the process of Job Finding/Employer Engagement the following are some of the key players and stakeholders:

- Job seekers
- Employers
- Employment Support Workers
- Other support workers
- Co-workers
- Funders
- Family members and social network
- Service providers

These key stakeholders all play roles within the following Job Finding and Employer Engagement activities flowchart:



1. Job Search

At this stage, the Vocational Profiling process has been completed and the job seeker’s curriculum vitae is compiled or is in final draft format. Familiarity with the skills and ambitions of the job seeker are now evident, and this information must be used to find suitable employment. Realistic goals regarding the employment objective should be maintained by all stakeholders, while still maintaining the focus on the wishes of the individual job seeker.



Figure 1: Job Searching Planning Cycle

i. Employment Possibilities

Together, the job seeker and the Employment Support Worker explore and assess the employment possibilities and prospects of the job seeker.

This part of the process is about analysing the information from the Vocational Profile, and relating it to the employment potential of the job seeker. This is achieved through discussions with the job seeker and other key stakeholders, including previous employers and personal network contacts.

ii. Support Network

Through discussions with the job seeker and key stakeholders, the potential support available is examined, and additional support needs may need to be identified.

iii. Labour Market Opportunities

Explore the existing options available in the local labour market, and also the potential for creating and developing additional opportunities. The following are some suggestions to consider as potential sources for jobs:

- Job seekers network
- Employment Support Workers network
- Other Agencies involved in Supported Employment
- Recruitment fairs
- Private sector recruitment professionals
- Local or national government agencies
- Printed media - local and national
- TV and radio advertising
- Business directories
- Trade directories
- Cold calling/phone and mail
- Business listings

iv. Make a Plan

The Employment Support Worker and the job seeker should develop and agree a plan on how best to make contact with employers and find the most suitable job.

As this is a continuous cycle, a dynamic process follows.

2. Approaching Employers ¹

When approaching employers, there are 5 key elements involved:

- Information Gathering
- The Approach
- Meeting the Employer
- Dealing with Objections
- Agreement

(i) Information Gathering

This is the foundation on which all further negotiation with the employers and job seekers are based. It is therefore essential that this stage of the process is carried out comprehensively.

Employers - It is important that whoever approaches the employer, they have gathered all relevant and necessary information on the employer and the nature of the employer's business. Examples could include the size and structure of the company, who are the key decision makers in relation to recruitment and what types of jobs they may offer.

Information can be gathered on the employer through a number of mechanisms including internet searching, business directories, and newspaper articles and through local contacts.

Job Seekers - Information relevant for the job seeking process, for example the Vocational Profile and their CV, must be available to both the Employment Support Worker and the job seeker. The job seeker and their Employment Support Worker should operate as a team and both should be clear regarding the wishes, skills, aspirations, and support needs of the job seeker. This information will have been gathered through the vocational profiling process, and used to compile the CV. This information will also be extremely useful if the job seeker is required to complete a job application form.

(ii) The Approach

It is essential that a defined goal has been identified for the approach, for example to introduce the Supported Employment service and secure employment opportunities.

The employer can be approached by either the job seeker, the Employment Support Worker, or by both together. However it is essential that the approach is always made with the job seeker's agreement.

¹ Leach, S. (2002): A Supported Employment Workbook - Individual Profiling and Job Matching. Jessica Kingsley Publishers, London and Philadelphia, p. 68ff

Potential employers can be initially contacted through a variety of methods:

- By letter or email
- By telephone
- Dropping in (some times called cold calling)
- Through being referred by a person or an organisation known to that employer
- By delivering a presentation to an employer's group or organisation

There are a number of possible promotional/marketing materials that are useful when making contact with employers:

- Business cards
- Brochures – it is important to have a separate brochure for employers
- Employer testimonials
- Relevant media articles
- DVD or a video link on your website can be of benefit

The more formal methods of job finding should also be considered and job seekers should be encouraged and empowered to make contact with employers directly. The formal methods of job finding include completing job application forms, writing letters to employers in response to vacancy advertisements, writing speculative letters and submitting a curriculum vitae to employers.

Completing an Application Form

It is important to read the instructions carefully, and to practice on a draft copy as it is vital not to make any mistakes on the original application form. Reading the job description and the advertisement will also give the job seeker and the Employment Support Worker an insight into what skills and qualities the employer is looking for and what the job is about. It is also important to ensure that spelling and grammar is correct and that the job seeker's handwriting is clear and legible; typed copies are also more welcome by employers. If the job seeker has experience relevant to the job then make sure it is mentioned, repeated if needs be. Additionally, experience gained outwith work and transferable skills should also be mentioned. All questions should be answered fully and it is inappropriate to simply put 'see attached CV' in any sections.

By keeping a copy of the completed form, the job seeker will be able to prepare for the interview with the knowledge of the answers already provided to the employer. It is also important to retain a copy of the job advert and the job description.

Letters

Letters are usually sent as an introduction to the CV or the job application form. They can highlight the aspect of the CV/job application that is most relevant to the employer, whether it is Employment history or Training. The letter should contain the job reference number or title (if appropriate) and structured as follows:

- First paragraph – Introduction and the reason for writing
- Second paragraph – Briefly indicate the area of the CV or application form that highlights the job seeker's suitability for the job and mention that the CV or job application form is attached
- Final paragraph – The job seeker should state they are available for interview

Letters can also be sent speculatively when a job is not advertised, and the structure should be similar to a general cover letter as described above. The key aspect is the first paragraph, and it should grab the attention of the reader, and encourage them to want to meet the job seeker.

Compiling the Curriculum Vitae

The aim of a CV is to get the employer to want to meet the job seeker to discuss their suitability to become an employee. A CV should be presented in a clear and relevant manner; it should be neatly typed and not be longer than 2 pages. It should contain information in the following areas:

- Personal details
- Employment history
- Training & educational qualifications
- Key skills
- Hobbies and interests
- Referees

Both Employment history and Training should be listed in reverse chronological order, and the section with the strongest selling point for the job seeker should be presented after 'Personal details', whether that is Employment history or Training & educational qualifications.

It can be beneficial to tailor the CV to suit the particular job being applied for, and the issue of disclosure of disability issues to the employer should be considered. In order to present a professional image, the following should be avoided on a CV:

- Gimmicks
- Unnecessary personal details
- Negative information
- Irrelevant details
- Gaps in dates
- Untruths

(iii) Meeting the Employer

The stage of meeting the employer is likely to happen either through the Employment Support Worker visiting an employer to discuss a job seeker or their own Supported Employment service; or through a job seeker being granted a job interview possibly after submission of a CV, job application form or a letter to the employer.

Throughout the discussion with the employer, always communicate the features of the Supported Employment service in terms of how it can benefit their company. This involves demonstrating the business case for choosing Supported Employment when recruiting staff especially the saving of time and money in the recruitment process.

The presentation can take several forms from a one to one meeting with the key person in the company through to a formal presentation to a group of interested people in a company. For both forms, always prepare, present and conduct yourself in a professional manner.

Throughout the communication process be aware of the need to discuss with the employer in terms of how the Supported Employment service can fulfil the employer's needs, bearing in mind the abilities of the potential job seekers and any concerns that either party may have.

During all communication with the employer, remember to use business language and not jargon from the Supported Employment sector, for example expressions such as 'profiling', 'natural supports', 'job matching' and 'job carving' etc. should be avoided.

Planning should take into account the job description, advert and person specification if available. Analyse the main job activities and make notes on the relevant experience and background of the job seeker. Consider any activities or duties that can count as transferable skills. Familiarise yourself with the company background, culture and what services or products they are involved with. Plan how the job seeker is going to get to the interview location and aim to arrive around 10 -15 minutes prior to interview.

Prepare for the interview by deciding what sort of candidate they are looking for and what questions will be asked. It is not too difficult to determine the type of interview questions that may arise and whilst it is not possible to be 100% accurate, the job seeker/ Employment Support Worker may be surprised how close they can predict potential questions. Go over your application form/CV and ensure the job seeker is comfortable with their employment background, dates, work history and experience. Practice some questions and answers and come up with one or two questions that you could ask the interviewer. There will always be a few areas of discussion that the job seeker may want to mention; therefore prepare the job seeker to ensure these positive aspects are mentioned during the interview as they will put the job seeker in a good light or they may demonstrate their ability or eagerness to do the job - work out different strategies for ensuring you mention all of them.

Presentation on the day will be so much easier if the job seeker has planned and prepared. First impressions count so ensure the job seeker dresses smartly, is neat, clean and well groomed. Be aware that everyone the job seeker comes into contact with such as the receptionist, secretary, administration staff may have an input into the selection process. Encourage the job seeker to smile, sit well back and present a positive posture. Maintain eye contact and answer the questions clearly whilst remaining positive, friendly and enthusiastic.

Disability Issues at Job Interview

As we are all well aware, not all disabled people have the ability to plan, prepare and present themselves for interview and the job seekers' ability/disability will have a direct impact on just how far the Employment Support Worker can go in assisting job seekers with their job seeking/interview skills. It is important that a job seeker has an awareness of the issues surrounding their disability and an understanding of their capabilities and limitations. Job seekers should also be aware of what support is available to them and how that support can be accessed. Moreover, the Employment Support Worker must be aware of the support, guidance and training needs of the job seeker.

Key areas for the Employment Support Worker to consider in assisting the job seeker to prepare for a job interview include:

- Does the job seeker have the skills required to fully prepare for the interview and can they be taught?
- Is the building accessible?
- Can the person travel independently to the interview location?
- What questions is an employer likely to ask regarding disability issues and what areas may cause concern?

For most people a job interview can be a daunting experience especially when confidence levels are low and experience of work is limited. Practice of interview techniques and role playing exercises can help and lots of support and re-assurance can boost confidence levels. Due to reasons of disability a person may not have good communication skills and may not be able to control hand/leg movements. Contacting the employer prior to or after interview may be useful or indeed essential².

(iv) Dealing with Objections

Be prepared for objections from the employer as there is the possibility of being turned down. Never take rejection personally. In reality, an employer's lack of knowledge and lack of awareness of Supported Employment job seekers may make them apprehensive about engaging with Supported Employment. By acknowledging their concerns and dealing with them in a professional manner, the majority of objections can be overcome. A good Supported Employment service provider can offer staff training and provide an advisory and guidance service on matters relating to employment and disability.

(v) Agreement

Ensure the goal for the meeting is achieved and any further action to be taken is agreed with the potential employer. Examples of this could be:

- Employer will advise of vacancies as they occur in the future
- The employer will meet with you to explore and review with you the range of jobs in their company in order to see what opportunities may be suitable
- To agree contact in the future regarding mutually benefiting opportunities
- To agree the next step in matching a job seeker with an existing job opportunity

3. Job Analysis

When a suitable job has been identified, a Job Analysis is carried out to determine the skills needed.

The Job Analysis should include:

- Job duties
- Task analysis
- Key features of the job – physical, cognitive, emotional, environmental, etc
- Productivity required
- Quality standards required

² For more useful tips how to help the job seeker preparing for the interview see also Ryan, D.J. (2004): Job Search Handbook for People with disabilities, 2nd edition. Jist Works, Indianapolis, p. 161-194

- Wages available
- Hours/days of work
- Accessibility of the job
- Health and safety considerations
- Company culture
- Worksite environment
- Social aspects of the job site
- Opportunities for providing support on the job
- Potential for organising natural support
- Transport considerations

The Job Analysis document is then used as the baseline to match a job seeker to the job. This is a “live document” and can be open to change depending on the requirement of the employer.

4. Job Matching

To determine if there is a match between the job seeker and the actual job, the following should be considered:

- Can the job seeker complete the tasks, or is there a need to adjust the job, or provide training?
- Does the job reflect the ambitions of the job seeker?
- Will assistive technology and/or adaptations be needed and can they be organised/funded?
- Is the job seeker available for the hours required by the Employer?
- Does the job seeker “fit” within the work site?
- Does the job seeker accept the potential implications in terms of their social welfare benefit payment or pension?
- What is the anticipated future of the job, is it temporary, long term or permanent?
- Can the job seeker meet the expectations of the employer, and is a period of Work Experience needed to clarify this? In some cases, a Job Taster or a Work Experience Placement may be a useful and worthwhile activity for both the job seeker and the employer.
- Is support available when needed by both the job seeker and the employer?
- Does transport and accessibility need to be addressed?

A period of Work Experience Placement can last for a number of weeks, while a Job Taster or Job Shadow should last between 1 day and 1 week. The time period, and the responsibilities of the job seeker, employer and the Employment Support Worker must be agreed at the outset .

5. Secure the Job

Once the Job Match has been achieved, the following responsibilities and expectations should be agreed:

- Working hours and the rate of pay
- Provision of support, and who will provide it
- Productivity expected
- Quality expected
- Responsibilities of the employer, the co-worker(s), the job seeker and the Employment Support Worker in relation to the support requirements
- A review procedure may be identified and agreed to ensure the continued success of the job match

On the completion of this agreement, a contract of employment is drawn up and signed by both the job seeker and the employer. It may also be useful to have an informal agreement between the employer/employee and the Supported Employment service in relation to what support will be provided.

Timescales

It is very difficult to apply a time scale to any aspect of the Supported Employment process. However it is important to have scheduled reviews to ensure that progress is being made. Each case is individual but the first review should take place no later than a month after commencement of the job; dates for further reviews can then be agreed. Whilst accepting there are no defined timescales, it is important to find a job as quickly as possible; however this depends greatly on the following factors:

- The availability of a suitable job
- The number of other people who are looking for similar jobs
- Whether the job seeker knows the type of job he or she wants
- The caseload of the Employment Support Worker
- Social Welfare system
- Accessibility issues
- The social awareness of employers
- The support available to the job seeker outside of the Supported Employment network
- The availability of transport

Tips for Effective Job Finding and Employer Engagement

This How to Guide was developed by practitioners for practitioners. Therefore the listed “Useful Tips” and “Things to Avoid” should help readers to benefit from the authors’ experience and knowledge.

Useful Tips:

- Know and involve the job seeker
- Always get the job seeker’s consent to allow you to pursue the process
- Always keep the job seeker at the centre of the process
- Know your potential employers
- Encourage employers with experience of Supported Employment to talk with other employers
- Make sure that every person involved has a clear understanding of their role
- If the job seeker is agreeable, involve the family
- Develop a knowledge of all the incentives and schemes available for employers, and be aware of how they impact on both job seekers and the employers
- Be honest with the job seeker and the employer in relation to the support needed and the levels that can be provided
- Always do what you promise and meet deadlines
- Ensure that support is available when it is needed
- Portray a professional approach at all times, use a good standard of promotional material, business cards and brochures etc
- Keep up to date with the details of the jobs advertised
- Where possible, support the job seeker to carry out their job search

Things to Avoid:

- Do not oversell the job seeker, the employer or the service
- Do not leave the job seeker, the employer or the co-workers without the support required
- Do not assume anything about either the job seeker or the employer
- Do not over protect the job seeker
- Do not get involved with employers who may not provide suitable worksites or appropriate jobs
- Do not allow the process to be more important than the job seeker

Reflective Questions

The following questions are intended to initiate further discussions and should help practitioners and Employment Support Workers to reflect their methods and approaches:

- Is it better to have a dedicated 'Job Finder', specifically working to find jobs and other staff to support the job seeker – or should Employment Support Workers carry out both roles?
- What are the parameters of the role of the Employment Support Worker at the stages of "Job Finding" and "Employer Engagement" and how can you ensure to stay within these parameters?
- What are the issues to consider when deciding whether to accompany a job seeker to a job interview with a prospective employer?
- What are the skills required for an Employment Support Worker to be an effective job finder?
- What makes a good employer for Supported Employment?
- What are the advantages and disadvantages of developing an Employer Network?
- What are the possible learning aspects of the job seeker and how do you ensure them?

Relevant EUSE Position Papers:

- Job Finding
- On and Off the Job Support
- Working with Employers
- Supported Employers for Employers
- Work Experience Placements

Relevant EUSE How To Guides:

- Vocational Profiling

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