

Our Approach To Job Development: It's Who You Know

People supported by LiveWorkPlay rarely obtain jobs through traditional processes like searching the help want ads, submitting resumes, completing on-line applications, going to interviews as a stranger to the employer, or attending job fairs.

Many people, with or without disabilities, get job leads or invitations to interviews through their relationships with others. Many people with disabilities have limited social relationships to help leverage these types of connections, so that is a gap that LiveWorkPlay helps fill.

We use a social capital approach: developing and utilizing employment networks consisting of employment champions, professional trade associations, service clubs, volunteers, staff, family members, and job seekers themselves in order to meet and work with potential employers to create employment opportunities customized to the skills and interests of our job seekers.

Traditional methods for pursuing employment tend to present serious barriers to people with intellectual disabilities and/or autism. This includes for example expectations for levels of literacy and/or verbal interaction and/or employment experience that cannot be met or cannot be easily met by the typical job-seeker that comes to us through ODSP Employment Supports.

The LiveWorkPlay Job Development process does not focus on filing out applications and pursuing traditional interview opportunities. Our approach is to establish a relationship that moves our job-seekers beyond these initial barriers. If an employer is interested in a relationship with LiveWorkPlay to help diversify their workplace by employing people with intellectual disabilities and/or autism, but nevertheless requires these traditional processes to be completed, we will of course support this when there is potential for one of our candidates.

LiveWorkPlay only supports authentic employment. This means the job is part of an integrated workplace (workers with and without disabilities working alongside each other at minimum wage or better).

Job Creation and Customization

Like other leading employment supports providers who support people with intellectual disabilities and/or autism, LiveWorkPlay is focused on creating job opportunities instead of competing with the broad pool of public job-seekers. LiveWorkPlay sees better long-term employment outcomes when we use our relationship with employers to negotiate and customize job descriptions and tasks that mutually benefit the employee and the employer.

Highlighting job-seeker skills and interest – not only what they have coming into the job but what potential they possess to grow within the workplace by learning new skills that match employer needs – is critical. We look for opportunities that might match the job seeker's skills and to understand unmet employer needs, and ideally, we partner with employers to create a job that benefits both the employer and best matches the skills of a job seeker.

A mostly unsuccessful traditional approach to employment for this population focuses on entry retail and restaurant positions. These are often a mismatch for our job-seekers and positions them to compete with an endless supply of other job-seekers. We have found success with matching our candidates to employer needs in many corporate and government office environments with impressive results for all concerned. Whether big or small, the type of workplace and their attitude towards diversity and inclusion is often what is most important.