

JAN

Job Accommodation Network

Practical Solutions • Workplace Success

Accommodation and Compliance Series

Accommodation and Compliance Series: Customized Employment

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JAN'S Accommodation and Compliance Series

Introduction

Customized employment is a flexible process designed to personalize the employment relationship between a job candidate and an employer in a way that meets the needs of both. It is based on an individualized match between the strengths, conditions, and interests of a job candidate and the identified business needs of an employer.

Customized Employment utilizes an individualized approach to employment planning and job development — one person at a time . . . one employer at a time.

Customized employment often takes the form of:

- **Task reassignment:** Some of the job tasks of incumbent workers are reassigned to a new employee. This reassignment allows the incumbent worker to focus on the critical functions of his/her job (i.e., primary job responsibilities) and complete more of the central work of the job. Task reassignment typically takes the form of job creation, whereby a new job description is negotiated based on current, unmet workplace needs.
- **Job carving:** An existing job description is modified — containing one or more, but not all, of the tasks from the original job description.
- **Job sharing:** Two or more people share the tasks and responsibilities of a job based on each other's strengths.

Self-employment, although less common, is becoming more established as a form of customized employment. Self-employment allows for an individual to receive assistance in the creation of an independently owned small business (typically a micro enterprise, under five employees) based on the strengths and dreams of an individual and the unmet needs of a local market while incorporating the individualized planning and support strategies needed for success.

Situations and Solutions:

The following situations and solutions are real-life examples of accommodations that were made by JAN customers. Because accommodations are made on a case-by-case basis, these examples may not be effective for every workplace but give you an idea about the types of accommodations that are possible.

A large, busy veterinary clinic has veterinary assistants who do multiple tasks, including bathing and exercising the animals.

Due to emergency situations that require immediate attention, an extra person to walk the dogs twice daily was needed. Richard's employment counselor became aware of the need and promptly contacted him to see if he was interested. He loved animals and only had the stamina to work several hours at a time, with rest in between. Hiring Richard to exercise the animals was a win/win for him as well as the clinic.

Ruth was recently diagnosed with dementia.

She has been having great difficulty performing the essential functions of her position. With information from Ruth's doctor, her employer determined that she would do better at tasks that are repetitive and routine. Ruth's employer wants to help her retain her employment by carving out tasks for her from other positions, freeing those employees up to perform some of the tasks Ruth can no longer do. This positive move for Ruth created more specialized job descriptions for the entire department.

Juliette loves clothes and fashion.

Her job specialist worked with her to get a job at a retail clothing store unpacking merchandise and placing it on hangers, freeing up the sales people to be on the sales floor more frequently to attend to customer needs. The employer was open to the discussion of Juliette working in that capacity on a trial basis to see how it could work, since this was not a current position. It turned out to be very beneficial for the store. The new merchandise was able to be placed onto the sales floor much quicker and sales increased. Juliette was offered a more long-term position in the job that had been customized for her.

An employer who hired Josh to do some very limited and specific office work for a trial period was very pleased with his performance and offered him a part-time job on a more long-term basis.

Since Josh showed such an interest in the copy machine, the employer was looking to see about more tasks with the printing department.

Roddie applied for a position operating rides at an amusement park.

His father, who was quite savvy, worked with the employer to customize the job for his son. Because Roddy gets extremely agitated with certain sounds and flashing lights, he and his dad felt it would be best if he could stay in one position and operate only the ride that was the quietest instead of having to rotate around to all of the rides as the other employees would do. After meeting and interviewing Roddy, the employer agreed to hire him, requiring him to rotate between and operate two of the rides they all agreed would work for Roddie instead of the entire circuit.

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