Discovering Personal Genius™

Going Where the Career Makes Sense

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The Challenge

Creating lasting satisfying, person-directed, employment beyond the confines of conventional job development
Two Rules to Follow

Rule Number One

It’s Always About the Job Seeker
Rule Number Two

Never Break
Rule Number One!

4 Phases of Conventional Employment

- Assessment/Evaluation
- Job Development
- Job Coaching and Other Employment Supports
- Ongoing Support

Each represents a discrete step with little or no relationship to the other steps.
The Phases of Individualized Employment

I. Discovering Personal Genius
II. Cultivating Employment Opportunities
III. Engaging Employment Supports
IV. Ongoing Support and Career Development

Individualized Employment Logic Model

- Discovering Personal Genius
- Job Development
- Career Sustainability
- Worksite Support

Note: These may be Non-Sequential Considerations
Economic empowerment, financial literacy, financial security, and asset development cannot happen without paid work. Bringing employment and poverty to the center of our conversation is an antidote to the “impoverishment of expectations” which most often leaves individuals with significant disabilities dependent on systems with fragile futures.

Russell Sickles

Activity - Your First Jobs

- Write down the first three jobs you had.
- How did you get those jobs?
- What was the benefit you brought to the employer?
- Did you receive any formal or informal training?
- Describe the supervision you received.
- What did you learn from your employer, co-workers, and the work experience in general?
- Would you hire your younger self today if you were the employer?
A set of tools and strategies, resulting in positive employment opportunities by matching a job seeker’s interests, skills, and ideal conditions of employment with the identified needs of an employer or community.
Discovering Personal Genius™

Answers the basic question: “Who are you?”

DPG identifies 3 Vocational Themes for Each Individual

Each Theme generates a List of 20 places in the community where the Career Makes Sense

Informational Interviews and Paid Work Experiences narrow the targets for Job Development

Traditional Assessment

Standard Information

3 Vocational Goals
A Different Approach

Common Myths About Discovery

- We do Discovery from our center
- Discovery requires large team cooperation
- Discovery takes too much time
- No one will pay us to do Discovery
- It’s for folks who are ‘ready’ for competitive employment
- It’s for folks who aren't able to be competitively employed
Discovering Personal Genius
Hanging Out With Intent

- Assistance NOT Assessment
- Inventory real environments
- Do not rely on data from segregated environments
- One place leads to another
- One person leads to another (Family, Acquaintances, Friends, Professionals, Strangers, etc.)

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Discovery

- Discovery is a structured Process
- We are not here to ask “What job or business would be best?”
- The more folks involved, the more diversity of activities & locations
- The more activities & locations, the more diversity of thought
- The best way to get a great idea is to get lots of ideas
POSSIBLE EMPLOYMENT OUTCOMES:

- Wage Employment
  - Job Carving
  - Job Creation
  - Resource Ownership
- Microenterprise/Self-Employment
- Business within a Business

Discovering Personal Genius™

Divining Vocational Themes™
Personal Profile
Establishing Financial Goals
Exploitable Skills
Ideal Conditions of Employment
Review
Discovering Personal Genius™

- How much do you need to earn for:
  - Housing
  - Transportation
  - Living expenses
  - Other
  - WIPA
- Do you receive government benefits?
- Does employment affect those benefits?
- Are there planning resources available?
- If applicable, request a benefits analysis

The Task at Hand

- Building a Positive Vocational Profile
- Learning about interests and supporting skills
- Determining the Ideal Conditions of Employment
- Divining the Vocational Themes
- Creating the Lists of Twenty™
- Job Development
**Statements**

- DPG is not used to find a “dream job”
- DPG is focused on getting people into the work arena as quickly as possible
- People can begin to sculpt a career
- DPG is time limited, quick paced and goal oriented

**Dream Jobs or Nightmares?**

- Dream jobs are very unique and rare.
- Dream jobs assume very few vocational interests
- Dream jobs suggest one time career placement
- The experience and talents of professionals limit employment possibilities
- There are unlimited ways to make a living
- Dream jobs reinforce the idea that people with significant disabilities are one-dimensional
**Targets**

- Solid outcome of work that fits the individual and provides opportunities for personal and professional growth
- Employment is ecologically relevant
- Benefits both employer and employee
- Generally developed without regard to the “labor market”

**Businesses by Number of Employees**

**34,461,500 Companies with Fewer than 500 Employees**

- Total Companies: 34,500,000
- Single Owner: 22,000,000
- 1 to 19 Employees: 11,000,000
- 500+ Employees: 38,500

US Census, Kaufmann Foundation, CFED, 2010-2012
Discovery Staging Record™
Your Roadmap to Employment

Process

✓ Seven basic stages
✓ 20 – 65 hours
✓ 6 – 8 weeks
✓ Formulate descriptive paragraphs
✓ Basic question: “Who is this individual?”
✓ 3 solid Vocational Themes™
Stages of DPG

1. Home and Neighborhood Observation
2. Interviewing Others
3. Skills and Ecological Fit
4. Review
5. Vocational Themes
6. Descriptive Narrative (Vocational Profile)
7. Career/Business Development Plan

Home & Neighborhood Observation

✓ Initial Interview
✓ Home Observation (hobbies/room/belongings)
✓ Tasks/Chores
✓ Neighborhood Mapping
✓ Others to Interview
✓ Tasks to Observe
**Smooth Listening**

- A conversation not an interrogation
- Probe and then listen
- Move from the smooth talker to the smooth listener

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**No Question Marks?**

- “Tell me about yourself.”
- “Tell me about Bob.”
- Do not interrupt the flow
- A little feedback may derail the conversation
- Inconspicuously jot down relevant info and come back to it later
**Try to learn:**

- Where is this person most at ease?
- When the person is most in-flow or engaged and by what people or activities
- What supports are needed in particular situations and how are they best delivered
- Situations and environments to be avoided
- Personal skills, talents and interests

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**If the conversation stalls....**

- Tell me about chores and tasks at home
- Tell me about routine and special family activities and traditions
- Family vacations & holiday celebrations
- Major life events that influenced....
- Events or activities that you look forward to
- Techniques for teaching something new
- Favorite people (teachers, clergy, relatives, etc.)
### Others to Be Interviewed

- Who knows the job seeker well?
- Relationships that matter & that help us get ideas
  - Family
  - Friends
  - Teachers
  - Neighbors
  - Spiritual Leaders
- Wrap up in next two weeks (along with most of next stage)
- Doesn’t have to be in-person
- Avoid leading questions.

### Skills & Ecological Fit

- Ecological Fit = Ideal Conditions of Employment
- Verify Skills in 3-5 areas - take photos/video
- Note Supports needed and other valuable info regarding ideal conditions of employment
- Emerging Themes
- Environments to Avoid?
Review

- Review the information you have collected
- Write it down!
- Type it into the Discovery Staging Record™
- Share it with the individual, family, co-workers or Discovery Team
- Does this capture the essence of the job seeker?
- Transfer information to the VR Vocational Profile

UNDERSTANDING THE ROLE OF VOCATIONAL THEMES IN DISCOVERY & CREATIVE JOB DEVELOPMENT
DPG Flow...

- Home & Neighborhood Visits (Smooth Listening)
- Interviewing Others
- Skill & Task Observation in Multiple Environments
- Informational Interviews used in DPG & Job Development
- “Divining” the Vocational Themes
- Discovery Staging Record (DSR) or Voc Profile
- Career Plan Development with the Lists of 20

The Crux of DPG

- When & Where you are In Flow
- When & Where your support needs are highest
- The people who know you best
- Interests & Tasks that engage you
- Resident and Emerging Skills
- How you learn new Skills
- Where best to observe these Skills & Tasks being performed
**Name Those Jobs**

- A person likes Dogs
- A person enjoys Music
- A person is interested in Cars
- A person likes working on the Janitor Crew
- The person is regularly seen studying a basic Math Workbook
- How many jobs can we think of?

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**Name Those Places Where the Theme Makes Sense**

- Theme: Animals
- Theme: Entertainment or Music
- Theme: Transportation
- Theme: Cleanliness
- Theme: Mathematics
- How many places can we think of?
- Mix a person’s Themes and what do you Get?

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Divining Vocational Themes

Themes are NOT Job Descriptions
Themes are Big and Hold Many, Many Jobs
Themes Open up the Possibilities Even in the Smallest Communities

Divining Vocational Themes: Activities

Discovery Activities Confirm & Investigate Skills & Tasks
Many can be done around the home or community
An Activity is ACTIVE. The person must be engaged; a picture can likely be taken (and used for a Portfolio!)
For Work Trials Use Non-Profits instead of For-Profits if possible...
Try an Activity or two in unfamiliar locations; performing unfamiliar (but related) tasks...
Divining Vocational Themes

Why Three? One isn’t enough. If we have two and throw one out, we’re back to one....

Themes are Imprecise but provide guidance for DPG activities & career development

Themes are Not The Sum Total of Skills, Tasks, Attributes, or Interests... but they do make the Theme stronger

Divining Vocational Themes: Tasks

A Task is a series of actions that complete a process
(Re-stringing a guitar involves multiple actions & skills)

Pay attention to level of Competence
Best teaching & Support Strategies
Information Processing
Try new but related tasks....

Be thinking “Where else do these or similar tasks make sense?”
**Skills**

Re-stringing a guitar entails many Skills:
- Removing the old strings
  - Loosening each tuner
  - Removing the pins
  - Discarding the old strings
- Inserting each new string and setting the pin
- Threading each new string into the tuning post
- Tightening each string
  - Initial tightening
- Using/reading a tuner
  - Tightening to tune

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**Divining Vocational Themes: Interests**

- Interests are important, but not Nearly Enough for Job Development: Skills & Tasks Rule!
- Interests help Skill/Task acquisition & retention
- Mutual Interests aid in Job Development & Worksite Inclusion (we hire and help others who like what we like)
- Pair Interests with Skills & Tasks in the right Environment
- Evidence of self-determined Interests can be hard to come by; many Interests have been chosen by Others (Cleaning Toilets; Bowling on Saturday night)
Divining Vocational Themes: Personal Attributes

- Personality & Behavioral Characteristics
- Don’t speculate regarding Motivation (or anything else)
- Attributes Inform work Conditions & Cultural fit
- Common Attributes: Outgoing or Shy, Quiet or Talkative, Manner of Dress (if personal choice is involved), Sense of Humor, Punctuality
- There’s a place for Everyone

Divining Vocational Themes: Conditions of Employment/Culture

- Considerations for good Worksite Fit
- Conditions & Cultural Considerations don’t change a Theme, they help Discern Which Places are the best Match
- Conditions may include: Work Hours, Use of particular Skills or Performance of Specific Tasks, Pay, Intensity of Supervision...
- Work Culture may include: Dress, Humor, Muscles or Brains...
Robert Putnam defines Social Capital as "the social networks and the norms of trustworthiness and reciprocity that arise from them."

"The goodwill and reciprocity inherent in relationships"

Knowing others and sharing their interests, neighborhoods, cultures, ideals and values

Social Capital is the underlayment of networking – purposeful connection to others for mutual gain
Ideal Conditions of Employment

- Interests
- Preferences
- Contributions
- Environment
- Social Capital
- Skills/Talents/Knowledge
- Time/Schedule
- Location
- Transportation
- Tools
- Hygiene
- Social Norms
- People
- Cultural Bias

Discovery Visits (Activities)

* Opportunities to ACTIVELY explore skills/interests in new ways
  - Occur in community
  - Reveal more about skills and interests
  - Facilitates community connections
  - Enhances business team development
  - Adds to emerging Themes
**DPG Visits**

- Identify at least 5 places for DPG visits
- Goal: Observe the person doing activities that give context to their interests, talents, & skills
- Build on what was learned in interviews and during the observations
- Schedule follow-up activities in new contexts based on what was learned
  - Team members are great resource

**Discovery Observations**

- As you complete the activities, record observations in the DPG Staging Record
- Identify:
  - What the activity was
  - The location
  - What tasks were performed/observed
  - What supports were required (who provided, and how)
Analyzing the Discovery Observations

- After all visits are complete, review and:
  - Summarize supports needed during activities
  - List environments to be avoided (and why)
  - Identify places, activities, & skills that require more exploration
  - Determine when/where these will be explored and who is responsible
  - Complete follow-up activities & reports

- Most effective as a team process
### Vocational Themes

- Establish Themes
- Verify Themes: List businesses (minimum 3)
- Test Themes
- Find the Nerds: These become theme testing informational interviews
- Get help, brainstorm ideas, the more ideas the better.
- Avoid the obvious, avoid the ‘everybody’ simplicity.
- Again, have fun!

### Developing a Vocational Profile

- Pursue interests and skills revealed by DPG
- More ecological and individualized method
- Create unique opportunities
- Interests, Talents and Skills Inventory
- “Going where the career makes sense.”
Relationship Mapping

- Identify people known to the job seeker
- Identify people known to the Team who know the community
- Create a Community Inventory of both Formal & Informal Associational Life
- Start visiting places & people of Relevance

Developing A Plan

- Discovery should lead to a solid Profile that captures the essence of the individual:
- What Works & What Doesn’t (How will you know if things don’t work until you’ve tried them?)
- Best Settings; Support Needs; Talents
- What Home is like; demonstrations of chores & hobby tasks, revealed Interests, the impact of disability….
- What other things we need to observe or investigate both formally & informally
Going Where the Career Makes Sense

As a Course of Action evolves (using the Team Process), visiting others who have the same interests is often a valuable step in collecting possible career information.

As the Personal Narrative is revealed:

Note Complexities and Contradictions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Personal Life</th>
<th>Professional Life (The 20% that’s observable)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Avoids social situations</td>
<td>People Person</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Doesn’t like to be around large groups of people</td>
<td>Public Figure</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Small group of close friends</td>
<td>Future Oriented</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sensitive and emotional</td>
<td>Stoic and logical</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Big ego</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Particular and Orderly</td>
<td>Risk-taker</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Likes complexity</td>
<td>Change agent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Doesn’t like a lot of change</td>
<td>Keep it simple</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Going Where the Career Makes Sense

As the Personal Narrative is revealed:

- In Context, Sometimes What some Consider Flaws are Strong Points
- Cashier in local Grocery store may be totally annoying to you, but not to others...
- You must set your values, beliefs and preferences aside
- Remember Rule #1

The Transition from DPG to Job Development

Final Vocational Themes Formulation
   Informational Interviews...

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Formal Job Development

↑ Work Trials
   Unsolicited Employment Offers...
Going Where the Career Makes Sense

As the Personal Narrative is revealed:

- Make a list of places where people with similar interests work or gather
- Make appointments (if formal sites such as workplace)
- Go observe, participate, conduct informational interviews
- Gather information on teachable skills, evolving interests, probable contributions, opportunities (resource ownership), natural supports....

Back to the Plan

- At this time we can begin to ask about possible business or wage job ideas.
- Design a personal portfolio or resume
- Use the Job Seeker’s Relationship Map
- Throw out the 1st; The Path of Least Resistance
- Avoid the 5 Jobs most stereotypical jobs
  - food, filth, flowers, filing, and fetching
- Develop a list of potential employers or products & services for a Small Business

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- *Best Practice Still Entails:*
- Quality Job or Business Development with the Person
- Job Analysis & Discrete Task Analysis
- A Training Plan for their new Employee
- Natural Support Analysis
- A Consultative Approach

More Background

✓ Interests breed personal engagement
✓ Many of us have interests but lack skills
✓ Matching preferred work to existing and teachable skills is crucial to success
✓ Systematic instruction, workplace supports and technology are keys
The Futility of Job Divining

- We only understand a few jobs and have experience in a few types of businesses
- Job samples represent a small segment of what goes on behind the scenes
- Co-workers and supervisors have a tremendous and unique influence on skill development and success
- Job descriptions may contain tasks irrelevant to the person’s skills or interests
- There are unlimited ways to make a living in the world

Finding the Jobs Behind the Jobs

- DPG illuminates vocational themes that allow for a broad collection of possible jobs.
- Most jobs are unknown/unseen to the public
- Connect by shared interests
- CE circumvents the HR filter – connects directly to the business owner or manager
- Employers are always hiring
- Skills matter
Employment Progression

- Discovering Personal Genius
- Creating the Lists of 20
- Informational Interviews
- Employment Development
- Systematic Instruction
- Continued Support (Assistance)

What about the Labor Market?

- Who cares!
- Much employment occurs in less obvious places and businesses.
- We are not reacting to the labor market, we are creating a labor market.
- Growth and Recession have not affected or changed the employment rate for people with disabilities.
Informational Interviews

- Brief interviews OR short (1/2 day) work experiences
- Opportunity to learn more about business, industry, environment, culture, etc.
- Provide hands-on experience with new tasks related to areas of interest
- Allow connections to emerge

Why Informational Interviews?

- Helps refine Themes and Lists of 20
- Reveals Skills and Tasks found in workplaces
- Reveals Ideal Conditions of Employment
- Warms up to Job Development
- Helps avoid thinking in Job Descriptions
- Casual way to create professional relationships
- Increases Social Capital for the Job Seeker
The Informational Interview

- Ask for advice and listen
  - Questions to ask
- Take notes
- Get as many leads as possible
- Names, email addresses, phone numbers
- Determine the next steps
  - Change your list of 20 to reflect advice
  - Recognize a good fit (i.e. workplace culture, work environment, etc.)
  - Follow through with leads
  - Remember rejection happens more often than not; don’t give up

SMOOTH LISTENING AND BEING “NAÏVE”

- Remember: We are not the experts – they are
- We are merely looking for advice
- Do not use personal stories or talk about yourself or what you do
- Ask questions with an emphasis on the job seeker (best if job seeker asks the questions)
- “What advice would you have for someone trying to start out in your field?”
Language and Content

- Focus on the strengths, abilities, and skills of the job seeker
- “Job Seeker” not Client, Consumer, Participant, Low and High Functioning, etc.
- Avoid Job Coach, Job Developer, and other Human Services jargon
- Include shared interests
- Smooth Listening
Critical Review

• What led you to that place or business?
• How did it make sense for the job seeker?
  • Themes
  • Ideal Conditions of Employment
  • Present skill or competency
• How did you contact the business?
  • What did you say?
  • How did you introduce yourself?
  • How did you introduce the job seeker?
• What went well?
• What problems/concerns arose?
• How did job seeker/employer respond?
• What would you change?

10 Things I Wish I’d Known Before Starting Discovery

1) Work with one person at a time
2) Avoid the word “Interview” with IDT
3) Be patient and persistent
4) Helpful to ‘name-drop’
5) Cold calling can be difficult; it gets easier
6) Skills verification is very important
7) Create solid themes before going on informational interviews
8) You can’t do it on your own
9) Tap into the Job Seeker’s Social Capital from the beginning
10) Businesses are always hiring (even if they say they’re not)
Employment Involves the Job Seeker

- People come together over shared interests and skills
- People teach each other their skills based on mutual interest
- There’s a place for everyone, somewhere out there.

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