Making Vocational Success *Possible* for Individuals with ASD

Taking Action and Utilizing Resources

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“Able autistic individuals can rise to eminent positions with such outstanding success that one may conclude that only such people are capable of certain achievements. Their unswerving determination and penetrating intellectual powers, part of their spontaneous and original mental activity, their narrowness and single-mindedness, as manifested in their special interests, can be immensely valuable and can lead to outstanding achievements in their chosen areas.”

(Hans Asperger 1944)
Program Overview

- The Current State
- The Basics (a misnomer?)
- Taking action and utilizing resources
- Maintaining Employment
The Numbers

- Approximately 85-90% of persons with ASDs are unemployed or underemployed (Bureau of Labor Statistics)
- Adults with ASD are able to ‘give back’ to society
- The key is finding the right job for the individual
Like everyone, individuals with ASD thrive when their *personal strengths* and *preferences* match the requirements of the job.

- Technical Skills
- Requirements for social interaction
- Clearly defined routines
- Adequate time for learning new tasks
- Sensory needs
- Flexible work schedules
- Transportation

*Although trends are evident, keep in mind that we are all individuals and have differing needs*
Types of jobs found by 89 high-ability adults with autism or Asperger syndrome who participated in a specialist supported employment service

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of work</th>
<th>% of jobs</th>
<th>Examples of Jobs</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Administration/technical</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>Statistician, chemist, research officer, photography</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Administration/accounts assistant</td>
<td>22%</td>
<td>Archiving, accounts, etc.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Technical assistant</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>Library, finance, technical, BT operator</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Data entry</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>Keyboard operator, data input</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Data management</td>
<td>3.5%</td>
<td>IT analyst, web design</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Office work/clerical assistant</td>
<td>19%</td>
<td>Offices, banks, etc.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Secretarial</td>
<td>1.5%</td>
<td>Hospital and university posts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shopwork</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>Customer service, travel agents, transport, check-out till etc.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stockroom</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>Shelf stocking etc.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Postal work</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>Mail delivery/sorting</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>Support worker, nursery, messenger, joiner, gardening, seamstress</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Catering</td>
<td>1.5%</td>
<td>Chef, kitchen hand</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cleaning</td>
<td>0.5%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Why is finding a job so difficult?

- *Soft Skills* (*handshakes, eye contact, humor, nonverbals*)
- Resumes
- Interviewing
- Inexperience
- Lack of employer awareness
- Lack of support
- Lack of utilization of community resources
- Knowledge of own strengths, interests and limitations
- Current economy
Soft Skills

“Emotional Intelligence” Quotient (EQ)
...much different from one’s IQ

- Relates to ones’ interpersonal skills and behavior
- Requires understanding of utilizing and reading nonverbal communication

- Examples:
  - Firm handshake
  - Eye contact
  - Appropriate tone of voice
  - Conflict resolution
  - Working with a team
Help clients to:

- Be clear and concise
- Use consistent language
- Prepare to discuss experience
- Use **action words** and provide **quantifiable** examples of your past work (e.g., “increased” sales by 15%, “engaged” customers, etc.)
Resumes – The Good, the Bad, and the Ugly
Jane Doe

Education
2002 - 2006  James Madison University Harrisonburg, VA
BA Business Administration
Concentration in Marketing

Work experience
2006 - 2007  Acme Products Gotham, VA
Sales Representative
I sold full line of Acme Products in the Springfield territory as a business-to-business sales person. I focused mainly on corporate accounts working with C-level decision makers on a daily basis. I received two weeks of sales training at the Acme headquarters and have been over 100% of quota since I started.

2005 - 2006  Ation’s Pub Harrisonburg, VA
Bartender/ Waitress
I bartended part time. My responsibilities included taking customer orders, and making sure they are enjoying their meals.

2002 - 2004  Gap Harrisonburg, VA
Salesperson
I helped to meet customers expectations by showing customers new products and assisting them. I tried to meet sales goals by getting customers to sign up for the Gap Credit Card. I also maintained the cash drawer and answered the telephones.

Interests
Swimming, soccer, spending time with family and friends.

Use of “I” ➔
No quantifiable differences noted

Too much white space ➔
Freddie Miller’s Resume.

- SMART
- HANDSOME
- Successful

(That’s where you come in)

Lightning!!!
Interviewing

Teach adults to focus on:

- Hygiene
- Appropriate attire
- Familiarity with resume
- Background information on the employer
- Practice: someone trustworthy
- Interview techniques
  (e.g., Asking the interviewer to repeat his/her question)
- The level at which his/her diagnosis may affect the interview and/or job performance
Suggestions for Success:

- Make a gradual transition to work, start with a part-time job and then move to more hours as you feel competent.
- Seek a supportive environment:
  - Kind mentors/supervisors
  - Employers who are open-minded in developing and implementing accommodations
- Provide resources and training to develop skills.
- Develop a 30 second “elevator speech” selling yourself and your skills.
- Stress arriving to work, meetings, and other work functions on time.
  - “Practice run” before the interview.
Q: Resumes must demonstrate your talents using _______ descriptions such as “Led a team of five individuals to the national championship in 2010 and 2011.”
   a. positive
   b. quantifiable
   c. understandable
   d. flexible

Q: Soft skills are related to:
   a. culture
   b. social nuances
   c. only a
   d. both a and b
Dream Job Activity for Clients

- Come up with a list of 5 jobs that could be your dream job
- Find people who hold those positions currently
- Complete informational interviews with those individuals
- Assess whether this job is feasible and/or still your “dream”
- Remember the importance of flexibility and experience
Explore Career Support and Development Options

- Bureau of Autism Services
- Office of Vocational Rehabilitation (OVR)
- Assessments with career counselor
- Occupational outlook handbook
- Bureau of Labor Statistics
- Suggested reading: *Fortune, Small Business Magazine*
  - small businesses are usually focused on the *quality* of the skills you bring to the job
- Internships
- Volunteer Opportunities
- Job shadowing
ASR Time

Q: *Flexibility* is important when researching job opportunities and options
   a. True
   b. False

Q: Once you get a job you must
   a. Continue to adjust to the environment as it changes
   b. Relax, as you can stay at your place of employment as long as you like
   c. Remember not to ask too many questions
   d. Both a and b
Disclosure Discussion

- When is it necessary?
  - Accommodations will be required
  - Social/sensory differences have potential to be disruptive in the work environment
- What are the costs?
  - Potential for discrimination
  - Those you tell may not be understanding
- What are the benefits?
  - Production under the Americans with Disabilities Act
  - Social faux pas can be forgiven, rather than punished
  - Reasonable accommodations can be made only if you disclose
- When is the right time?
  - After you have practiced talking about your diagnosis with others you trust
  - During an interview
  - Once hired
- Who should I tell, if I decide to?
  - Direct supervisor(s)
  - Human resources department
Self-advocacy

- What about my client makes him/her different from the average employee?
- What does he/she need from the job in order to succeed?
  - Effective communication from employers
  - Transportation (explore barriers with clients)
  - Accommodations such as
    - Limited sound and/or light
    - Ability to work from home
    - Private working space
Problem Solving

• Know who your client can go to with questions, and *how often*
  ✷ If you can Google it...

• Know who to go to if there is a problem

• Learn employers’ expectation level and “Acceptable margin of error”

• Teach clients to accept feedback of all forms, including critiques, suggestions, and complements
Still in high school?

- **Transition Planning**
  - Teens and young adults can never start too early!
    - Attend IEP meetings regularly
    - Request incorporation of employment-related goals into IEP
    - Use all relevant resources when available to assist in planning
    - Address skills relevant to success in employment/life in the community:
      - Academic/Employment Responsibilities
      - Life Skills/Domestic Responsibilities
      - Social/Communication Skills
Life Skills/Domestic Responsibilities that can affect work

- Provide clients with *real* practice with the following:
  - Eating a healthy diet/cooking
  - Money Management
  - Housekeeping
  - Personal Appearance / Hygiene
  - Negotiate campus/community independently (walk, bus, etc.)
Social/Communication Skills

- **Self-Advocacy**: understand diagnosis/differences, know how and when to ask for help
- **Ability to communicate** with at least one trustworthy source
  - For social guidance
  - Regarding academic career
  - Even if communication must be elicited
- **Respect for Law and Authority**
  - Ability to follow campus rules/regulations
  - Ability to address authority figures with respect
- **Safety**
  - Awareness/Avoidance of dangerous situations (socially and physically)
ASR Time

Q: Transition goals for high school students should address each of the following except:
   a. Academic/Employment Responsibilities
   b. Life Skills/Domestic Responsibilities
   c. Social/Communication Skills
   d. Independence without the support of any type of team

Q: A point person at your place of employment is:
   a. Someone who does things for you when you do not know how
   b. A person you can trust and ask for assistance
   c. Someone who tells your mom how you have been doing at work
   d. A person you avoid talking with
Community Resources

- Bureau of Autism Services (BAS)
- PA Career Link
- Autism Speaks – [www.autismspeaks.org](http://www.autismspeaks.org)
- Disability Rights Network – [dmpa.org](http://dmpa.org)
- Office of Vocational Rehabilitation
- Adult Autism Waiver
- OBRA Waiver
- MR Waiver
- Job Coaches and service providers such as:
  - Goodwill
  - Life’s Work
  - The Life Program
Online Resources

- Autism Works - [www.jobs4autism.com](http://www.jobs4autism.com)
- Compass – [www.humanservices.state.pa.edu/Compass.web](http://www.humanservices.state.pa.edu/Compass.web) (AAW providers for supportive employment and housing)
- Monster.com
- Career One-Stops | Your pathway to career success. [careeronestop.org](http://careeronestop.org)
Resources

Autism Services, Education, Resources, and Training (ASERT)

- ASERT is a statewide initiative funded by the Bureau of Autism Services, Pennsylvania Department of Public Welfare.