

Job Analysis: Key to Job Retention by Cary Griffin and David Hammis

The importance of job analysis for individuals with significant disabilities cannot be overstated. Job analysis is a critical element in the overall job match. Job matching melds personal aspirations, talents, and attributes to specific jobs or careers. Job loss is closely tied to the absence of or the improper development of a job match. Job matches are often viewed as expensive and time consuming, but the savings resulting from lasting job stability and the cultivation of a quality reputation with employers, families, and funders substantially offsets the initial investment of time and effort. Writing down the job analysis is critical to learning the technique and to improving future efforts. In our office the saying "where is an idea if it is not written down?" refers specifically to the commitment we make when performing a job analysis.

Best employment practice today relies on various person-centered approaches (e.g., MAPS, Personal Futures Planning) to discovering the vocational attributes and aspirations of an individual. The planning process is the first half of a job match. Once these clues are revealed, finding good employment can begin.

The job analysis process follows consumer and employer approval to develop a specific job. Sometimes the job analysis process is also used to set-up the training regimen for a work tryout or work experience, although we are finding that simply developing some "first" jobs with pay is preferable. After all, most of us did not have work experiences, we simply went to work and our employers paid us and trained us. Most of us discovered our career paths by securing jobs that we liked, and by leaving those we disliked.

Taking our cue from natural supports philosophy, the process should be much the same for individuals with disabilities. Most of us serve individuals who have little or no work experience, so first jobs are an important resume builder; they refine career choices and lead to job satisfaction, which means retention, which means happy customers.

Once a hiring commitment is secured from the employer it is time to perform the Job Analysis. The job analysis is the first step in devising a training plan. One of the best ways to approach job analysis is to spend at least one work-shift observing the targeted job. Make sure that it is a typical day so that the analysis reflects what the employee will experience.

Steps of the job analysis include:

1. Observe the job as performed by a typical employee and note any special operations, tools, or techniques.
2. Observe environmental factors: noise, temperature, speed requirements, coworker interaction, unwritten rules of the work place..

3. Ask for explanations of the steps of the tasks, if necessary.
4. Have whoever typically trains new employees train you in the task.
5. Perform the task yourself for a shift or until you understand it and the rhythms of the work day.
6. Record all the expectations of the tasks on a Job Analysis form.
7. Confirm with the employer that these actually are the expectations of the job. Do not rely on the job description.
8. Ask about atypical work expectations, such as the frequency of rush orders or if new techniques or production equipment will be introduced (so you can anticipate assisting with re-training).

The Employment Specialist analyzes the job and the work environment and compiles a list of job tasks the worker will need to learn to perform the job. Some of these tasks will occur with repetition and will, therefore, be easier to learn because of the many opportunities to practice during each shift. These tasks are called core routines and are typically the primary task(s) in a job. Other parts of the job may be required on an irregular basis or, maybe just once or twice a day. Such tasks are referred to as episodic routines. The job analysis tells the trainer when these duties are performed and provides the foundation for on-site training design.

The new employee also will need to understand the dress code, times for talking and times for being busy, what clothes to wear, and other corporate culture concerns. Since job loss is almost always caused by problematic personal interactions with others on the job, the understanding of corporate culture is key to job retention and, therefore, must be studied closely. Further, the Employment Specialist and new employee need to understand the supports necessary to get to work on time, to pack a lunch or bring money for the employee cafeteria, how to manage medications, which bus to take, and all the other work related routines that help minimize differences, enhance credibility of the new worker, and that guarantee the employee gets to work and keeps the job.

Examples

Core Routine:	pumping gas at a filling station.
Episodic Routine:	refilling the toner in a Xerox machine
Work Related Routine:	packing a lunch before work
Culture of the Company:	bringing donuts for co-workers when its' your turn

Understanding and identifying work routines is critical because it determines the training plan design. Routines that occur repeatedly throughout the day give the worker many opportunities to learn the task. Routines that occur only once or twice a day (or week) may require significant instructional assistance to gain mastery and this impacts the training and support design. Knowing the most difficult lessons to be taught going into the job makes the employment specialist's task easier and more predictable. Depending on the worker, the employment specialist may need to teach these routines differently. Sometimes to assist an employee in performing an episodic, or job related routine, the employment specialist will adapt the task or the method in which the task is performed. For example, a worker may need a checklist that he follows to remember to punch in and out for his shift. Before creating an adaptation or changing a piece of the job, have the employee attempt to perform it just as any other employee does. Adaptations can make the employee appear different and thus be a barrier to "fitting in." When in doubt, ask a co-worker or supervisor how they mastered the routines and if they use any special adaptations to remember tasks. Most workers carry checklists like Day Timers, have computer prompts when entering data, use various gauges or specialized tools, or have supervisors who remind them of their duties. Always, however, start with the most typical performance approach and add support from co-workers and typical supervisors before increasing employment specialist assistance.

One other suggestion: when working with someone who is particularly challenging due to severity of disability, get help with a job analysis. Team meetings are a terrific resource; employment specialists can swap ideas and ask for assistance. Another favorite technique is video taping a typical employee performing tasks and then viewing the tape with the consumer, other employment specialists, family members, and friends who know the person and who can offer ideas on training techniques or job modifications that will minimize errors and increase job retention. Always remember to use natural supervision and instruction first. Reposition the role of employment specialist as the supporter of the co-worker and supervisor. Business is used to training their employees; help them do that.

There are a variety of Job Analysis forms available. The best, in our opinion, is located in the book *Keys to the Workplace* by Callahan and Garner (www.amazon.com) which is highly recommended reading for all employment staff. Similar forms and information can be found in the manual, *Supported Employment & Systematic Instruction: A Guide for Employment Consultants*, by Condon, Hammis, and Griffin and is available for \$6.00 (including shipping and handling) by sending a check to The Rural Institute, c/o Nancy Maxson, 52 Corbin Hall, The University of Montana, Missoula, MT 59812.