

Summer 2006

Volume 1, Issue 2

MAR Chronicle

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President's Corner

Chapter Happenings

Small Business: Boundless Opportunities

Alan Davis Article

Rhonda Shumway Article

2006 Conference update

President's Corner

Hello Fellow Rehabbers,

Ahh, midsummer in Montana. That can only mean a few things heat, fires, relatives and tourists. The fortunate part of this is we live in Montana and most of those things only last a few days or weeks. Such is the amazing wheel of life, so jump on, hold tight and enjoy the ride!

In this issue I endeavored to bring some articles from different sources focused on different aspects of our work world. My purpose is to share information and provide food for thought. The first is from Rob McInnes who is a contemporary of Denise Bissonette and comes from his great newsletter. I also had the good fortune of attending a training by Alan Davis centered around relationships and conflict within the workplace. He was kind enough to share more insights on his presentation for our newsletter. Lastly, Rhonda Shumway has sent along a synopsis of a training she attended recently.

Please let me know if you have articles, upcoming dates of importance, rants/ravings or points of interest you feel would be beneficial to share with our organization.

Mark Mahnke, Board President

Chapter Reports

In an attempt to promote the use of our new site I will refer the reader to that site to get up to the minute reports from the respective chapters. The web address is www.mtmar.org and it contains more information about our organization, the upcoming conference, board activities, membership, .

MAR Conference 2006

This year's conference will return to West Yellowstone, MT and will be at the Holiday Inn. The main event will be Richard Pimentel who is a colleague of Denise Bissonette's.

Richard Pimentel is a nationally renowned expert on Disability Management, Job Recruitment, Job Retention, Americans with Disabilities Act, and Attitude Change. He is not only technically proficient, he is also an exceptional communicator whose audiences praise his ability to combine information, humor, metaphor, analogy and storytelling into an informative whole that does not just *present* the information, but really *communicates* it in a memorable fashion.

Look to our website for more exciting details, registration information and of course, what's happening for Fun Night!

Small Business: Boundless Opportunities: Used with kind permission from Rob McInnes, Diversity World - www.diversityworld.com".

In the realm of employment for people with disabilities (and in the realms of most job-seekers – particularly those with employment barriers) the word “employer” is used sweepingly to describe those folks who seemingly influence the hiring of people into the workforce. While it is handy to just use one word...it isn't particularly helpful. If Eskimos/Inuit really have a dozen different terms for various types of snow, we should have at least that many terms for different types of employers.

Among those we include in our “employer” term are corporate CEOs, small business

owners, human resources managers, diversity consultants, recruiters, and hiring managers.

These different types of employers have vastly different characteristics – from daily business realities to capacities for decision-making and influence. In this article, I am offering a perspective on owner-operated small businesses that I hope will be helpful to some of the job seekers and job developers that receive our newsletter.

Ten Characteristics of Owner-operated Small Businesses

1. The Owner Is In Sight

The owner is likely to be working on the premises – at least part-time. Unlike a large company, the key decision-maker (the owner) is relatively easy to identify and contact. Whatever their hiring process is, do what you can to first make a good impression on the owner. You might consider first going in as a customer and engaging the owner in a conversation – and then coming back a week later to submit your resume. Even if the owner doesn't directly make the hiring decisions... if they want you hired, you will get hired.

When the owner makes a decision, they answer to themselves. No one is looking over their shoulders. They are usually willing to take reasonable risks – and to live with the consequences of their decisions. Even if they are a little unsure of your ability to do the job, they may be willing to give you a chance to prove yourself.

2. Employee Relationships Are Up Close and Personal

Personality is important. Whoever is interviewing you is likely part of the team and going to be working directly with you – maybe every day – possibly for years. Their decision is likely to be as personal as it is professional. Their radar is going to be scanning for things like personality traits, outside interests, etc. Sure, they want to know that you can do the job, but they also want to know if you are going to be someone they will enjoy working with and if you will “fit in” with the other employees.

You might want to let them know that good working relationships are important to you too. If there are sports trophies, family pictures recognition plaques from community organizations on display, show an interest in them. If there is a subtle way to do so, consider making comments about your hobbies and personal interests.

3. Need for Multi-Tasking Rather Than Specialization.

Generally, the larger the organization, the more highly-specialized individual jobs become. Small business owners are often the cashier, accountant, janitor and salesperson all wrapped into one. Similarly, their employees are usually expected to take on a variety of roles and tasks. If this kind of multi-tasking isn't something that you are able to do well (or want to do), you might want to focus your job search on

larger companies.

4. Less Formality

Smaller companies tend to operate without the formality and rigidity of larger ones. Written job descriptions probably don't exist or aren't adhered to. Within a general set of expectations, employees are expected to do a "good job" and do what it takes to make the customers happy and the business successful.

In recruiting, there is less focus on resumes, less emphasis on credentials, degrees and "formal experience" in the small business arena. In short, there are far less job search hoops to jump through – or bureaucratic red tape to gum up the works. Decisions can be made more quickly... job interviews can take place on the spot. Sometimes the only reference you may need is having been a regular customer or residing in the neighborhood. While this is not always true, the lack of formality in the small business sector can make the job search easier for the person who does not have a traditional or particularly linear work history.

5. More Flexibility

Small businesses are often used to finding ways to do things differently and responding to changing circumstance. They are used to doing whatever it takes to get the job done. In this context, the idea of job accommodations isn't a foreign concept to them.

If your disability precludes full-time employment or requires flexible hours, these are often easier to negotiate with smaller employers. They don't have to deal with established personnel policies and protocols. Many smaller companies rely on part-time employees to supplement regular staff during busy times of the day, week, month or year. They are also likely to hire part-time for specialized roles like accounting or sales.

6. Time Is Precious.

This is a particularly important thing for job developers to know. Small business owners and their employees can't usually afford to take a lot of time off work. These folks may come to an event outside of their working hours, but they aren't likely to attend a full-day conference on "Accommodating People with Disabilities in the Workplace". Their time is precious and needs to be treated that way. Often, "time is money" is very present reality for them. If you want to engage them, it is best to approach them at a time of day when business is slow. (For many retailers, first thing in the morning often works well.)

As an employee, YOUR time is also a precious commodity to your employer. Be aware that your employer is constantly aware that he/she is paying for your time. To a small business owner, watching an employee stand around doing nothing is as anxiety-

provoking as being a passenger in a taxi watching the meter climb as they sit stuck in traffic. Small employers are looking for employees who, even in slow periods, will find things to do things that will benefit the company (e.g. wash the windows, clean up the files, make courtesy calls to customers). In an interview, it might be wise to ask if there will be lulls in the routine of the job and, if so, what other tasks can be done during those periods.

7. The Bottom Line Is Close To Home.

Typically, the owner's personal income is whatever is left over after all expenses are paid. Small businesses are usually run pretty lean and will be particularly interested in how hiring you will either increase revenues or decrease expenses.

Any accommodation expenses incurred by the business will come directly out of the owner's pocket. A small business owner can not likely afford expensive accommodations and will be wary of any added operating costs. If you are someone who will require your employer to pay for expensive job accommodations, you need to know that, stated or not, this will likely be a bigger issue for a small company than a larger one.

If, because of your disability, your employer will be eligible tax credits or other financial incentives, know that smaller businesses are more likely to be more keenly interested than big business. While large companies tend to not want to be bothered with such programs, most small businesses can't afford not to be interested.

If, beyond the job description, you have other skills that can be of added value to the company, don't hesitate to mention these up front. Are you computer savvy? A small employer would probably welcome an employee who could do basic trouble-shooting and maintenance on their equipment. Are you artistically inclined? Maybe you could bring added value by designing posters, flyers or menus. Do you have basic accounting skills? Maybe you could save your employer some time or money by taking on some of that role.

8. Open To Ideas

Almost by definition, small businesses yearn to grow. Owner-operated businesses are constantly on the lookout for creative new ways to make or save money. They are likely to be more receptive to fresh ideas and new ways of doing things than larger companies that are heavily invested in their structure (business model, routines and procedures, marketing plan, etc.). As a job seeker, the small business sector may well give you more opportunity to co-create a job in a way that more intentionally capitalizes on your unique talents and interests.

9. More at Risk

Small business owners are people who have taken the risk of investing in an idea,

with the hope that it will flourish and provide them with a good livelihood. Unlike large companies, they don't have vast resources to draw on. They have likely fully leveraged their credit cards, savings and home mortgage to finance their business. In pursuit of their dream, they are often out on a limb. They are looking for employees who respect that – not employees who are looking for a handout, but for employees who share their entrepreneurial spirit. While a large business might, a small business certainly isn't likely to hire someone with a disability solely out of "social responsibility". They need all employees, with or without disabilities to at least do a fair day's work for a fair day's pay.

10. Unsophisticated on Disability

Don't expect small business owners to be politically correct in disability terminology and etiquette. Don't expect them to savvy about the Americans with Disabilities Act. Don't expect them to be current on job accommodation strategies. Disability is your world – likely not theirs. While you can expect large businesses to have some familiarity with the basics of disability concerns and protocol, small businesses don't have HR managers to attend workshops and seminars on "workforce diversity". They don't have in-house lawyers or risk-management departments to keep them current on legal issues. Be prepared to educate them as you go.

In discussing job opportunities with a small business person, or in the course of a formal interview, do your best to second-guess their concerns about your disability and how it might affect your performance on the job. They are likely to be awkward and unpolished about how to voice their concerns. You need to take the lead and ensure them that you will be able to do the job and that there are no surprises awaiting them. It can be as easy as saying things like; "You might be wondering about my dog. He is a highly-trained service animal – a working dog. He will stay quietly by my side and not disturb the workplace at all." Or "You are probably wondering how I can handle phone calls with my hearing loss. Let me tell you how I do that,,,"

More than large employers, small businesses will be impressed with your enthusiasm about "their job" versus "a job". If you are looking for more than just a paycheck from them, if you are passionately interested in working in their business sector and, better yet, their particular business, freely communicate that. There are approximately 23 million small businesses in the United States and they employ roughly half of the private workforce. A full 98% of business enterprises in Canada have less than 100 employees. While the small business sector doesn't have the glamour of Fortune 500 and Wall Street, small business controls a huge portion of North America's jobs and has boundless employment opportunities.

~ Rob McInnes

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Some Considerations Regarding Conflicts with Consumers

Alan Davis, PhD.

Reframing Discrepancies

Relationships become entangled in problems that arise from discrepancies of expectations. The tendency to think in adversarial terms and to treat people as problems is sometimes present. Discrepancies must be seen as differences in interests and goals rather than as a contest of wills. Reframing discrepancies as problems that the team must confront together encourages mutual responsibility in resolving the conflict. It also promotes a "we" attitude among the partners who are striving toward the goal of an effective working alliance. In defining a discrepancy, it is important that the consumer be provided with the agency's point of view. Guidelines and boundaries within which the consumer and the counselor must work should be clearly communicated.

1. Dispel Myths

Myths include the beliefs that (a) a good working relationship is one in which no discrepancies are present, (b) good working relationships avoid disagreements and conflict.

2. Identify, Define, and Understand the Discrepancies

Identify and define the discrepancy from the perspectives of both partners. Before responding, the other partner must accurately restate those interests and goals.

3. Clarify Misperceptions

Careless communication is the source of many misperceptions.

4. Promote Trust

Keep promises, follow through with commitments, and behave reliably.

5. Generate options.

Brainstorm without criticism. Help produce potential strategies for resolving discrepancies. Reconcile interests, as opposed to compromising between positions.

6. Implement and Evaluate.

Revisit the contract at various times and revise it as needed. It is neither practical nor necessary to have a discrepancy-free relationship before proceeding with rehabilitation planning.

Violence Considerations

- Have clear, unobstructed, exits in the workplace.
- Train clerical staff to recognize and report agitated clients.
- Do not work alone, especially after hours.
- Remove heavy or sharp objects from the workplace, they are convenient weapons.
- If you are threatened, get away from the person immediately.
- The agency should send the person a registered letter stating – “Vocational Rehabilitation staff are released of normal service responsibilities until an assurance of safety has been restored. The individual should have no contact of any kind with VR staff until the assurance of safety has been established through the following procedure: The person making the threat must participate in appropriate counseling or therapy with a third party accepted by both the individual and the agency; and The individual making the threat must express directly to the threatened parties why the threat was not acceptable; and the individual making the threat and the agency must successfully negotiate the conditions of a resumed service relationship.”
- If the person ignores the letter or escalates the behavior, take legal action such as a restraining order.
- Consider pressing charges for trespassing, assault, or stalking.

Assessing Level of Supervision Needs

In relation to the technical and emotional demands of rehabilitation counseling...

1. Basic – Is the standard on-going support provided directly by my supervisor and peers adequate (as in one-on-one discussion of specific case challenges and job

stress)?

2. Secondary – Do I need for support beyond the basic level, in greater intensity and concentrated in some area of special concern (such as in-service training and/or peer group sharing)?
3. Extensive - Do I need a comprehensive and extended supportive intervention (as in academic coursework in selected subject areas, private counseling, and/or therapy)?

Self-Assessment

1. What kinds of situations with consumers involve conflict?
2. How have I dealt with my feelings?
3. What kind of support would help me deal with my feelings when I am in conflict with a consumer?
4. What strategies have I used to cope with conflicts?
5. How effective have these strategies been?
6. What resources would help me when confronted with a conflict?
 - Information?
 - Skills?
 - Case-strategies?
 - Partnerships?
 - Administrative policies?
 - What level of support do I need in each area above?

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Motivating People for Change

The Southeastern Montana Community Management Team recently sponsored Dr. Christine Fiore in a two day workshop entitled, "Motivating People for Change." Dr. Fiore's presentation focused on the Transtheoretical Model of Behavioral Change which is a "spiral model" reflecting the multiple change attempts made by individuals before achieving change. Dr. Fiore drew on the works of Drs. Prochaska, DiClemente, and Rosengren in presenting information on motivational interviewing.

The model is made up of Stages, Processes, Decisional Balance, and Self-efficacy. The stages are dynamic, moving, and represent varying levels of motivation for change. Dr. Fiore noted this model is used by counselors in working with individuals in a variety of situations some of which included

working with chemical dependency issues, spousal abuse issues, or anyone facing a significant medical situation that requires a life change.

The stages of change of this model include Precontemplation, Contemplation, Preparation, Action, and Maintenance. A feature of the spiral nature of this model is that individuals move in and out of each stage until the change behavior has been stable for six months or longer. For us as helpers we experience frustration when it appears the individual is ready for change but just won't do it. The individual appears ready for change, has a plan, and has committed to the change and some forward movement is being made. The individual might be experimenting with steps toward changing but often experiences failure which in turn plummets the individual back down the spiral. Motivational interviewing is used to determine where the individual is in regard to the change-not interested, somewhat interested but uncertain how to proceed, ready to change and making some steps, performing the new behavior consistently, and maintaining the new behavior for six months or more-and assists the individual in making and maintaining the new behavior.

As counselors we use motivational interviewing techniques first of all to identify the problem, knowing that the counselor and the individual may see the problem differently. One task at the precontemplation juncture is to work with the individual in moving toward contemplation of the new behavior. These consumers are frequently the ones we dread seeing. That's because we often feel helpless in working with consumers in the precontemplative stage. We should be asking ourselves "why is he stuck?" instead of avoiding or dreading contact. Once the individual is willing to consider change counselor tasks include considering what Dr. Fiore referred to as the "pros" and "cons" of behavior change again from the consumer's perspective. For an alcoholic the cons might be the ridicule s/he might face from the drinking buddies or concerns about how to manage anger without using alcohol. The counselor also wants to gather information about past attempts to change and present them as attempts at success rather than failures. When the consumer expresses the willingness to change counselor tasks might include assessing the strength of the commitment, building confidence, building coping skills and reinforcing the commitment. For those consumers who are putting the change into action, the counselor role is to continue to build confidence by remaining focused on the positive steps taken by the individual. The counselor may serve more as a "monitor" at this stage. By the time a consumer has reached the maintenance stage we are often only a dim memory. If however the counselor does have an opportunity to interact with a consumer at this stage the relationship typically involves providing feedback or providing additional information. If

the consumer is in crises or relapse the counselor would review the cause of the turmoil and work with the consumer in identifying what has worked to this point.

The Process Stage includes Emotional, Thinking, and Behavioral aspects. The emotional aspect means the individuals knows how they feel about the behavior and can express feelings about the behavior. The emotional process is found in the precontemplative and contemplative stage. The Thinking aspect includes exploration of ideas, consideration of what is important to the individual and learning how to change and is found in the contemplative and planning stage. Behavioral changes, found in the action and maintenance stages, includes doing things that make change happen and in applying what works consistently.

Decisional Balance is a component of the stages of change and varies across the stages. In the early stages the individual may be more influenced not to change because of the power of the "cons". As the individual sees the "pros" as more powerful change is effected and the power of the cons is diminished.

The final stage-Self Efficacy- consists of the confidence or "lack of temptation" to continue the behavior change. Dr. Fiore stated this is not self-esteem although it is characterized by the same low confidence found in individuals experiencing low self-esteem. "Self-efficacy is very important for movement into Action and Maintenance," explained Dr. Fiore as it leads to Hope.

It is important that we understand the change process and how it works within us and those we work with. It is most helpful when we work with the process and not against it. Dr. Fiore noted motivational interviewing "should be like dancing, not wrestling."

Dr. Christine Fiore is an Associate Professor of Psychology at the University of Montana, Missoula. She earned her PhD. from the University of Rhode Island in 1990.

Rhonda Shumway

THANKS TO ALL THE CONTRIBUTORS AND SEE YOU IN WEST YELLOWSTONE IN OCTOBER.

