Job Preparedness & Retention: Tools and Tips

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Ideally, Start Early

• **Develop Workplace Habits**
  • Being on Time
  • Completing Tasks
  • Negotiating
  • Consistency and Accountability

• **Build a Portfolio**
  • Document achievements (photos, videos)

• **List Dream Jobs**
  • Make a list and do research
  • If possible interview someone with that job
    • How did they get it? How did they prepare?

*Society loses out if individuals with autism spectrum disorders are not involved in the world of work.* - Temple Grandin
Explore Your Strengths

- Make a list of interests, skills and talents in order of strength
- Have ongoing discussions with others about interests and possibilities
- Remember enjoyable past activities
- Look through picture books and flag images of interest

There is no one harder to get to know than yourself.
Practice Perspective Taking

• The work task is not the only job – making the boss happy is the real job

• Who is the client?

• What does the boss/client expect?

• What do they assume?

• How can assumptions be checked out?

To hold a job, most of us have to adapt our own social behavior based on the perceived thoughts of the people we work and live with. - Michelle Garcia Winner
Seek Out Mentors

• Teens are more likely to listen to other adults than to their parents

• Mentors provide support and also respite for the parents

• The mentor/teen relationship can be a model for future adult relationships

Mentors listen and listen and listen. -Teresa Bolick
Ease into the Workplace

• Volunteer after school or summers

• Small first jobs with family members

• Graduate to public agencies (libraries, Humane Society, etc.)

• Then on to more formal businesses – family friends can help here

Be prepared to enter the job market through the back door, side door, any door but the front door! --Temple Grandin
Is the Job Ready for You?

• Develop an elevator speech that describes abilities and challenges

• Make a checklist of sensory issues that could impede workplace success

• Check out the workplace environment – take a tour

• Let coworkers know that there may be difficulties in some areas

We need to work where our talents are respected and our colleagues are tolerant of our social eccentricities. Temple Grandin
Follow Your Heart

“Make mistakes, take chances, be silly, be imperfect, trust yourself and follow your heart.” Anonymous
The Big Question

Why is employment such a big problem for autistics?

Right now, Employment is hard for everybody – and therefore especially hard for those who have less advantage.

Today even typically developing young adults are struggling to find careers.
What do you do for a living?

What are NTs doing these days?

What career advice are we giving college grads?

High school grads?
STANFORD JOB DESTINATIONS FOR GRADUATES

- Grad School: 22%
- Med School: 17%
- Other: 17%
- Consulting: 11%
- Finance: 11%
- Tech & Eng: 16%
- Law: 6%
Things we’ve tried:

- Created a model employment programs: inhouse production and sales (eBay, Etsy, custom orders)
- Explored DOR funding
- Worked with other agencies who promise job placement

The more we looked at employment the more problems we found.
We have had limited success placing our students in meaningful, sustainable jobs. We call these “Unicorns”.
- QA testing for the software industry?
- becoming computer programmers?
- support jobs at hospitals?
- Running their own companies selling arts and crafts?
“Autism at Work” and targeted hiring and retention efforts by large employers. Microsoft and Salesforce have initiatives to provide employment opportunities in support staff as well as staff for their primary business.

**Autism-focused businesses.**
Also known as Social Enterprises (in the past “sheltered employment”) these are businesses formed with the intention of providing employment opportunities.

**Self-employment and internet-based creative collectives.**
These are programs to enable individuals to start their own businesses as well as systems that support individuals marketing their own creations as a way to earn a living.
What else works?

Families forming companies to place their children (this scales...) with an eye towards longevity.

Families with influence within existing companies creating positions and supporting the employment of their children (and others).
Paid Internship Program:
Western Railway Museum

At the Western Railway Museum Autistry work crews restore historic trolley cars and do general museum maintenance.
Paid Internship Program:  
Square Peg Foundation

At Cadence Farm work crews help retrain rescued thoroughbred racehorses, keep the tack in good shape, and perform the daily chores needed to maintain a horse farm.
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