

Communicating with the Employer- Transcript

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Lynda Leach: Welcome everyone to today's monthly teleconference with Rick McAllister who will be talking about communicating with employers. Rick is an expert in the field of job development and has done lots of training for us. He's currently presenting our Certification Series on Employment Facilitation. Let's get started.

Rick McAllister: Thanks Lynda! Today we'll be talking about job development and employment. It is critical that we make a distinction between employment and selling concepts. I want to talk about ways that we can secure employment opportunities for people. We are not really looking to market our concepts or philosophy. We are trying to match employers up with good employees. In doing that, we need to make sure we focus in these three sessions on how to communicate effectively with employers to get the people we provide services for opportunities for employment. The intent is to get a clear picture of negotiating, communicating, and interacting with employers. This is going to give you the best probability of success. There is no 100% guarantee. I would be foolish to assume there is such a thing and even to present it as such. What we're going to be talking about today is a bunch of strategies, techniques, and tools that have a probability of giving you the higher level of success. It's not an exact science. We want to really try to focus on processes that give us the best chance of being successful.

In doing that, this session focuses on a number of concepts and perceptions that I'll talk about that are pervasive to these the sessions. Not just in the first session, but all three sessions. They really go together as we talk about the initial contact for the employer and managing the relationship. We talk about proposals and then we talk about the assessment of the job which facilitates both the proposal and the negotiation with the employer. So all three parts of the presentations are tied together. You could tune into one and catch up on that one, but the intent is for them to be tied together.

If you're following along with the handout, "Effective strategies for job development," right about now we would be on page three. Let's talk about how we present ourselves. In our field, we have said some really bizarre things to employers throughout the years. Some of the interesting things we have

said to employers are things like, “Hi, my name is Rick McAllister, I work with people with disabilities.” They go, “What kind of disabilities?” And I go, “I can’t tell you that, what’s the matter with you?” We say interesting things like that, or we say things to employers like, “I have somebody who can do your job” and the employer says, “Have you ever seen my job?” And we go, “No, we haven’t!” Those are the weird messages that we send. We bombard employers with brochures. We bombard employers for their time. We do a number of things to employers that just don’t make sense sometimes. What we want to try to do today is talk about that. Talk a little bit about how we appear to an employer, the way we’re communicating, what we’re saying, what are some of the intended effects of what we’re saying, and what are some of the unintended effects of what we’re saying. In order to really talk about that I just want to make sure that we’re going to be talking about the business of doing business with businesses—catchy phrase. We’re really talking about employment and we’re talking about business. In talking about that, one of the things that comes up a lot is what are we selling to employers? What do they want from us? How do they see us and what do they want from us?

If you are following along, go to page four. We primarily have three customer groups in job development that may be important for us to explore a little bit. The three customer groups are—the employer, the funding agent, and the consumer, the person who is having our services purchased for them. With that consumer comes their friends, family, advocates, peers, co-workers, and would-be funding agents, our reputation, and our ability to be funded. Let’s talk about each of those three customer groups.

Let’s start with the employer. What is an employer looking for in the employment process from an employee? What do they want? If I were to go around and pose to all of you what they want, we would all say a number of things. They want productivity, outcomes, and dedicated employees. They want all of those things. If we were to take a look at every employer there would be a mix of the things that each of the employers really want from us relative to those items. If you boil them all down, there is really a key element of what the employer wants in an employment relationship. They want somebody who can contribute more than they cost. Cost is not just money. Cost is time, energy, hassle. Cost can be a number of items, but an employer is looking for somebody who can contribute more than they cost. In many ways that’s actually the definition of an employment relationship where an employer is hiring someone who can contribute more than they cost.

Let’s take that extreme perspective of an employer and look at it, and then look at our next customer who is the participant (the person who we are helping find the employment). If we look from that person’s perspective and we say, “Okay, what is the person we are helping looking for in the employment process?” We can ask ourselves, “What does everyone look for in an employment process?” If we asked each of us, we would find that some of us are looking for security, some of us are looking for money, some of us are looking for enrichment, relationships, a chance to grow, a chance to advance. There is any number of those combinations, but for each one of us it would be a different mixture. It would be different levels of each item that are critical to us.

The boiling down of all those different items is that a lot of us know you don’t just work for money; I’m talking to people who understand that you just don’t work for the cash. That’s critical and we have to understand that about employment. How many of the people with whom we work have a house, have a place to eat, have a place to live? For some “yes” and some “no,” but the majority of them do. Very

few people are going to be looking for employment for just the cash. Sometimes we're told that, "I just need a job because I need the money." By the second paycheck, what don't I need anymore? I don't need the money anymore so now the core elements of the job kick in. We're all looking for a job where the rewards outweigh the bad stuff. As soon as the rewards outweigh the bad stuff we're willing to take the job, and as soon as the bad stuff outweighs the rewards we don't want the job anymore. We quit and that's the end of the relationship.

Just as with the employer, they want to hire somebody who can contribute more than they cost. When we start costing more than we contribute, there is no longer an employment relationship. So for two of our customers, that's the perspective. What does that third customer want? That would be our funding agents. Many times right about now people stand up and go, "They want miracles!" Well not quite miracles, but sometimes it seems that way. What they really want for us is to make customer one and customer two happy for the least amount of resources. If you look at all three of our customer groups and you say, "Geez, are all of those things in harmony?" The reality is that in some ways they are in direct competition with each other or they are in direct conflict. There is one place that all three of our customer needs come together—the quality job match. That's important because job match is the key element that we're looking for in job development. The definition of a good job match is all three of our customers needs are balanced. No one of our customer needs exceeds the others. It's kind of like the three legged stool. If one of the legs is too short, or one of the legs is too long, the reality is that you can hold it up with a lot of effort, but eventually it's going to fall. When it falls over and crashes, who gets burned? The reality is all three of customers get burned. We have to be very thoughtful of that because every time we're making a bad job match, we're burning all three of our customers.

To the other side of that, the one thing that we can continually say is the one thing that all three of our customers want from us is a quality job match. If our job development effort is not totally focused on a job match, it's hard to say we're wrong, but we could definitely say we're off-track or off-line. So the key to communicating through each of our customers is focusing on what they want. If each of our customers wants a good job match, then that is what we need to focus on. When we're talking to the employers, the key is to focus on the job match, to stay focused on the job match, and communicate job match. That is the only thing in employment that an employer is looking for from us. We want to make sure that we focus on that.

If we look at some of the things that we write in our brochures and our business cards, there are very confusing messages that we're sending that don't focus on job matching, don't communicate job matching. We have to look at that carefully and think about that and maybe wonder if we aren't a little bit off track.

I'm moving on to page five—let's talk about networking and communicating that message. Communicating the message—one of the things we want to do is think about networking and how we're getting to the employer and what we're saying. Networking is the key. If I were to ask you to finish the follow adage, "In business, it's not always what you know, it's _____." For every one of you who thought, "Who you know," you already know the success of job development. It's about building relationships. It's easy to look at that in a couple of stages. For our process I've broken up the stages of job development. Some people break them into more or less. For our discussions, four stages make the most sense. The four stages of job development are the initial contact, relationship building, the

proposal, and service after the match (SAM). We're going to primary focus on the first stage, the "initial contact" because we could make an argument that that's the most important stage of effective job development.

Over the next two sessions we're going to focus on relationship building and proposals. Let's just talk about networking and the concept of relations. Let's talk about networking a little bit. If you look at the bottom of page five you can see that we have identified four strategies on networking—"consumer formal," "consumer informal," "staff formal" (staff would be the people who are paid to do the work) and "staff informal." It's important that we develop all four of those avenues of building relationships and are utilizing all of those.

In fact, I like to visualize these strategies as doors. If you look on page six, you will see doors. Let's just talk about each of these doors. If you were trying to get into a building and you knew that the building had four doors, then you would walk up to the first door. If it was locked, you then would be faced with one of two decisions. One is you could walk around and try to get into some other doors, or you can stand there and beat on the door and when it stays locked you could whine, cry, and complain that you can't get into that door. Good common sense tells us to go to one of the other doors. The same thing happens with employers.

There are primarily four avenues, or doors, into an employment site, into an employer, into a relationship with a business. Many times I see job developers get stuck because they can't get into the first door. When in reality we have to realize that all four doors have to be used. In saying that we want to use all four doors, the reality is that some of the doors are more readily available. The four doors are "staff formal," "staff informal," "consumer formal," and "consumer informal."

Let's talk about each of those doors for a second and then we'll talk about which ones have the higher probability rate. Let's first talk about "consumer formal." The avenues into an employer that comes under "consumer formal" are things like resumés, applications, formal networking, and some types of job fairs. That's a formal mechanism by which someone is contacting the employer in the pursuit of employment. That's one door. We'll call that "consumer formal" and we'll talk about the strengths and weaknesses of that in a second.

The second door into employers—"consumer informal"—things like friend, family, neighbors, places that the person does business, people they know, people with whom they have worked. Those are all those connections that the consumer has that are informal. We'll talk again about the strengths and weakness of that approach, but that's the definition we're going to use for "consumer informal."

"Staff formal"—traditionally called "job development." I would call it "cold calls." That would be going out and making cold calls to employers to introduce ourselves. This might include letters and brochures.

Contacting the employer directly in a formal way. That would be "staff formal." Of course, "staff informal" would be things like friends, family, neighbors, places you do business, the same avenues as for the consumer are "staff informal."

I was doing a training in Indianapolis a few years ago and one participant said “I know where you’re going.” I said “Where am I going?” She said, “You don’t understand, I keep my personal life and my professional life separate and never the two shall meet.” Before I could say another word, another person in the other audience stood up and said, “Well, I don’t understand, you wouldn’t give your friends, families, or neighbors a good job match?” That says a lot, doesn’t it? It really said it all. If you’re not job matching, you should be really scared about contacting employers and you should be scared about your networks, but if you are job matching you’re actually doing people a favor. So it’s almost as if you are not job matching and you’re doing something with two people and if you are job matching we are doing something for them. That’s really a nice way to look at it because a lot more people feel comfortable. I do a lot of one-to-one work with staff. Going in and making contacts with employers and frequently we get the feedback, “Wow, you seem really confident doing that.” I am very confident from practice, of course, but I’m also confident because when I walk into an employer I know that I would never place a person there who was not a good job match. In doing that, I have nothing to be intimidated about in context of employers. I can be confident and feel good about that relationship because I am not going to make a job match there that I do not believe is a good job match. That helps!

What we’re going to cover in a few minutes will also help in that process. Those are the four doors into an employer—“consumer formal,” “consumer informal,” “staff formal,” and “staff informal.” Now, the reality is that not all four of those doors are open the same amount. There are a number of different studies that tell us this, but rather than just quoting a specific number, let’s just intuitively take a look at that. Probably the number one most frequent opportunity for people to get interviews is going to come through the “staff informal.” It’s not what you know, it’s who you know. That’s going to be the number one source that is going to get people opportunities for interviews, job trials, and the whole piece. That’s another important aspect because when we’re looking for jobs we’re not just looking for full-time jobs. We’re not just looking for part-time jobs, we’re looking for full-time job opportunities, and we’re looking for opportunities for internships, assessment opportunities, job trials, any kind of employment relationship that can occur. We should always be looking for those. Again—full time, part-time, internships, apprenticeships, job trials, job opportunities, assessments. We’re looking for all of those opportunities when we go into an employer.

Again, the number one source could be those informal contacts. The number two is “consumer informal.” “Staff informal” is number one; “consumer informal” is going to be number two. I don’t think we tap into that resource nearly enough. Number three on the “hit” parade will probably be “staff formal.” Number four, at a distant four, is going to be the “consumer formal.” Now that tells us a whole lot because I see a lot of people spending a lot of time going out with people to fill out applications. Not that some employers don’t screen by using applications, but the whole point of utilizing the four doors of employers is to not be screened out. I certainly don’t want to perpetrate the very things that screen people out. In fact, for many resumes and applications now, software reads that. People don’t even get to see it. If we’re in job development and we’re allowing ourselves to be screened out in that process, our job development is going to be less than optimal in many ways.

When we are using the formal, we’re maximizing some basic techniques that we’ll talk about in a few minutes to make sure that works. I would tell you that the “consumer formal” is probably the least effective. When I hear people say things to me like, “Rick, you don’t understand, I went out and filled

out 100 applications with a person.” How many jobs did you get? More often than not the answer is “Not many.” That’s right because again we’re not really facilitating job development. That’s much more of a job hope. When we talk about this, we talk about building a relationship.

When we get through one of the doors, when we finally do get into the employer we are faced with two interesting scenarios. One is we have to access the employer to see where they are. The second piece is that we have to make sure we say the right things to the employers so that we get to say more. I always like to use the analogy that job development is a little like dating. Again, I’m not an expert in dating and my wife could certainly tell you that. I do think that we can make a parallel today for understanding job development. For instance when you’re dating, it’s not a good idea on the first date to say, “You know, I’m really thinking about marriage, how about that marriage stuff?” or “Will you marry me?” It’s a little premature and kind of turns people off a little bit when you ask that. It’s probably also not a good idea on the first date to tell a person everything about yourself. If you do you rarely have date number two! So the reality is that job development has some parallel to dating and we probably don’t want to be proposing marriage prematurely and we also want to make sure we don’t tell everything about ourselves on date number one. The problem with the analogy of dating is that to some extent you went on a date with someone where there was a mutual attraction and we may not have that advantage. In a lot of ways we do because employers do need employees. If we think about job development like dating and we continue to use that perspective as we go forward it might help a little bit. We are trying in dating to build a relationship.

If you look on page eight, if you’re following along in the manual, let’s start talking about the stages of job development and “How to facilitate a good dating process,” and then what we’re looking for in dating. We want to make sure we are following a relationship and building the trust and trying to facilitate a good relationship because the better the relationship we build with the employer, the more likely they are going to take risks with us. We are looking to match somebody in a job that is going to need more intensive support. We need to make sure to make a relationship with an employer that allows us to do that. Again, the four stages of job development are the initial contact, relationship building, the proposal, and service after the match.

Let’s talk a little bit about the initial contact. That’s really where everything happens. We can set some goals for the initial contact. These are also listed on page eight. Let’s just talk about those. One of the first goals is to make sure we’re professional. Second is we want to be concise. The third component of the initial contact is that we need to make sure that we’re beginning to access the employer’s needs. The key component of job development is making sure that we understand our customers needs. Number four, which I think is the true measure of effective job development, is to be welcomed back. I think one of the goals of effective job development is to be welcomed back so we get to see the job and do more analysis. I am not sure how we think we can match someone to a job if we have never seen the job. It’s kind of an amusing thing to think about because frequently I hear people say to me, “Well, I already know that job.” Knowing the tasks of the job may be true, but many people don’t lose their job based on knowing the tasks of the job. Many people lose their job based on the social and cultural aspects of the job. There is no way to ascertain how we do a job or how a job was done without seeing it.

We could use a job title. For instance I often say to people, “What is your job title?” People tell me “I’m an employment consultant/facilitator” or “I’m a job coach” or whatever term. I hear people tell me “I’m a facilitator” for agency A. Then we’ll pick out somebody else and they are an employment facilitator in agency B. Now the person in agency A may be very successful in agency A, but when you put them over in agency B they are going to fail miserably. Now what causes that to happen? Same job title, same competency list, same job description! What makes a person successful in one culture and not in the other culture is. It’s exactly that! The way the culture operates. The way the agency does business! There are a lot of holes in matching without seeing the job. There is a lot of unnecessary confidence and some people would argue arrogance on our part. We believe to know something when we really don’t.

One of the key measures to effective job development is our ability to get in and see and assess the job. That tells us we’re saying the right thing to the employer in building the relationship. A key measure is that we’re getting to see the job. One of the elements is that ability to come back and do a comprehensive assessment. We might do a number of different levels of assessment of a job. A lot of that is a function of time and the way our organization is structured. The measure that is important is seeing the job. That tells you how effective you’ve been in your job development. A couple of feedback things we get from what we say to employers are if they are saying things to us like, “We have to run that up to corporate” or “I have to run that by the district manager,” or “We have not had a program like that before.” We need to attend to that message because again, we’re probably not selling job matches if we’re getting that kind of feedback. The reality is why would they have to run up to corporate to make a good job match or a job hire? We’re trying to make sure we’re building the relationship between the employer and the employee. Yes, we want to be there to support it, but we don’t want to become the barrier in that process.

I have heard “Well, we sold a program and it worked just fine” or “I didn’t sell a program.” I was actually in the office of a company that hired me to do some consulting with them because they were struggling with their job matches and their placements. I was sitting in the office of the director when she took a call and it was a local business that had a couple of stores in the area. I could hear the person screaming something that had happened and that “I’m firing your whole program, take all five or your people out of my stores.” She hung up and of course she was upset and I said to her, “See, that’s one of the disadvantages of selling a program. If somebody messes up, they don’t get fired, your whole program gets fired.” She said to me, “I didn’t sell it as a program.” She may not have thought she did and she may not have intended to, but by the very feedback we got from the employer, the employer perceived it as a program and treated it as a program. It’s not always what we say or what we think we say, we have to attend very carefully to the feedback that we’re getting from the employer and listen to that so that’s what is going to make us better at our jobs. That’s what is going to make us truly understand the message that we’re sending. We’re sending messages that we’re not intending to send.

A classic example of sending a message we’re not intending to send is this. You sit down at a diner or something and you’re just sitting there and there are people on both sides of you and you start talking to the person next to you. What two questions are they going to ask you?” The two questions they are going to ask you are “Who are you?” and “What do you do?” That’s very much our society. Frequently the person will say, “My name is such-and-such, I help people with disabilities get jobs.” All of a sudden the feedback that person gets is “Ohhhh... aren’t you special, you must be very patient,

aren't you wonderful?" The person says, "It makes me frustrated when they say that to me." We've all heard that! So I say, "Listen, what did you just say?" You sent two contradicting messages. You didn't say that you help people get jobs, but you said "I help people with disabilities get jobs." Disability to an employer means inability to do critical vocational functions of the job. The reality is that we're sending contradictory information. It's not that we shouldn't tell a person about another person's vocational employment. A lot of people when we start saying this say, "Well you're going to hide the disability." Not a bit! But I do know I have no right to disclose someone's diagnosis. I have no right to do that! I'm not a physician and I'm not qualified to do that. So disclosing someone's diagnosis is a pretty shaky strategy, but I do know that with their permission I have the ability to disclose their vocational barriers.

Let's talk more about that as we talk about what we say to employers. When we get through one of those four doors, and it really doesn't matter which of the four doors we get through—informal, staff informal, staff formal, consumer formal, consumer informal. We get through one of those doors and we actually come face to face with the employer, we get a chance to talk to them, that's the initial contact. What do we say during that magic initial contact? A lot of people ask me, "How long should the initial contact be?" I think that if it's more than 10-15 minutes we are pushing our luck. Probably that's more than enough. 10-15 minutes should be enough to build the initial contact and get us welcomed back. You have a wonderful opportunity to look at the job right then, good, but I would actually treat looking at the job as a second contact. What I would really want to do is make sure is that in the initial contact I answer two questions. The two questions that we have to be able to clearly and concisely answer are "Who are you?" and "What do you want?" When somebody knocks on your door or calls you on the phone, what two questions come out of your head right away? "Who are you?" and "What do you want?"

The key for successful job development is to be able to answer those two questions. Now when we do some of these activities, sometimes when I'm able to do this in a classroom we do this as an activity and I have people stand up and talk about it. I will actually have them pre-rehearse this and I'll play the employer/employee and I'll ask them the hard questions. That's not a bad technique for you to use with your co-workers and people who are willing to help you. I would ask the hard questions because again we will get bombarded with a number of hard questions from employers and we want to be prepared to answer those. We want to be fluent and have a good vision of who we are and what we want. Again, we don't want to sit in front of an employer and go "Uh uh uh, I haven't thought of that." You want to make sure to be clear and ready to go.

An activity that you might just take a second to do right now is think about what you would say. I want you to then compare that later with what we've said. I am going to show you a technique today that is pretty effective. There are some significant strengths to it, perfect no, but pretty darn good. If you don't have a technique it might be one that would be effective for you. If you have a perfect technique and you're getting all the jobs you can handle then it's good to listen to, but you can continue with your present strategy. If you're not having that kind of success, then maybe you want to try to model some of the techniques.

If we're answering the questions, "Who are you?" and "What do you want?" we have got to realize that the employer is expecting us to broadcast on one radio station. I don't know if you realized this,

but all employers are only going to listen to one radio station. For those of you who know what that radio station is, fantastic! For those of you who are going, “Geez, what radio station is that?” Well, that’s good because you should know that, but the radio station that all employers listen to is WIIFM. It’s an FM station. That radio station is “What Is In It For Me?” The employer is always going to be listening to “What Is In It For Me?” If we’re not able to answer that question, we’re off track. I want to make sure we’re doing that.

The other question that comes up is the disclosure issue. What do we say about disclosure? It’s a very interesting thing because I frequently hear people talking about disabilities, “Geez, I’m not sure. . . . does everyone with a cognitive impairment have the exact same cognitive impairment, mental illness, the same manifestations?” We’re very frustrated when employers stereotype, but we’re frequently able to do that because sometimes I think we do that just based on the culture. There are two worlds we have to work in. We have to work in the world of the employer and we have to work in the world of human services. Those worlds are different. It’s like standing on the Canadian border and when you first walk across it the terrain doesn’t look too different, but the rules do change when you walk across the border.

We sit around in IEP’s, IWRP’s, ITP’s, ISP’s, all the P’s and we talk about what is wrong with each other. Going out to an employer and talking about a person’s diagnosis is not okay there, we want to talk about their ability to be a contributing member to that workforce and how they match the job. A lot of people say—“You’re going to hide their disability.” It’s not so much about hiding it during the initial contact; I just don’t know who is going to work there. I may have picked that employer because I was looking for work for a certain person or a group of people, but until I have actually looked at the job and done an analysis of the job to see if there is a job match I don’t know that that person is going to work there, so why would I be presenting that person to the employer before I knew that?

It’s as if I look at one of you and say, “Okay, I bet you can’t throw a fastball 90 mph and you probably don’t have a good curveball.” You are profoundly disabled as a major league pitcher! So if I’m helping people find a job and I have some major league baseball team that’s looking for major league pitchers, the question is, do I say “I have all these potential candidates, and then I have this profoundly disabled person.” You would laugh and say, “Of course, you wouldn’t mention that person.” Of course you wouldn’t, because they are not a match to that job. When you make that initial contact with the employer we need to make sure we’re not saying something silly like that.

Let’s talk about what we do say when we walk into the door of an employer. One of the questions that is going to come up is, “Who are you and what do you want?” I like utilizing a technique that sounds like this to answer that question. “Hi, my name is Rick McAllister and I work for _____ agency. We’re an employment training service here in the area. It’s very important that I understand your employment and training needs so I can better prepare the people with whom I’m working to be good candidates in the job market.” So you see how that’s broadcasting on WIIFM? Employers are looking for as many good people in a job market as they can possibly get. Leading off with that line is, “My name is Rick McAllister, I’m employment/training here in the area” – I’m telling them who I am and what I want. “It’s very important that I understand your employment and training needs so I can better prepare the people with whom I’m working to be good candidates in the job market”—see I’m not proposing marriage. I’m not saying I have somebody for that job yet. All I’m saying is that we can potentially do business. I don’t say we can do business, I’m not saying I can save you money, because

I don't know any of that yet. I do know that they want good candidates in the job market and I do know if I leave here today and the only thing that I leave with is understanding their employment and training, I'm in a much better place.

Then we get questions. One is, "How much do you charge?" A lot of people go into all the elements of their agency (we're funded by the state, we're funded my grants, etc). I'm not sure employers are that concerned about that. I like to answer that question very basically with we're paid through client fees. Employers only want to know how much it's going to cost me. So when they say, "How much do you charge?" We say, "We are paid through client fees." Then the million dollar question comes—I know your agency, do you work with people with disabilities? Here is where a lot of people freeze. The reality is to give a very basic straight-forward answer because we have nothing to hide. The answer is, "Yes"—STOP! A lot of people want to keep going, but it's not necessary. Aren't we going over the line when we go into all of that stuff too early? We really might be.

In the initial contact we want to answer who we are and we want to say we work with people who have disabilities. A lot of times they say, "What kind?" That gives us a perfect opportunity to say job matching. Job matching is always the right answer. Here is the nice way to say job matching to that question. So do you work with people with disabilities? Yes! What kind? Well, I really don't know which person we're talking about. I'd be glad to tell you how they match up to the job, but I don't even know who we'd be talking about yet because we haven't seen any of the jobs. I don't know who to talk about. Again, that's a nice way of saying—"Geez, I wouldn't be hiding anything from you," but then again, why would I want to talk about anyone who might not be the right candidate here? Again, it's not about hiding it, it's much more talking about job matches and people's abilities to perform critical vocational functions of the job and then presenting that. After we have had that discussion, you'd be surprised. This is what I tell people, "Try it for five times, honestly." I guarantee you won't go back. You'll see a different response from employers. Then you have to be able to ask them a couple of questions. What are you looking for in a quality candidate? Where are you getting those people?

The next questions are—When you hire people, how do you train them and what's good about it, and what could be better? Those are questions that we want to be asking. After we've asked those questions, it's legitimate to say, "Geez, I know job descriptions are not all they are cracked up to be. I have this tool I use called the Job Tool Inventory which allows me to get a picture of the job and I would very much like to look at it and pick a job based on the hierarchy. Now we've covered the basics of the initial contact during this first session. In a second I'm going to open this up to questions. I want to make sure that we can and will cover this more over the next two sessions. I've given you the first packet. Lynda are you ready to open it up to questions?

Lynda Leach: Yes I am. If you have a questions please use the *6 keys and ask your question.

Caller: Can questions to the employer be sent to me? I jotted down one—What are you looking for in a job candidate? The second one was—Where do you look or where do you market for the employers?

Rick McAllister: No—Where do you get those people? Where are you hiring? An employer might say to you, "I get all my candidates through the vocational technical college placement office." Well,

that's where they are getting folks from and I would want to know what is good about it and what would make it better.

Caller: Are they found somewhere online? There were a couple of questions I was interested in using. One of them was—Who are you? You had a paragraph.

Rick McAllister: Let me give you those two again. The first part of it, “My name is Rick McAllister and the company I work with is such and such”, and then the key is “We’re an employment training service here in the area. It’s very important that I understand your employment and training needs so I can better prepare the people I am working with to be good candidates in the job market. Some people say, “Well I don’t want to surprise them and bring a person over.” Don’t worry! When we talk about proposals, we would never send someone over to an employer who we haven’t already given a proposal about the supports they are going to need. So when we talk next session about proposals there won’t be surprises. I know you weren’t asking that question, but a lot of people do. But, do you work with people with disabilities? The questions we want to ask are—What do you look for in a quality employee? We are looking for attributes in a quality employee. The second part of that is we’d ask them what’s good about that and how they find that to be so powerful.

Then we’d ask them where they get the candidates that they presently hire. Where do you get people from right now? You can hear a lot of employers who will tell you what’s good about that and they’ll say “We’ve been doing that a long time.” Then we ask, “What could make it better?” They are all going to give you the same answer—I would like that process to be more informed about what I need. They’ll say that in a number of different ways, but that’s what they really mean. You’ll hear it. So, what do you look for in a quality employee and where are those people from right now? What’s good about it and what could make it better—which are just follow up questions to it.

The next question is—when you hire somebody, how do you train them? That tells us a lot about their culture. If they have a co-worker do the training, that can be good, but that can also be like telephone training. You ever play the game telephone where people talk all the way around the room? That’s a dangerous culture. Having a really good training department tells us some things about their culture. So we’re beginning to assess them by knowing that and these questions start facilitating that. The good thing is that they are also consistent with what we originally said in our first answer. It’s important we understand your employment and training techniques. So have consistency through your messages, which is a key part. So did you get those? If you need them written again, just e-mail Lynda and I will send them to you right now.

Lynda Leach: Rick, I have an e-mail question from someone in Minnesota. They want to know—When you don’t have the time to be with clients for an extended period of time, how do you know if it will be a good job match?

Rick McAllister: Well, two issues—One is that if you can’t be with a client for an extended period of time, you have to be very good at procuring that information from a number of sources. You have to be able to pull out the key indicators of that person from previous people who have worked with them, previous reports, and again you can’t believe everything you read. The key is to make sure we’re carving out that information. That’s also why it’s critical to start building an individual skills inventory, the

person, their vocational skills and abilities. To be honest with you, if we don't have that, then we are in jeopardy of making a bad job match. To some extent that may indicate to me that my first match with that person may not be a permanent match.

I may say to the employer, "Geez, I really don't know this person that well yet. I might be looking for somebody where we could do a job trial or a job tryout for a period of time because I'm pretty uncomfortable matching people until I have a pretty good understanding of them." That doesn't mean I wouldn't help a person find a job. All of the things I am talking about are applicable. If we're going to teach the person to find a job for themselves we'd use these same techniques, but I want to be very careful if I'm the broker of the match that I know both the person and the job.

Lynda Leach: Will you give everyone your e-mail address.

Rick McAllister: It's mcallinc@aol.com.

Lynda Leach: Now, we have a few more minutes for questions.

Caller: If you're approaching a business with a candidate in mind and they have a bachelor's degree and the employer asks you the question, "Why isn't this person job developing on their own if they have a bachelor's degree?" Do you have any feedback on how to respond to a question like that?

Rick McAllister: Well sure! I'm going to ask you a very important question. I can understand the expectation that you would think an employer would ask you that, but I'd be very surprised if an employer actually asked you that. Finding a job and job service agencies are very common. They are very much a part of the business world. So the reality is that an employer is not going to be that nervous if you sell yourself as an employment training agency. You're out looking for people and being paid through client services. That's the whole industry. So whether the person has a bachelor's degree, a master's degree, a PhD, not a high school education—I'm not sure their educational background is critical for really doing job matching and building relations with employers. See, if we've sold ourselves as an agency we're going to have some weird things happen to us, but if we're using the techniques that we're talking about that question really isn't going to become an issue because if an employer does say to me, "Why are you job developing for them?" I say "Because they're paying me to find them jobs." Finding a job is the work all in itself. Employment agencies do that, so if we're an employment and training agency it's not going to be surprising to an employer that we're looking for jobs for people. To some extent that question becomes more of a perspective on our part than it does probably a legitimate concern of employers. If we're selling ourselves to something else, we're going to run into a whole bunch of trouble and then maybe then it's a harder question. Does that answer your question?

Caller: I appreciate that! Thank you!

Lynda Leach: Any other quick questions? Rick, I just got one via e-mail. I think you just have covered it, but what do you say when the employer asks right off the bat, "Why are you asking me about this and not the person who would be applying for the job?"

Rick McAllister: Again, I would come right up to them and start with that. Remember, when I got in there and say, “Hi, My name is Rick McAllister and I’m in employment and training service here in the area.” Right away they already know I’m in the business of getting people jobs. That’s what employment and training services do! So again, they are not going to think that there is any issue here. Why am I asking? Remember—a lot of people get confused about the term “individualized job development.” Should I do individualized or generic? The answer is yes! We always have to do all of them. Individualized means that we match a person. Generic that we are always collecting information about people and jobs. Very early in the job process, we’re not seeking a particular person, so it’s going to be very rare that employers are going to ask that question if we’re really doing that job development process. See how everything gets back to those two magic questions—Who are we and what do we want? Things get out of sequence when we don’t answer these questions up front.

Lynda Leach: I have put the introduction you mentioned on our website. “Hi my name is etc. . . .” Tomorrow it will be on the archive webpage. I just want to remind everyone that Rick’s second presentation is on July 8th—*Effective Proposals to Employers*. I hope you can join us for that too! Rick I’d like to thank you again for a great presentation and we look forward to the next two. Thanks everybody for being on. Have a great day!