AT IN RSA: ASSISTIVE TECHNOLOGY AND THE VR JOURNEY

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Perspective:

What Is Vocational Rehabilitation??

Federally Funded, State Run Program – DES

- Federal Funding: 78.7%
- State Funding: 21.3%
- Plus: Social Security Reimbursement

*Each State in US + territories, and a number of tribes, have VR Programs.

I am a state employee and do not have any relevant financial or non-financial information to disclose as pertains to this presentation.

DES/RSA AT-Unit:

Paul Ferry, Home Mod & IL Coordinator

Sue LeHew, AT Coordinator

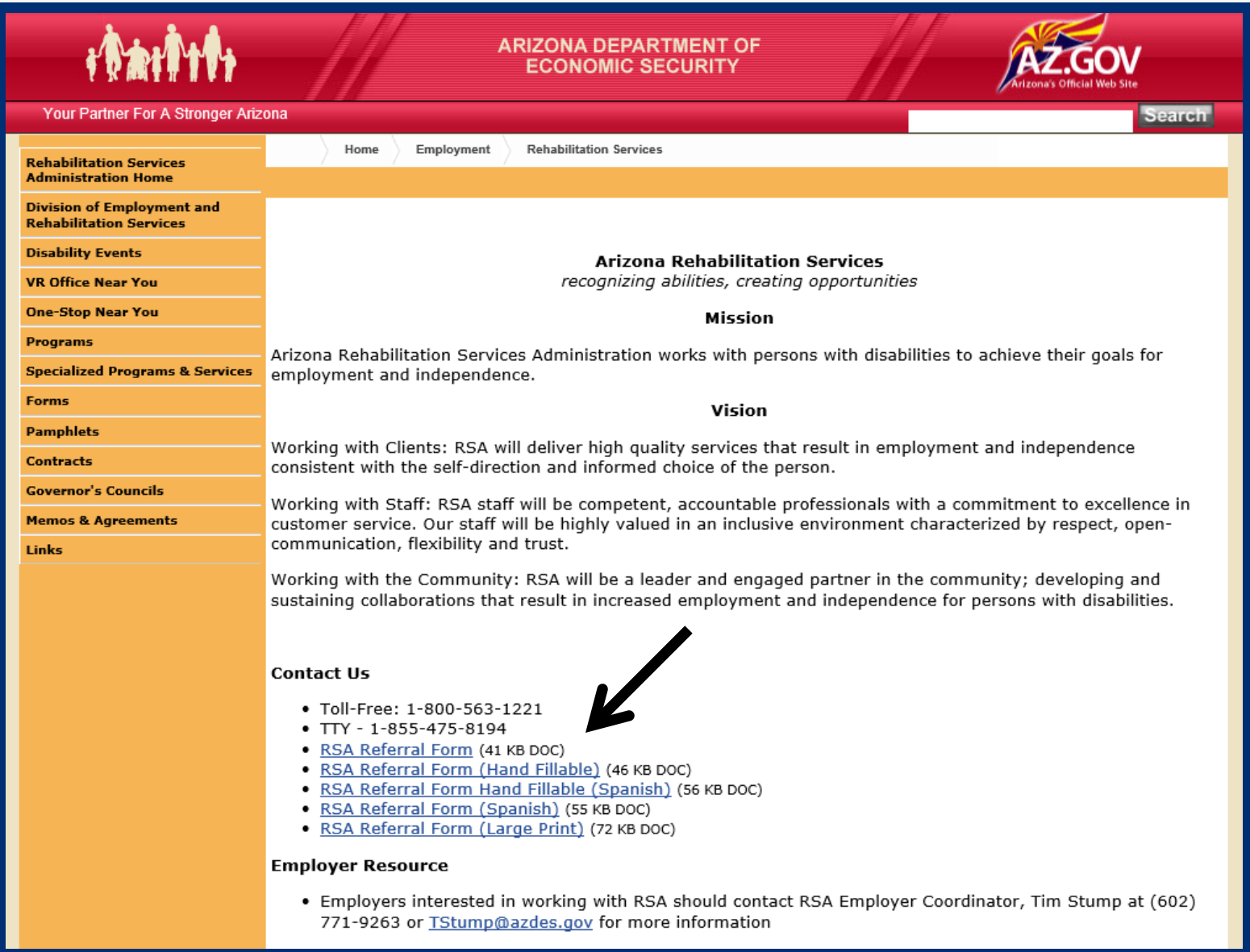
Anticipated Additional Staff:

Key Learning Outcomes:

- Participants will learn about steps in the process for the Vocational Rehabilitation program
- Participants will learn how client functional limitations directly relate to specific service needs
- Participants will learn how vendor resources function in the RSA process

What is RSA??

Screenshot of RSA Home Page: www.azdes.gov/rsa w/ Link to RSA Referral Form:



What is VR??

Screenshot of V R Home Page: www.azdes.gov/rsa/ Programs selection/VR:

Where Does VR Come From??

www.ndrn.org/issues/vocational-rehabilitation/338-vocational-rehabilitation.html

Title I of the Rehabilitation Act Laws and Legislation

Rehabilitation Act Title I (Vocational Rehabilitation Services) Statute:
29 U.S.C. §§ 701 - 751
The basic law for state public vocational rehabilitation programs.

Rehabilitation Act Title I (Vocational Rehabilitation Services) Federal Regulations:
34 C.F.R. Part 631
Regulations which implement the vocational rehabilitation legislation state vocational rehabilitation agencies must follow.

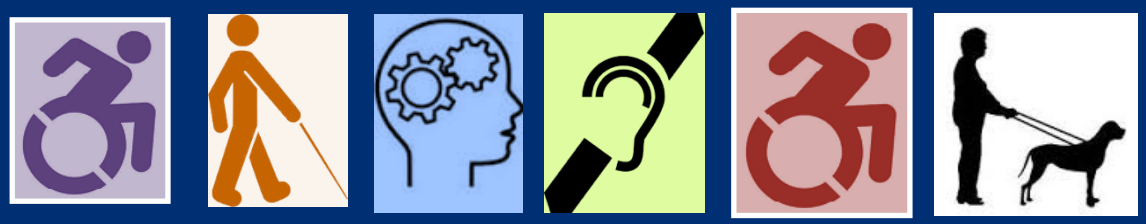
The Rehabilitation Act is the Federal legislation that authorizes the formula grant programs of vocational rehabilitation, supported employment, independent living, and client assistance. It also authorizes a variety of training and service discretionary grants administered by the Federal Rehabilitation Services Administration.

How does VR Work in Arizona??

www.azdes.gov/rsa/vr

We will review:

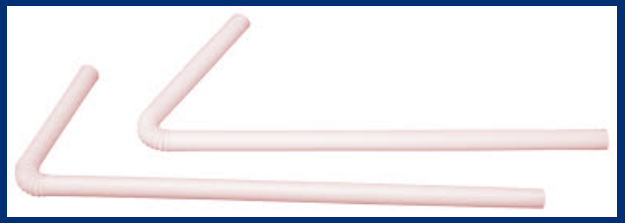
- Steps in the VR Process - w/ Tips about AT
- Tools for Success
- Tips for working with our AT vendor partners



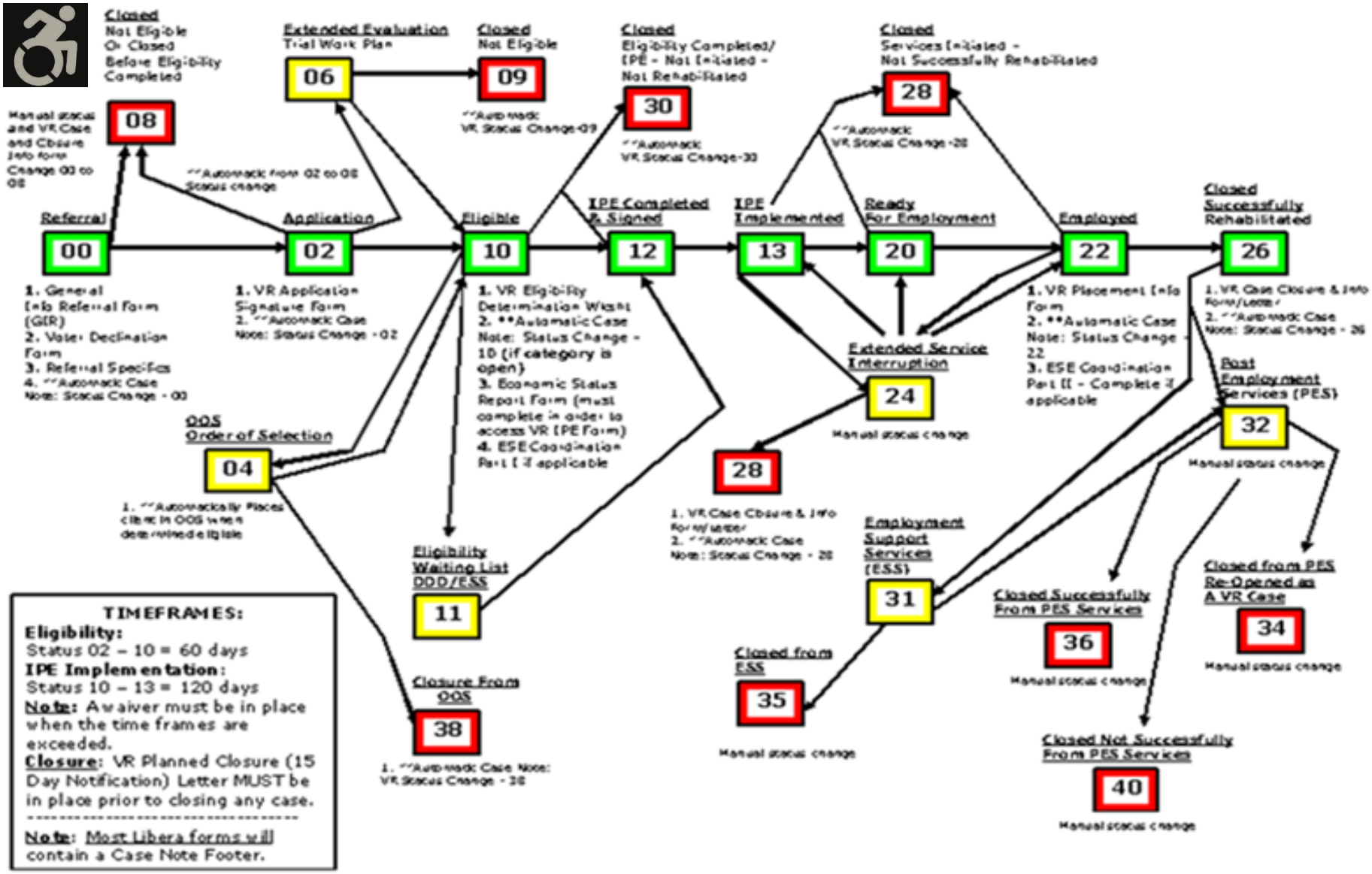
What Is AT?

"Assistive Technology Device" is defined as "any item, piece of equipment, or product system whether acquired commercially off the shelf, modified or customized, that is used to increase, maintain, or improve functional capabilities of individuals with disabilities."

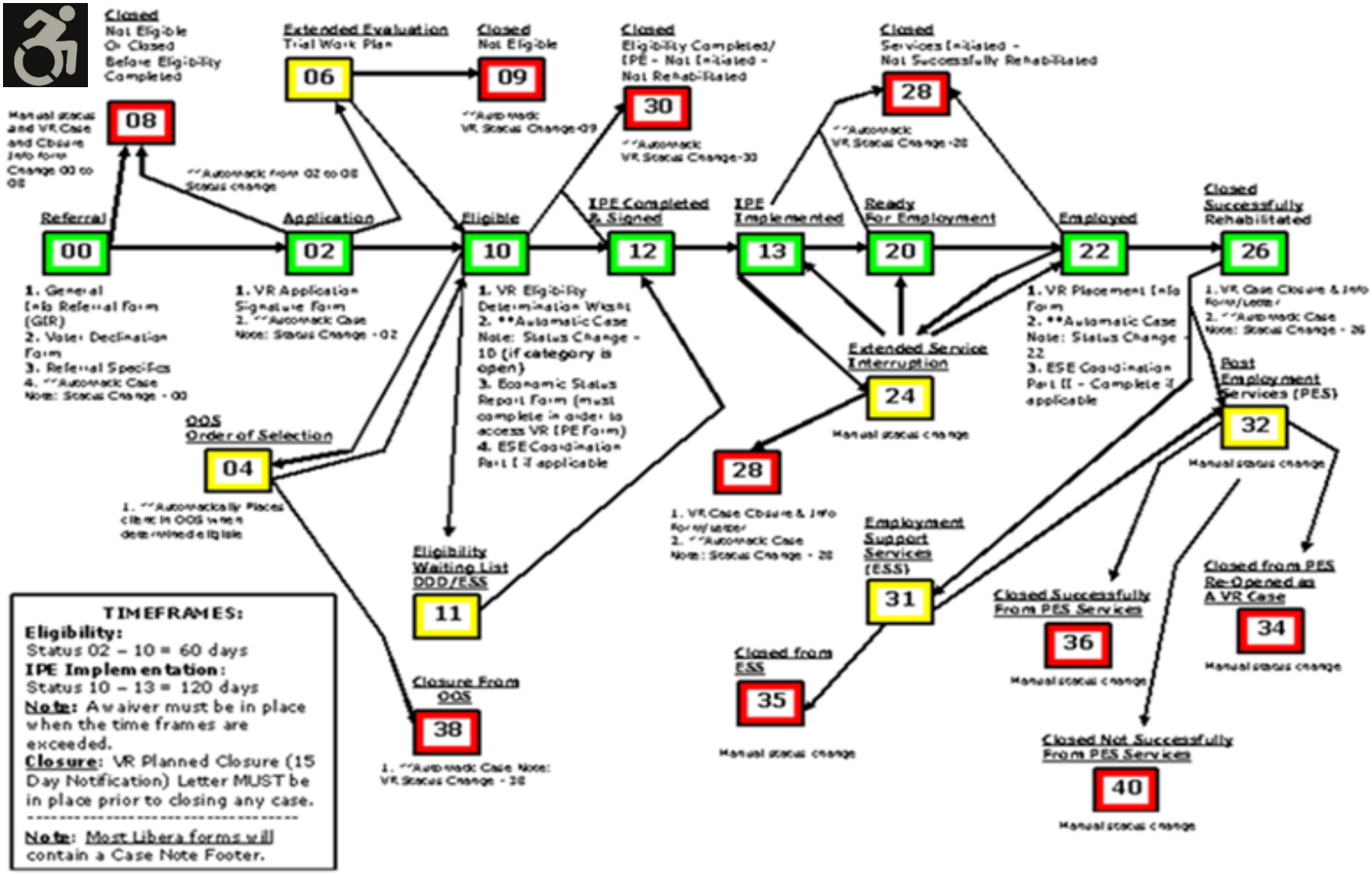
"Assistive Technology Service" means any service that directly assists an individual with a disability in the selection, acquisition, or use of an assistive technology device.



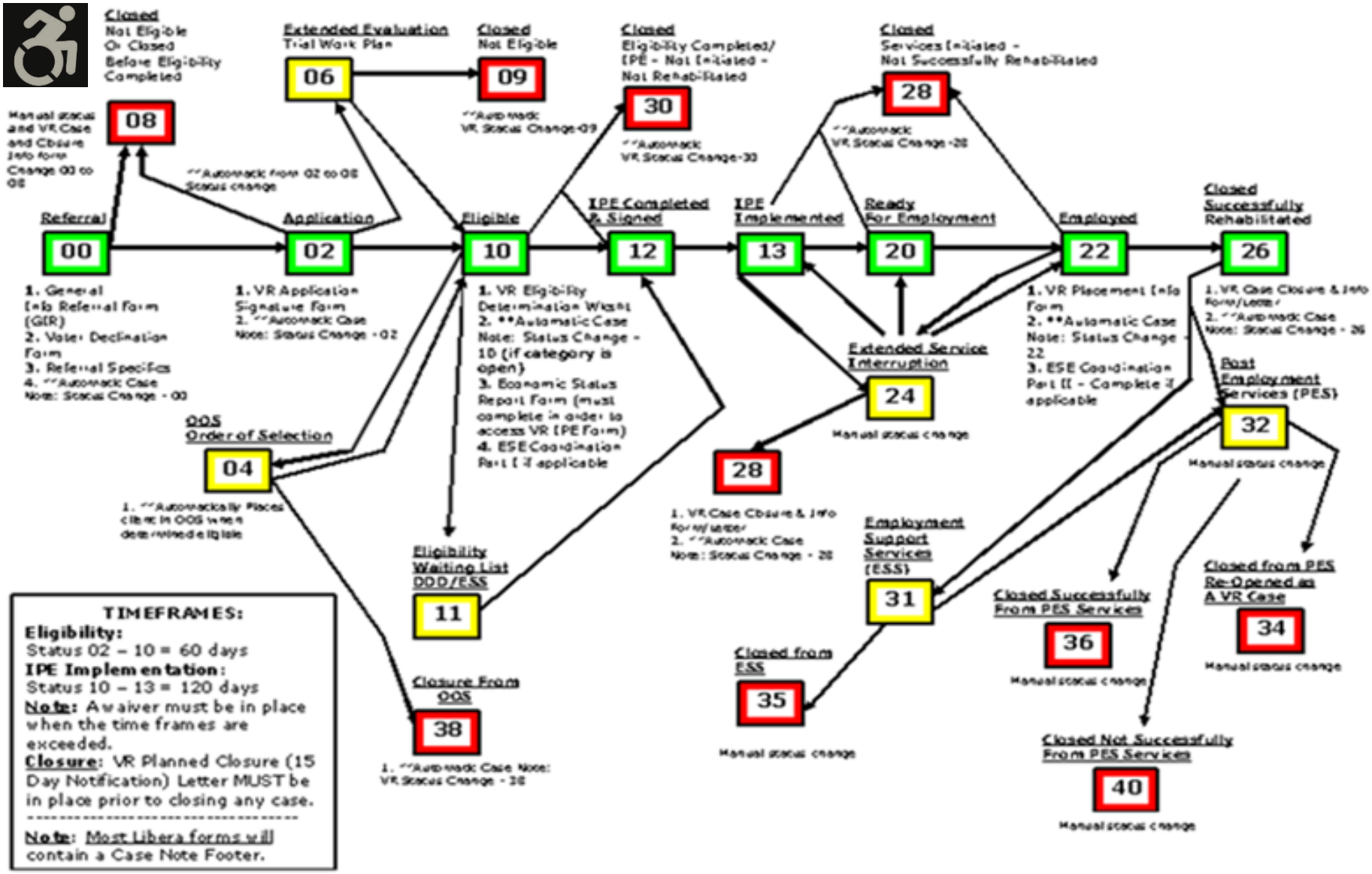
Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) Status Flowchart



Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) Status Flowchart



Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) Status Flowchart



The Journey of A Thousand Miles...

Begins in 3 Steps...

Referral 00:

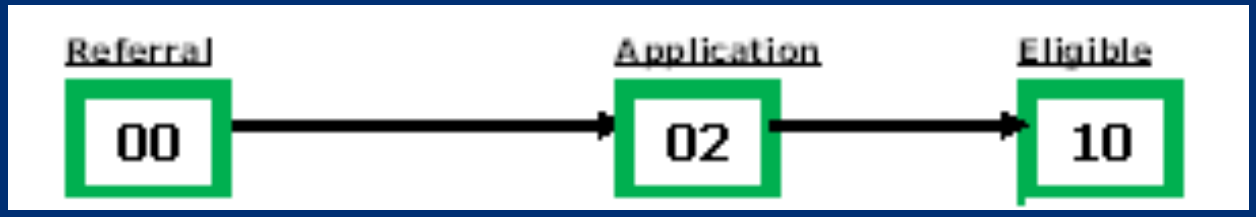
- Person wants to find/maintain employment
- Primary/Secondary/Tertiary Disability
- Functional Limitation/s impacting one or more Major Life Area/s
- require 2 or more services or Order of Selection would apply
- requires VR services for employment

Application 02:

- RSA requires medical docs and rationale of need! 60 days to eligible...
- RSA can provide medical assessments to determine eligibility...

Eligible 10:

- let the Vocational and AT assessments begin!!



Special Advice 00 through 10:

1. Know your Diagnosis and have Docs

2. Know your Functional Limitations –
   give examples to the intake RT or VRC

3. Know your AT!
   make/model/uses – even low tech!!
   (see handout: My-AT)

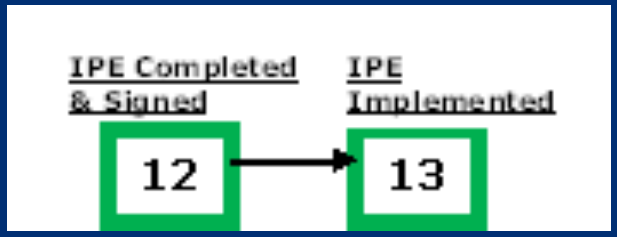
More Steps...

IPE Completed & Signed 12:

- VR Goal is selected - but is typically a pass through to where the VR work is done, Status 13

IPE Implemented 13:

- Let VR Services begin: Therapies, AT-Devices if no other resource, AT-Training, AT-Support/Fittings, additional AT-Assessment, etc.



AT and The Chicken and The Egg…

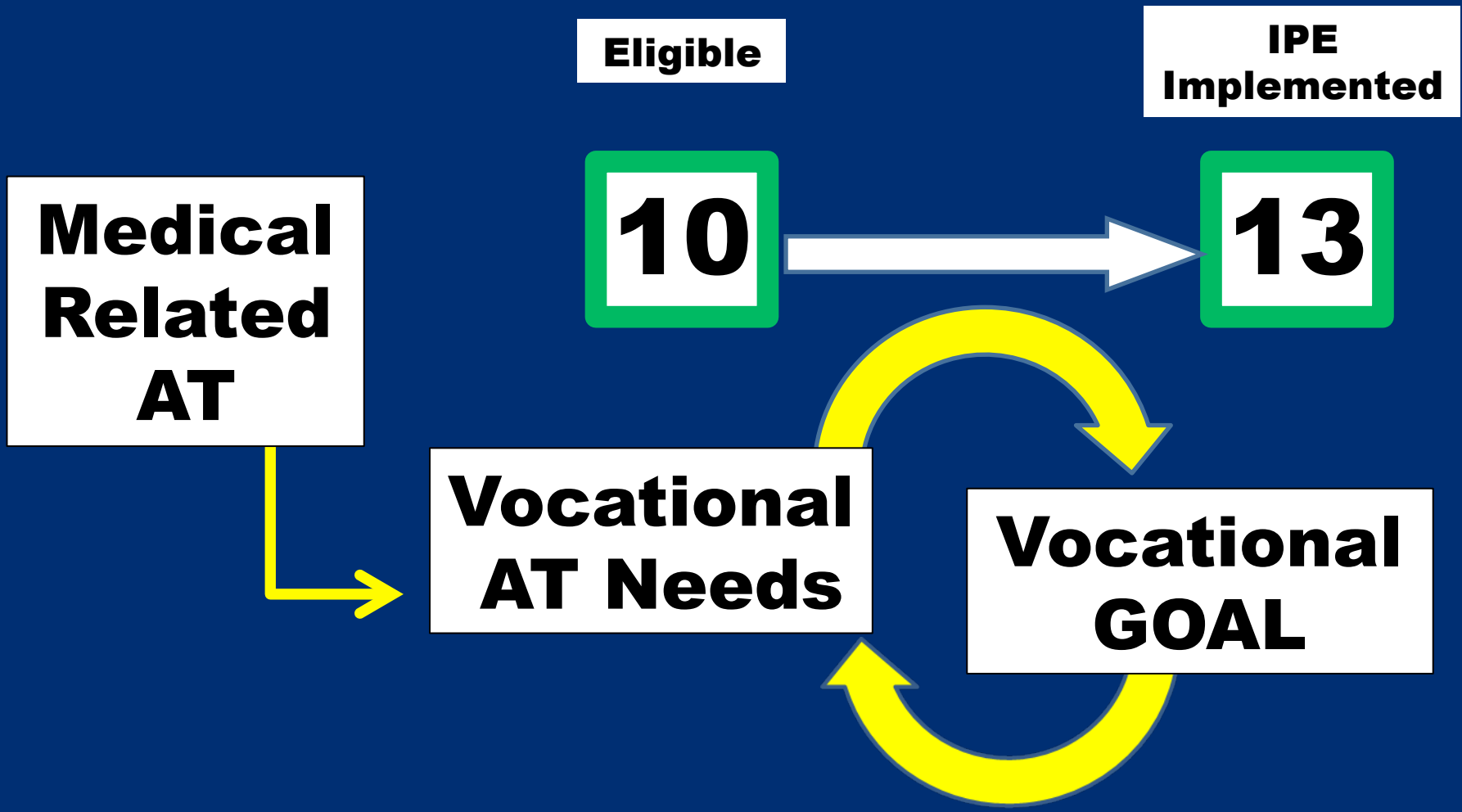
Eligible

10

IPE Implemented

13

AT and The Chicken and The Egg…



VR Process and SETT (Joy Zabala) are sometimes opposing paradigms:

this frequently results in amending IPE Goals and Services…

Special Advice 10 through 13:

1. Achieve Medical Stability and obtain health plan AT to the degree possible
2. Learn about AT options to be able to make "informed consumer choices"
3. Be as prepared as possible to work
   (see GCBVI handouts: Essential Employment Skills)
4. If a TRANSITION STUDENT:

   KNOW YOUR AT BEFORE YOU LEAVE!

   (see handout: My-AT)

Final Steps...

Ready for Employment - 20

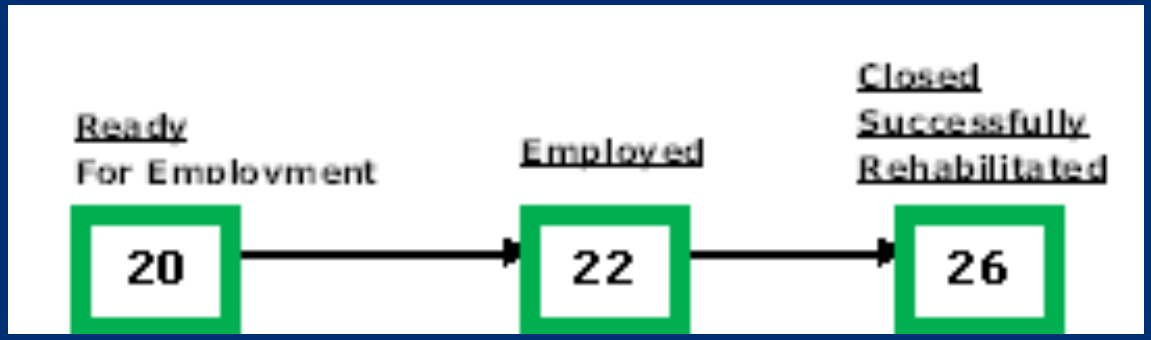
- IPE services have been implemented

Employed - 22

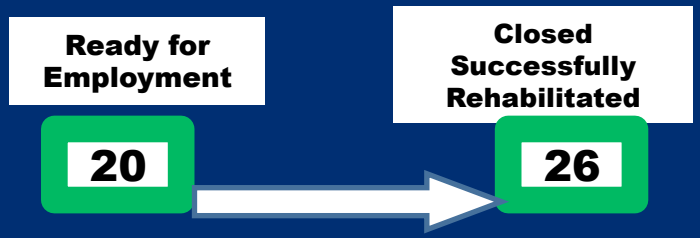
- may still require services to be successful

Closed – Successfully Employed - 26

- after a minimum of 90 days employed and IPE services are completed



Special Advice 20 through 26:



1. Anticipate/Learn/Know your job duties and employer expectations

2. Be prepared to use AT "workarounds" at work – be independent with AT!

3. Be prepared for Closure Status:

   ADA and/or your own resources may need to "kick in" when closed from VR

Functional Limitations, AT & VR

Disability	Functional Limitations	Medical Related AT	AT
Blindness or Other Visual Impairments	Access to print info Mobility Keyboard/PC access Independent Living Tasks	Aids/devices prescribed by Clinical Low Vision Dr.	Computer related Mobile Devices, GPS Screenreading, Magnification, Braille, OCR…
DHH: Communication Visual	Communication Telecommunications	Hearing Aids Cochlear Implants Integrated FM technologies Bluetooth Technologies	Video Phones Visual Alerts Mobile Devices…
DHH: Communication Auditory			Amplified &/or Captioned Phones, Amplified/visual Alerts Mobile Devices…
Communication	Communication Computer Access	AAC device Fluency AT	AAC, Productivity, ECU's, computer…
Cognitive Impair… (learning, thinking, processing info, concentration)	Reading/Writing, Attending, Planning, organization…	Medication management	Mobile Devices, Literacy Supports, Memory aids…
Mobility, Manipulation, Both, other orthopedic	Mobility Keyboard access Telecommunications	w/c, walkers, scooters, splints, orthotics, prosthetics	Home Mods, IL aids, Vehicle Mods, Computer & phone, Ergo supports…

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RSA ILB/RAES Unit:

www.azdes.gov/rsa

Then select: Specialized Programs

Then: Services for Blind/Visually Impaired and Deaf

RSA AT-Vendors

- Called: Vendors, Contractors, Providers, Community Partners, etc.
- Pre-Service: AT-Assessments
- IPE Implementation Services: AT-Assessment, AT-Training, AT-Support, AT- Aids/Devices
- Current Rates:
  - For: AT Services: RSA Fee Schedule
  - For: AT Devices: Contract Rates

RSA

RSA

Contract Updates

RSA

RSA

Questions ???

RSA

RSA

Essential Employment Skills (Student Edition)

A Quick Summary for People Who Are Blind Preparing for Employment

By Daniel Martinez

Presented by the Governor's Council on Blindness and Visual Impairment

First a Story

A young man approached a martial arts master and asked to be accepted as a student. The martial arts master agreed to teach the young man. The first skill the master demonstrated for the student was the punch. "Now, go practice," said the master. The student practiced and practiced. He punched day and night for many weeks and then returned to the master, saying, "Teach me something new." Instead, the master directed the student to continue practicing his punch. The student practiced and practiced. He punched day and night for many weeks and then returned to the master, saying, "Teach me something new." The master reluctantly showed the student how to block a punch. "Now, go practice," said the master," and do not return for a year." The student practiced and practiced. He blocked and punched day and night for a year. He then returned to the master, saying, "Teach me something new." "Show me your punch and your block," responded the master. The student proudly showed off his hard earned skills. "You need more practice," said the master. "Come back in a year." The student went away frustrated and practiced. He

blocked and punched day and night for another year.

He returned to the master, saying, “Teach me something new.” “Show me your punch and your block,” said the master. The student showed off his skills with a flourish. “You need more practice,” said the master. The student pleaded and pleaded with the master to teach him a new skill. The master eventually relented and showed the student how to execute the hammer fist. The student went away dispirited and practiced. He blocked, punched and hammer fisted day and night for another year. He returned to the master, saying, “Teach me something new.” “Show me your punch, your block and your hammer fist,” said the master. The student showed off his skills with prideful zest. “You need more practice,” said the master. At this point, the student’s frustration boiled over and he stated that the master was a fake. “While I want to learn the secrets of martial arts, you have me do nothing but practice three simple moves!” screamed the student. “I’ll show you!” He threw a punch at the master, who blocked, punched and hammer fisted the student, defeating him soundly. “You must constantly practice the basics,” said the teacher to the beaten student. “They are essential to mastery.”

Introduction

This summary provides you with an overview of essential employment skills that may not be included in the job description. We will touch on blindness skills. We will also focus on the soft skills that are rooted in interpersonal communications and workplace behaviors. While you may already possess and practice most, if not all, of these skills, they are presented here as a resource. It is always beneficial to pay attention to basics. Every human endeavor, no matter how seemingly complex, is rooted in the simple building blocks of basics. Use this summary to consistently and objectively review, evaluate and improve your skills.

While AIB employment is the context from which I gained my experience, the conclusions I have reached in preparing this document are my own and are not sanctioned as an official position of Arizona Industries for the Blind or the Arizona Department of Economic Security.

Tasks

Many people believe that vocational skills are the skills or knowledge necessary to perform the tasks of an occupation. For example, a cashier would perform some of the following tasks:

- Bag, box, wrap or gift-wrap merchandise and prepare packages for shipment.
- Compute and record totals of transactions.
- Count money in cash drawers at the beginning of shifts to ensure that amounts are correct and that there is adequate change.
- Establish or identify prices of goods, services or admission and tabulate bills using calculators, cash registers or optical price scanners.
- Issue receipts, refunds, credits or change due to customers.

However, task performance requires additional support skills and behaviors in order to be accomplished effectively. Employers expect employees to demonstrate these additional skills and behaviors to contribute to the success of the

business. Tasks alone are not the whole job.

Essential Employment Skills

Our focus is not on these task skills. One must have these skills. I recommend that clients work with their vocational rehabilitation counselor and or community rehabilitation provider to identify the best course of action for acquiring vocational task skills. Follow through and learn those skills. Our focus, however, is on the job skills which are often referred to as “soft skills”, “foundational skills” and “blindness skills”.

Blindness Skills

Blindness skills are the compensatory skills or adaptive skills a person with an eyesight disability uses to function at an equivalent level with sighted peers. Blindness skills, sometimes called skills of blindness, cannot be discounted or undervalued. Generally speaking, blindness skills include literacy, using specialized adaptive tools (specialized computer software, magnification, etc.), traveling with a white cane, community travel and self-advocacy. Adaptive skills enable people with vision loss to be independent and successful in the home, in school, on the job and in their communities.

Literacy

There are many definitions of literacy. Traditionally, literacy is the ability to use language actively and passively. One definition of literacy is the ability to read, write, spell, listen and speak. Since the 1990s, when the Internet came into wide use in the United States, some have asserted that the definition of literacy should include the ability to use tools such as web browsers, word processing programs and text messages. Given the wide use of computer technology in business, one cannot help but agree with this expanded definition.

Braille and Literacy

A study in the Journal of Visual Impairment & Blindness compared outcomes for congenitally legally blind adults who learned to read braille against those who learned to read print as their original reading medium. Those who learned to read using braille had higher employment rates and educational levels, were more financially self-sufficient and spent more time reading than did those who learned to read using print. Additionally, employees using a multimodal approach, two or more reading methods, can be much more effective than when only one

method is used.

Audio and Literacy

Speaking is the default modality for language in all cultures. The ability to access and interact with text, both printed and electronic, continues to be fundamental to employment. There are several software packages that offer audio output as a reading solution. It has been our experience that, in most cases, audio, while helpful, is not a complete package for supporting employment success with upward mobility potential. Depending on your occupation choice, audio is best used when supported with the use of braille or low vision reading. Audio just does not address all of the access needs present in employment.

Low Vision Reading and Literacy

Getting up close to reading material, using large print and handheld or electronic magnification are low vision reading methods exercised by people who are legally blind. Low vision reading permits access to a larger array of text or hand written material on the job. It is a usable method, but is typically very slow. Generally speaking, low vision reading alone is a partial reading solution. It is best used in combination with other reading methods.

Specialized Adaptive Tools and Methods

Whether it is taking physical or instrument measurements, identifying locations, taking notes or numerous other on-the-job tasks, the use of specialized adaptive tools can be used by a person who is blind to achieve the desired result. The number and types of adaptive tools and methods are too ample to list and not every tool is usable by every individual. The point is that an individual needs to know and use the adaptive tools and methods that work best for him or her. Do not expect employers to have the answers to adaptive tool needs. It is up to the individual to partner with his or her employer to remove barriers.

O&M and Community Travel

Orientation and mobility and the use of a long white cane are basic skills for people who are blind. One cannot hope to succeed in employment without the skills required to move through the environment. One cannot do the job if one can't get there to do the job. There are some people who are blind that have usable travel vision. A person needs to know what works and what doesn't work for them. An investment in developing good travel skills pays

dividends.

Self-advocacy

While self-advocacy is not solely a blindness skill, it is so critical that discussing it in terms of employment of people who are blind is a must. Self-advocacy refers to an individual's ability to respectfully and effectively communicate, convey, negotiate or assert his or her own interests, desires, needs and rights. It involves making informed decisions and taking responsibility for those decisions. (VanReusen et al., 1994) I have observed a significant level of passive communications with employees who are blind. I have seen a tendency in employees to avoid interaction which they may perceive as conflict. It is difficult to create a positive work environment when communications are not approached as a mutually beneficial exchange. It is not just a matter of self-esteem, personality or temperament. Self-advocacy with skills in effective communications can be learned.

Soft Skills

Soft Skills are behavioral competencies also known as interpersonal skills or people skills. Examples of soft skills include proficiency in communication skills, conflict resolution and negotiation, personal

effectiveness, creative problem solving, team building, influencing skills and selling skills.
Soft skills are a person's emotional intelligence quotients (EIQ), which include the cluster of personality traits, social graces, communication, language, personal habits, friendliness and optimism that characterize wholesome relationships with other people. Tasks are occupational skills used when working with “things” and “procedures”. Soft skills are used for getting things done with and through other people. They complement and enable hard occupational skills.

Strong Work Ethic

A strong work ethic is motivation and dedication to completing the job efficiently and effectively. Employees exhibiting a strong work ethic are more likely to be selected for better positions with more responsibility and ultimately, promotional opportunities. Employees who do not exhibit a strong work ethic may be regarded as not providing fair value for the wage the employer is paying them. Many feel that a strong work ethic is all about working hard. It really doesn’t matter how much effort one applies if it does not achieve the desired result. A strong work ethic is much more about a

sustained focus on getting the desired results.

Positive Attitude

Attitude is an internal set of values and feelings that drives behavior. People judge a person's attitude on observable behaviors. If a person is optimistic, energetic and friendly, we say they have a good attitude. When we are optimistic, we expect good things to happen and we work to make them happen. When we make good things happen, we feel good about ourselves and those around us. It reaffirms our high expectations. This creates a positive cycle of believing, doing and achieving.

Good Communication Skills

Good communication skills involve writing clear information, reading with understanding, being verbally articulate and being a good listener. Simply put, communication is an exchange of information. In order for communication to be effective, information needs to be sent clearly and received with understanding. Communication problems on the job can cost companies millions of dollars in lost time and materials.

Speaking and Listening

Oral communication is an important part of any job. You need to be able to effectively relay information to coworkers, superiors and customers. Oral communication is not just words spoken aloud. It is also the body language, annunciations, facial expressions and gestures used in combination with words to convey a message. Listening is also an active process. Hearing what someone says and listening to what they say are not the same. Listening implies understanding and responding to what you have heard. Active listening requires checking for understanding and asking good questions.

Reading

Whether you are reading work orders, equipment manuals or company memos, you need to understand what you read and remember key points. Here are some strategies that may help you better comprehend what you are reading. Look at key headings and highlighted material to gain a general idea of what the document is about. As you are reading, ask yourself questions on what the communication is about. It will help you stay

focused.

Writing Skills

Your ability to communicate in writing will help you find a job and perform that job well. Employees use writing skills to communicate with coworkers and supervisors, generate customer orders and report problems.

The following guidelines will help make your writing clear and effective:

- Identify your purpose for what you are writing. Knowing your purpose will help you stay on track.
- Consider your audience. Just as when you speak, you should tailor your writing to the needs of your readers. You know what you mean, but you must be able to communicate your ideas to others.
- When possible, type rather than hand write your message. Always double check for accuracy before sending a note or form. This is especially important for documents containing business transaction information.

Time Management Abilities

Knowing how to prioritize tasks while working on multiple projects at the same time is a hugely beneficial skill in employment. Steps in achieving this skill include setting clear goals, breaking goals down into distinct steps and reviewing your progress towards those goals. It is more important to focus on urgent and imperative tasks before those that are not as urgent or don't move you towards your goals. However, it is still crucial to ensure all tasks are completed. Organizing your work schedule, making a list to remind you what to do and when to do it, judging when things are not working out and avoiding procrastination are typical time management characteristics. Time management is rooted in organization and planning.

Problem-Solving Skills

When faced with issues or problems that are new to them, employees need to develop the ability to apply problem-solving skills. The development and use of problem-solving skills can be learned and applied in most work settings. The ultimate goal of problem-solving is to overcome obstacles and find a solution that best resolves the issue. The precise skills or

techniques one will use may vary considerably, depending on the problem and one's role in the organization. You may have to use a logical, methodical approach in some circumstances and be prepared to use creativity or lateral thinking in other situations. Whatever issues you are faced with, some steps are fundamental. Learn and use those basic problem-solving steps.

Team Player

The value of teams lies in the diversity of its members. That is to say, each member possesses a unique set of skills, characteristics, perspectives, talents, strengths and weaknesses. Teams are an integral part of how things are done in organizations. Teams usually come together to handle an issue that is very difficult, if not impossible, for an individual to do on his or her own. When a group works well together, creativity levels are generally higher as people tap into one another's strengths. This often leads to increased productivity, as well as an inspiring sense of collaboration and cooperation that moves everyone and the project forward. It is important to realize that a business team differs greatly from a social group. We must all work together to ensure that the company's end product or service is

delivered to customers in an efficient and cost effective manner.

Self-Confidence

The belief that you can truly do the job is the key to self-confidence. Self-confidence projects a sense of calm and inspires confidence in others. It requires you to have the courage to ask questions that need to be asked and to freely contribute your ideas. Self-confidence can be learned. It is not simply a trait that some people have and some do not. It is a reality based confrontation with the fear that we all have preventing us from succeeding. In 1969, psychotherapist Nathaniel Branden defined self-esteem as "the experience of being competent to cope with the basic challenges of life and being worthy of happiness."

Ability to Accept and Learn From Criticism

Criticism is often presented as something unpleasant, but it need not be. It could be friendly criticism, amicably discussed. In employment, you will experience continuous feedback on your performance from coworkers, customers, supervisors and managers. You will receive formal criticism in the form of performance reviews. You will want to learn

how to use that input and be open to learning and growing as a person and as a professional. Some of the criticism you receive will be very positive, so you may not recognize it as criticism. You may call it recognition. Other criticism you may view as negative because it indicates that you have not performed to expectation. The key to growth is to look at criticism objectively and use it to improve your job skills.

Adaptability/Flexibility

Adaptability is a feature of a system or process. This word has been put to use as a specialized term in business operations. According to Andresen and Gronau, adaptability in the field of organizational management can generally be seen as an ability to change something or oneself to conform to occurring changes. This equates to employees within a business system being flexible enough to change, as business needs are continuously changing. Change is stimulated by process and technological innovation, as well as the demands of competition and elevated consumer expectations. Employees are the main element of every business system and flexible employees are a major competitive advantage for a business. To be employable in today's labor market,

an individual must not only cope with change, but flourish with it.

Working Well Under Pressure

Stress may accompany deadlines and crises on the job. Employers look for personnel who will be able to do their best work and come through under pressure. In psychology, stress is a feeling of strain and pressure. Symptoms of stress may include a sense of being overwhelmed, feelings of anxiety, overall irritability and insecurity. There are productive and counterproductive ways of handling stress. Positive reappraisal redirects thoughts (cognitive energy) to good things that are either occurring or have not occurred. This can lead to personal growth, self-reflection and awareness of the power and benefits of one's efforts.

Punctuality

Punctuality simply means being on time. It means starting your workday when it is scheduled to start and completing tasks when they are scheduled to be completed. Employees are expected to be punctual and dependable in order to meet the needs of the business. When employees are absent or tardy, work and service are interrupted and an additional burden

is placed on colleagues. Attendance and reliability are important factors in evaluating individual performance and continued employment. In many, if not most employment contexts, a timely arrival is an essential function of the position. Plan to arrive at work in a timely manner.

Computer Use

Almost every job requires employees to use computers. Knowing how to use Microsoft Office Suite software is a skill many employers expect. This gives them some assurance that an employee will adapt to their specific business computing system. Integrating accessibility software programs, like JAWS, especially to proprietary computer software, can sometimes be slow. Be sure to include your vocational rehabilitation provider in the accommodations process. He or she may have access to the policy and technology expertise required to negotiate and facilitate the software integration process.

Appearance

Always dress and groom appropriately. Show respect for yourself and others by being clean and tidy in clothing that fits the culture of the business in which

you are employed. When in doubt of what to wear, always lean toward the conservative side. Make it a rule to practice immaculate grooming.

A Closing Note

This overview is intended as a reference for you to inventory and evaluate your employment skills from a perspective that is not always stated. Many employment preparation providers and employers presume that these skills are in place and do not necessarily put them on the job description. This summary can serve as a skills checklist you may use as you prepare for employment and as a continuous improvement reference while you are employed.

Essential Employment Skills
That May Not Be Included In the Job Description

A Helpful Pre-Employment Resource
for People Who Are Blind

Presented by the Governor's Council on Blindness and Visual Impairment (GCBVI)

Compiled by:
Daniel M. Martinez

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Introduction

I want to help people who are blind succeed in employment by sharing with them my insights into the world of work. Employed with Arizona Industries for Blind (AIB) for over twenty years, I have exercised and observed the behaviors that support employment success. Here, I have attempted to condense employment success behaviors to basic essentials.

My employer, AIB, is a self-sustaining enterprise that employs people who are blind and therefore must operate just as any for profit business would operate. Like any business, in order to remain viable, AIB must achieve a financial return on their activities that is equal to or greater than the expenditures necessary to generate that activity. Just like any business, AIB must rely on the skills of their employees to remain successful. It is reasonable to conclude that AIB employees must perform at a skill level that is equal to that of employees engaged in any business. So, while some of the successful employment skills I identify are blindness specific, most are universal and crucial to employment for anyone in any setting.

In compiling this white paper, I have gathered anecdotal information from individuals engaged at all levels of employment with AIB and other organizations. Personnel engaged in management, Human Resources, supervisory, administrative and direct labor have shared their opinions and ideas with me.

Presented here is a narrative identifying the skills that I believe are essential for employment success. I am forwarding this information to organizations that prepare people who are blind for employment and ask that they use it as a resource that may benefit clients in preparing for employment.

While AIB employment is the context from which I gained my experience, the conclusions I have reached are my own and are not sanctioned as an official position of Arizona Industries for the Blind or the Arizona Department of Economic Security.

Daniel M. Martinez

It is well to be prepared for life as it is, but it is better to be prepared to make life better than it is.

Sargent Shriver

Context Background

Arizona Industries for the Blind (AIB) has been in business since November 1952, when the first Visually Impaired trainees entered a rehabilitation program. In June of 1953, the 21st Legislature passed enabling legislation creating Arizona Industries for the Blind. June 1956 brought action by the 22nd Legislature when they passed legislation as part of the Arizona Revised Statutes further establishing the mission of AIB.

With the creation of the Department of Economic Security (DES) in January 1973, Arizona Industries for the Blind was assigned as a component of the Rehabilitation Services Administration.

With assistance and support from the National Industries for the Blind (NIB), AIB participates in the AbilityOne Program. The AbilityOne Program is the largest source of employment, on Federal contracts, for individuals who are blind or have other severe disabilities in the United States. Established in 1938, this program is administered by the AbilityOne Commission, an independent Federal agency.

AIB operates four unique lines of business. These include a 175,000 square foot distribution center, three Base Supply Centers at military bases in Arizona, a Document Imaging business that provides scanning services, and a manufacturing facility that makes military litters for the Department of Defense, as well as parts for the Defense Logistics Agency.

In all of these businesses, AIB has a minimum of 75 percent of our direct labor positions staffed by people who are blind. Additionally, individuals who are blind are employed in many staff and management positions.

Javits-Wagner-O'Day Act

(3) DIRECT LABOR. The term ''direct labor''—
(A) includes all work required for preparation, processing and packing of a product, or work directly relating to the performance of a service; but
(B) does not include supervision, administration, inspection or shipping.

Tasks

Many people believe vocational skills are the skills or knowledge necessary to perform the tasks of an occupation. For example, a cashier would have to perform the following tasks:

- Bag, box, wrap or gift-wrap merchandise and prepare packages for shipment.
- Compute and record totals of transactions.
- Count money in cash drawers at the beginning of shifts to ensure amounts are correct and there is adequate change.
- Establish or identify prices of goods, services or admission and tabulate bills using calculators, cash registers or optical price scanners.
- Issue receipts, refunds, credits or change due to customers.
- Issue trading stamps and redeem food stamps and coupons.
- Maintain clean and orderly checkout areas.
- Monitor checkout stations to ensure they have adequate cash available and they are staffed appropriately.
- Offer customers carry-out service at the completion of transactions.
- Process merchandise returns and exchanges.
- Receive payment by cash, check, credit cards, vouchers or automatic debits.
- Request information or assistance using paging systems.
- Resolve customer complaints.
- Sort, count and wrap currency and coins.
- Weigh items sold by weight in order to determine prices.
- Calculate total payments received during a given time period, and reconcile this with total sales.
- Compile and maintain non-monetary reports and records.
- Keep periodic balance sheets of amounts and numbers of transactions.
- Stock shelves and mark prices on shelves and items.
- Pay company bills by cash, vouchers or checks.

In order to be successfully employed as a cashier, a person would have to be able to do all of these tasks effectively. However, task performance requires additional support skills and behaviors in order to be accomplished effectively. Employers expect employees to demonstrate these additional skills and behaviors that are not necessarily associated with tasks, but never the less contribute to the success and perpetuation of the business. Tasks alone are not the whole job. While each job or occupation has its own unique set of tasks, essential employment skills are applicable to all jobs and occupations.

Essential Employment Skills

We have touched on task skills as an essential of vocational functioning and they are possibly the easiest to acquire. Most people learn occupational task skills by attending college, vocational trade school, apprenticeships and by learning on the job. Our focus is not on these task skills. One must have these skills. It is recommended that clients work with their vocational rehabilitation counselor and or community rehabilitation provider to identify the best course of action for acquiring vocational task skills. Follow through and learn those skills. Our focus, however, is on the job skills which are often referred to as "blindness skills", "soft skills" and "foundational skills".

First, let's talk about blindness skills. Blindness skills are the compensatory skills or adaptive skills a person with an eyesight disability uses to function at an equivalent level with sighted peers. Blindness skills, sometimes called skills of blindness, cannot be discounted or undervalued. There is a tendency for individuals to pick and choose the blindness skills they adopt while ignoring others. That simply does not work. While the adaptive methods people implement to accomplish a specific function may vary, the function cannot be ignored. Individuals benefit from appropriate skills and are limited by poor or incomplete blindness skills. Here again, clients are encouraged to work with their rehabilitation provider to address acquisition of the full range of blindness skills they will need to succeed in employment and in life.

Blindness Skills

Blindness skills include literacy, using specialized adaptive tools (specialized computer software, magnification, etc.), traveling with a white cane, community travel and self-advocacy. Adaptive skills enable people with vision loss to be independent and successful in the home, in school, on the job and in their communities.

Literacy

There are many definitions of literacy. Traditionally, literacy is the ability to use language actively and passively. One definition of literacy is the ability to read, write, spell, listen and speak. Since the 1990s, when the Internet came into wide use in the United States, some have asserted that the definition of literacy should include the ability to use tools such as web browsers, word processing programs, and text messages. Given the wide use of computer technology in business, this expanded definition is most applicable to employment.

The use of writing makes it possible to store large amounts of information outside of the human brain and allows us to retrieve it again. There is some evidence that the use of writing also has effects on the cognitive development of humans. Perhaps this is because acquiring literacy generally requires explicit and formal education. Literacy functioning is typically an immediate loss with acquired blindness that must be mitigated. Data tells us that individuals demonstrating higher levels of literacy were more likely to be employed, work more weeks in a year and earn higher wages than individuals demonstrating lower proficiencies.

Braille and Literacy

A study in the Journal of Visual Impairment & Blindness [(1)] compared outcomes for congenitally legally blind adults who learned to read braille against those who learned to read print as their original reading medium. Those who learned to read using braille had higher employment rates and educational levels, were more financially self-sufficient, and spent more time reading than did those who learned to read using print. With braille as their original reading medium, individuals are literate. For those that lose vision later in their lives, braille, even though it is slower, should be considered a critical substitute for sight reading. Additionally, employees that use a multimodal approach, two or more reading methods, can be much more effective than when only one method is used.

Audio and Literacy

Speaking is the default modality for language in all cultures. The ability to access and interact with text, both printed and electronic, continues to be fundamental to employment. There are several software packages that offer audio output as a reading solution. The favored screen-reader for Windows is JAWS, but others are also good. In most cases, audio, while helpful, is not a complete package for supporting employment success with upward mobility potential. Depending on your occupation choice, audio is best used when supported with the use of braille or low vision reading. Audio just does not address all of the access needs present in employment.

Low Vision Reading and Literacy

Getting up close to reading material, using large print and handheld or electronic magnification are low vision reading methods exercised by people who are legally blind. Low vision reading permits access to a larger array of text or hand written material on the job. It is a usable method, but is typically very slow. Generally speaking, low vision reading alone is a partial reading solution. It is best used in combination with other reading methods.

Specialized Adaptive Tools and Methods

Whether it is taking physical or instrument measurements, identifying locations, taking notes or numerous other on-the-job tasks, the use of specialized adaptive tools can be used by a person who is blind to achieve the desired result. The number and types of adaptive tools and methods are too ample to list and not every tool is usable by every individual. The point is that an individual needs to know and use the adaptive tools and methods that work best for him or her. Don't expect employers to have the answers to adaptive tool needs. It is up to an individual to partner with his or her employer to remove barriers.

O&M and Community Travel

Orientation, mobility and the use of a long white cane are basic skills for people who are blind. One cannot hope to succeed in employment without the skills required to move through the environment. One cannot do the job if one can't get there to do the job. There are two issues that severely impact an employee's ability to succeed on the job. First, some individuals do not have basic O&M skills. They simply have not had the training. Second, there are those that don't recognize their own limitations and attempt to move around without acquiring new skills or using a white cane. This is not to say that everyone who is blind must use a white cane. There are some people who are blind that have usable travel vision. A person needs to know what works and what doesn't work for them. An investment in developing good travel skills pays dividends.

Self-advocacy

While self-advocacy is not solely a blindness skill, it is so critical that it must be discussed in terms of the employment of people who are blind. Self-advocacy refers to an individual's ability to respectfully and effectively communicate, convey, negotiate or assert his or her own interests, desires, needs and rights. It involves making informed decisions and taking responsibility for those decisions[(2)] (VanReusen et al, 1994). There is a tendency in people to avoid interaction which they may perceive as conflict. It is difficult to create a positive work environment when communications are not approached as a mutually beneficial exchange. It is not just a matter of self-esteem, personality or temperament. Self-advocacy with skills in effective communications can be learned. We will discuss communication skills further in another section.

Soft Skills

Soft skills are behavioral competencies also known as interpersonal skills or people skills. Examples of soft skills include proficiency in communication skills, conflict resolution and negotiation, personal effectiveness, creative problem solving, strategic thinking, team building, influencing skills and selling skills. Soft skills are a person's emotional intelligence quotient (EIQ) [3], which include the cluster of personality traits, social graces, communication, language, personal habits, friendliness and optimism aids in building wholesome relationships with other people. Hard skills are those occupational skills used when dealing with things and procedures. Soft skills are used for getting things done with and through other people. They complement and enable hard skills.

Strong Work Ethic

A strong work ethic is motivation and dedication to completing a job efficiently and effectively. Employees exhibiting a strong work ethic are more likely to be selected for better positions with more responsibility and ultimately, promotional opportunities. Employees who do not exhibit a strong work ethic may be regarded as failing to provide fair value for the wage the employer is paying them. Many feel that a strong work ethic is all about working hard. Hard work can be defined as the effort that one exerts on a task or goal. It really doesn't matter how much effort one applies if it does not achieve the desired result. A strong work ethic is much more about a sustained focus on getting the desired results. (Appendix C How to Develop a Strong Work Ethic)

Positive Attitude

Attitude is an internal set of values and feelings that drives behavior. A person's attitude is judged on observable behaviors. If a person is optimistic, energetic and friendly, we say they have a good attitude. When we are optimistic, we expect good things to happen and we work to make them happen. When we make good things happen, we feel good about ourselves and those around us. It reaffirms our high expectations. This creates a positive cycle of believing, doing and achieving. Low expectations create the opposite effect. Both are self-perpetuating. The positive attitude that employers look for is rooted in the high expectation model. (Appendix B Attitude)

Good Communication Skills

Good communication skills involve writing clear information, reading with understanding, being verbally articulate and being a good listener. Simply put, communication is an exchange of information. In order for communication to be effective, information needs to be sent clearly and received with understanding.

Communication problems on the job can cost companies millions of dollars in lost time and materials. Miscommunication can cause delays, affect quality and leave customers dissatisfied. It can also cause tension between workers and make work extremely frustrating. (Appendix D How to Develop Good Communication Skills)

Speaking and Listening

Oral communication is an important part of any job. You need to be able to effectively relay information to coworkers, superiors and customers. Oral communication is not just words spoken aloud. It is also the body language, annunciations, facial expressions and gestures used in combination with words to convey a message. Listening is also an active process. Hearing what someone says and listening to what they say are not the same. Listening implies understanding and responding to what you have heard. Active listening requires checking for understanding and asking good questions.

Reading

Whether you are reading work orders, equipment manuals or company memos, you need to understand what you read and remember key points. Here are some strategies that may help you better comprehend what you are reading: Look at key headings and highlighted material. As you are reading, ask yourself questions on what the communication is about. It will help you stay focused. Create a mental construct of what you are reading. Imagine yourself completing the steps of a described activity or completing a work instruction correctly. This can help you remember it later.

Writing Skills

Your ability to communicate in writing will help you find a job and perform that job well. Employees use writing skills to communicate with coworkers and supervisors, generate customer orders and report problems. The following guidelines will help make your writing clear and effective: Identify your purpose for what you are writing. Is it to give information or instruction? Is it to request information or action from someone or is it to register a complaint? Knowing your purpose will help you stay on track. Consider your audience. Just as when you speak, you should tailor your writing to the needs of your readers. You know what you mean, but you must be able to communicate your ideas to others. Clarity is of utmost importance. Use correct grammar and simple direct statements to convey your point. When possible, type rather than hand write your message. Always double check for accuracy before sending a note or form. This is especially important with documents that contain business transaction information.

Time Management Abilities

Knowing how to prioritize tasks while working on multiple projects at the same time is a beneficial skill in employment. Steps in achieving this skill include setting clear goals, breaking goals down into distinct steps and reviewing your progress towards those goals. It is more important to focus on urgent and imperative tasks rather than those that are not as urgent or don't move you towards your goals. However, it is still crucial to ensure all tasks are completed. Organizing your work schedule, making a list to remind you what to do and when to do it, judging when things are not working out and avoiding procrastination are typical time management characteristics. Time management is rooted in organization and planning. (Appendix E Time Management Tips)

Problem-Solving Skills

During the hiring process, a candidate's problem-solving skills are often identified by employers as an important quality. Employees need to develop the ability to apply problem-solving skills with issues or problems that are new to them. The development and use of problem-solving skills can be learned and applied in most work settings. The ultimate goal of problem-solving is to overcome obstacles and find a solution that best resolves the issue. The precise skills or techniques you will use may vary considerably, depending on the problem and your role in the organization. You may have to use a logical, methodical approach in some circumstances and be prepared to use creativity or lateral thinking in other situations. Whatever issues you are faced with, some steps are fundamental. Learn and use those basic problem-solving steps. (Appendix F How to Improve Problem Solving Skills)

Team Player

The value of teams lies in the diversity of its members. That is to say, each member possesses a unique set of skills, characteristics, perspectives, talents, strengths and weaknesses. Teams are an integral part of how things are done in organizations. Teams usually come together to handle an issue that is very difficult, if not impossible, for an individual to do on his or her own. When a group works well together, creativity levels are generally higher, as people tap into other's strengths. This often leads to increased productivity, as well as an inspiring sense of collaboration and cooperation that moves everyone and the project forward. It is important to realize that a business team differs greatly from a social group. Friendships may occur with coworkers. We may even confide in a coworker at times like we would with a friend. Yet, we cannot lose track of the fact that we must all work together to ensure that the company's end product or service is delivered to customers in an efficient and cost effective manner. If we experience problems in friendships we've formed with coworkers, we have to be sure that it doesn't affect the business team.

Self-Confidence
The belief that you can truly do the job is the key to self-confidence. Self-confidence projects a sense of calm and inspires confidence in others. It requires you to have the courage to ask questions that need to be asked and to freely contribute your ideas. Self-confidence can be learned. It is not simply a trait that some people have and some do not. It is a reality based confrontation with the fear that we all have thats preventing us from succeeding. In 1969, psychotherapist Nathaniel Branden defined self-esteem as "the experience of being competent to cope with the basic challenges of life and being worthy of happiness." According to Branden, self-esteem is the sum of self-confidence (a feeling of personal capacity) and self-respect (a feeling of personal worth). It exists as a consequence of the implicit judgment that every person has of their ability to face life's challenges, to understand and solve problems, their right to achieve happiness and be given respect.

Ability to Accept and Learn From Criticism
Criticism is often presented as something unpleasant, but it need not be. It could be friendly criticism, amicably discussed. In employment, you will experience continuous feedback on your performance from coworkers, customers, supervisors and managers. You will receive formal criticism in the form of performance reviews. You will want to learn how to use that input and be open to learning and growing as a person and as a professional. Some of the criticism you receive will be very positive, so you may not recognize it as criticism. You may call it recognition. Other criticism you may view as negative because it indicates that you have not performed to expectation. While that makes you uncomfortable, it is not an indictment on your value as a human being. The key to growth is to look at criticism objectively and use it to improve your job skills.

Adaptability/Flexibility
Adaptability is a feature of a system or process. This word has been put to use as a specialized term in business operations. According to Andresen and Gronau, adaptability in the field of organizational management can generally be seen as an ability to change something or oneself to conform to occurring changes. This equates to employees within a business system being flexible enough to change, as business needs are continuously changing. Change is stimulated by process and technological innovation, as well as the demands of competition and elevated consumer expectations. Employees are the main element of every business system and flexible employees are a major competitive advantage for a business. To be employable in today’s labor market, an individual must not only cope with change, but flourish with it. (Appendix A Dealing with Change)

Working Well Under Pressure
Stress may accompany deadlines and crises on the job. Employers look for personnel who will be able to do their best work and come through under pressure. In psychology, stress is a feeling of strain and pressure. Symptoms may include a sense of being overwhelmed, feelings of anxiety, overall irritability and insecurity. There are productive and counterproductive ways of handling stress. Positive reappraisal redirects thoughts (cognitive energy) to good things that are either occurring or have not occurred. This can lead to personal growth, self-reflection and awareness of the power and benefits of one's efforts. There is also a normalization that occurs over time with constant exposure to high stress environments whereby an individual views high demand employment as typical and may become stressed when demands are decreased.

Punctuality
Punctuality simply means being on time. It means starting your workday when it is scheduled to start and completing tasks when they are scheduled to be completed. Employees are expected to be punctual and dependable in order to meet business needs. When employees are absent or tardy, work and service are interrupted and an additional burden is placed on colleagues. Attendance and reliability are important factors in evaluating individual performance and continued employment. In many, if not most, employment contexts, a timely arrival is an essential function of the position. Plan to arrive at work in a timely manner.

Computer Use
Almost every job requires employees to use computers. Knowing how to use Microsoft Office Suite software is a skill many employers expect. This gives them some assurance that an employee will adapt to their specific business computing system. Integrating accessibility software programs, like JAWS, especially to proprietary computer software, can sometimes be slow. Be sure to include your vocational rehabilitation provider in the accommodations process. He or she may have access to the policy and technology expertise required to negotiate and facilitate the software integration process.

Appearance
Always dress and groom appropriately. Show respect for yourself and others by being clean and tidy in clothing that fits the culture of the business in which you are employed. When in doubt of what to wear, always lean toward the conservative side. Make it a rule to practice immaculate grooming.

Appendix A Dealing with Change
Excerpt from: ***Business Etiquette Guide to the Art of Interaction***
An unpublished work written by Audrey A Young

Dealing with Change

Change is Inevitable-Accept It
Understanding change from a personal perspective builds a foundation for managing change in a broader context. Change has always been a part of life. What is different now is the pace of change and the prospect that it will come faster and faster, affecting every part of life. Today, change is happening so fast it often feels like we don't have time to adjust before more change occurs.

Change can be defined as any planned or unplanned circumstance in the status quo of an organization, situation or process. There are three stages of change: ending, transition, and new beginning.

- Ending is the start of transition. The cessation of familiar routines or a way of life requires a modification in behavior. For example: children moving away from home, new employment or reporting to a different supervisor are endings. Adjusting to these altered circumstances is transition. Even though a change may be a new opportunity, it is still the end of the status quo. It is a process of letting go of what was and adapting to what is.

- Transition is the period when you start adapting to the changed circumstance. Typically there is a struggle with the situation. There is a sense of loss that causes grief and mourning. You go through a crisis of identity and question your self-worth. This is the time to process your experience and feelings, gather information about the situation, review options and identify their consequences, experiment with the new beginning and make plans.

- New beginning is when new goals result from your transitional processing. Different behaviors are adopted to flourish from existing conditions. A fresh lifestyle emerges.

We exist within contradiction. On one hand, we need stability and perform well when we feel secure and established in our work and home environments. On the other hand, we can become stagnant, complacent and uncreative when we shy away from change or when we simply cannot cope with it.

How can we bring these two ideas together so that we can rest easier and deal better with change?

- ♣ One way is to look at limiting beliefs, patterns and bad habits that get in the way of being able to incorporate change into our lives when it happens.

- ♣ We can start to understand how patterns occur and what we can do to begin altering limiting habits and thought repetitions. We can also look at the various kind of changes there are and some effective ways of approaching them.

  What types of change are there? Some changes are easy; some are more difficult; and sometimes changes can seem downright impossible. There are five types of changes:

  1. Straightforward change, such as changing your car or changing your hairstyle.

  2. Changing something you already do by learning a new method, such as changing your golf swing.

  3. Changing something that obviously needs changing, but you either don't want to or you can't quite see how it could be done. This type of change usually involves a habit - for instance, smoking. You know smoking is unhealthy, but you can't seem to stop.

We struggle with these three types of change every day of our lives. We change in little ways all the time. We may struggle a bit with whether or not to change our hairstyle and we may never give up smoking, but these are the things we are conscious of. We can choose relatively easily how we will deal with these kinds of changes.

The following types of change can be the more difficult and, therefore, more challenging. Both of these types challenge the beliefs we've created to structure our lives.

4. Changing something you absolutely know you can't change.

This type of change asks us to change a point of view, adopt a way of seeing the world that differs from the way we are used to seeing it. This experience can easily tap into our insecurity. We can develop a feeling of uncertainty, a sense of not quite knowing what the 'right' thing to do is. There is no longer a predictable, reliable pattern to follow.

5. Change that is imposed upon you and which you appear to have no control.

Imposed change, can often feel like suffering. If we have no say in the matter we can feel as if it is being perpetrated against us. We can feel cheated or hoodwinked. When change opposes our beliefs, we can easily feel powerless.

On the other hand, it is also true that some people thrive on change. They can't stay in one job, one relationship or even one country for very long. Some people need to shake up their own status quo. They sometimes create change just for the sake of it.

Why Is Change So Hard Sometimes?
We are pattern-making machines. In general, our mental systems are more comfortable with pattern and routine than with change. Once a pattern is established, our left-brains will quite happily keep marching along that path.

Most patterns get set very quickly. We have built a strong resistance to changing patterns that have been part of our lives for years. Some patterns are as simple and straightforward as the route we take to work every day. Some patterns are as complex as the way we feel and think about ourselves.

For instance, the fourth type of change – something you don't believe can change – is a limiting belief. It often has to do with low self-esteem. These patterns can be the hardest to break because they are based on a belief system. The pattern is stronger than the contradictory evidence because it has been around longer.

Self-worth or self-esteem is what we think about ourselves. Psychologists believe feelings of self-worth are developed in early childhood and are formed from the interaction of the child with the mother and father. How we think about ourselves, our feelings of self-worth are of fundamental importance both to psychological health and to the likelihood that we can achieve goals and ambitions in life and achieve self-actualization. Let's imagine what we think about ourselves as an inner-voice. That voice gives us negative or positive messages telling us who we are and what we can do in any given situation.

Growing up in an environment where one is constantly demeaned will lead that individual to believe they are not good enough. Even after removing negative people from one's environment, an individual may experience difficulty receiving platitudes after performing a task well.

To change the negative thinking, one must recognize that a negative voice exists. A person may need to reprogram their thinking by discussing their accomplishments with themselves and others. A voice of praise will eventually overshadow the voice of disapproval.

The fifth type of change - imposed change - can sometimes be easier to deal with. The trick is overcoming victimization self-talk of, "I don't want to." "It's not fair."

"Why me?"

- ♣ Our dissatisfaction and helplessness about this type of change exists when we didn’t buy into the agreement or we were never consulted.

- ♣ The only way to navigate through this type of change is through negotiation between yourself and the other people affected. Relief from the stress and upset caused by imposed change comes about when people choose to accept and commit to the change and to stop fighting or feeling resentful. If this acceptance doesn’t happen, people may leave, move away or even get divorced.

Change is unavoidable and is usually for the good. No one lives a life free of change, but sometimes we are afflicted by more change or demands for change than we can cope with. When this happens, it helps to look at what change should get your attention and effort.

- ♣ Look for the smallest change that will achieve what is needed and be wary of wholesale change and change for change's sake.

- ♣ Look at your beliefs or ways of seeing things. Changing beliefs may be hard work but the end result of changing your beliefs is a change in your attitude which can be dramatic.

Appendix B Attitude
Excerpt from: ***Business Etiquette Guide to the Art of Interaction***
An unpublished work written by Audrey A Young

Entitlement Attitude

The entitlement attitude says, "Life owes me something," or "people owe me something." What in life do you feel is coming to you: health, a good job, children or a peaceful retirement?

You probably have an entire list of things you feel entitled to and if you don't obtain them, you may feel cheated. If you are unable to take a vacation or buy the home you've dreamed of, then you may think that life has robbed you of something you are entitled to!

You will know if you're experiencing entitlement thinking because it leaves you constantly feeling angry, resentful or frustrated.

- For example, if you believe that someone owes you something and that person doesn't come through, you feel angry or cheated out of what you rightly deserve.

It's A Lie!
Entitlement is a lie. It is a distortion of reality. There is nothing in the universe that states anyone deserves to live a long, happy and successful life! Thoughts and feelings of entitlement are born from within our own minds. There is no basis for such claims. No one owes us anything. Do you believe this is true? Most people do not.

Where Is It Written
There are many things we could feel entitled to. For example:
- Aren't I entitled to have people treat me fairly, with sensitivity and respect?
- Aren't I entitled to a job that pays a good salary and offers benefits because I have a disability?

Where is that written? The truth is that:
- Any kindness we receive from others is always a gift.
- Any good job we receive is because we are qualified to perform that job.

If You Want It, You Must Earn It!
A person is not entitled to be given respect or to have a good job; both respect and a good job are earned.
- Respect is earned by being respectful of others, but there is no guarantee that others will return that respect.
- A good job is earned by possessing the knowledge and skills necessary

to carry out the job tasks according to the employer's performance measures.

♣ Being a person with a disability provides you the right to have a reasonable accommodation to perform job tasks, but you still have to meet the employer's performance measures, even if you have to work two or three times as hard to do it.

The Gratitude Attitude

Gratitude is the recognition that life owes you nothing and all the good you have is a gift. Your children, spouse, clothes, job and every breath are gifts. This is a major shift from the entitlement mode. Recognizing that everything good in life is ultimately a gift is a fundamental truth of reality.

What Does Attitude Have To Do With Your Job Search? Plenty!

During an interview and on your resume, make it clear that you are not an "It's not in my job description" kind of person. Show that you understand the importance of your work effort in adding value to your manager and the company. If you leave the interviewer with these impressions, you have an excellent chance of hearing back from them.

Ideas to Improve Your Attitude

Too many workers spend most of their time concerned about their rights and carry with them an entitlement attitude. The following ways of thinking will help to improve your attitude:

- The customer comes first. Always serve customers ethically and within company policy.

♣ Coworkers are your work family. Go out of your way to get along with them.

♣ Profit isn't a dirty word. You want the company you work for to be profitable. If they don't make money, there will be no jobs.

♣ The ability to have a job is a privilege, not a right. If you are not grateful for and respectful of that privilege, someone else will be glad to have your job.

♣

Thought Patterns

A thought pattern is a "recording" in your brain tissue representing a memory of an experience you've had.

Every single sensory experience you have is recorded as a memory in your brain tissue. When you experience similar events over and over, your brain records a pattern for them.

Now when you experience an event, your brain automatically searches its recorded memories and replays a patterned memory from a similar experience. You feel the same way and do the same or similar thing you have done hundreds or thousands of times before. This is why you almost always feel and act in the same manner in similar situations.

Thought patterns are the foundation of all our habits and personality traits. They make us predictable. We literally could not survive without them.

Unfortunately, as important as thought patterns are to our survival, they can also make us feel and act in ways that don't support us in being our best.

We all have thousands of unconscious programmed patterns that control and guide our thoughts, emotions and actions. The patterns override logic. Often, they don't make any sense, but we are still controlled by them.

If you haven't been able to feel how you want to feel or able to get yourself to do something you want to do, then you are being victimized by your own thoughts, beliefs and attitudes.

Change Your Mind
You need to change the way you think**.** If you don't change, you'll continue to fail and never attempt or reach your goals.

Suggestions for Change:

Release the Failure Self-Image
Get rid of the image of "not good" at something and you'll lay the foundation for excellence. Instead of identifying yourself as: *I am a smoker. I am a fat person. I'm not good enough,* replace these images with mental pictures of a successful you. You must see it and believe it, to be it. Changing images that took years to develop doesn't happen overnight.

Pick one negative self-image you want to work on and start repeating over and over the new self-image statement about yourself. For example:

Replace: I am fat; I can't lose weight no matter what I do with, "I am strong and have the willpower to become a healthier person."

Stop Pointing Fingers Elsewhere
Take responsibility for your mistakes and failures. The core pattern of victim mentality is blaming your problems or failures on circumstances or other people. For example: *it's not my fault, it's not my job and it was too hard* are phrases used to avoid personal responsibility.

♣ If you make a mistake, own it. A mistake does not mean that you are bad or incapable of doing it right, it means you are human. Get up, fix it and keep going.

Stop the "I Can't" Chant
"I can't" thoughts and beliefs are the primary cause of procrastination, never setting a goal and quitting before succeeding. For example: *I can't do it, I can't change, there's nothing I can do and I'm going to fail* are repeated internal messages that support inaction.

♣ Since you don't have what you want anyway, what have you got to lose by

trying. Become an "I can do" person". It does not matter if you have to redo it 5, 10, 50 or 100 times before you get it the way you want it. All successful people fail many times before they succeed. You just don't hear about their failures.

Stay Away From Unsupportive People, Places & Things

The lure of unsupportive people, places, activities and inactivity keep you from doing what must be done. Unsupportive people, place and things may include smoking buddies, alcohol, magazines, video games, surfing the 'Net, gambling, TV and shopping ,etc.

- Stay away from the naysayers. These are people who always find a reason why you won't succeed. They tell you: *you're too old, too young, blind people don't do that*, etc.
- Before you take the naysayer's advice, check out their success record. If they are succeeding in an area you want to succeed in, take their advice into consideration, but make your own decision. If they are not, turn a deaf ear to their advice.

Stop Focusing on What's Not Perfect/What Could Go Wrong

Focusing on things like: *I'll bet that they're talking about me right now; they won't like this; I'm too skinny/too fat; What if we have to start all over?* causes procrastination, nagging, arguments, unhappiness, rage, jealousy and obsessiveness.

- Being a person with a disability, you have already overcome many obstacles most able-bodied persons would have trouble negotiating. You are a survivor, a "can do" person. Now use those same survivor skills to accomplish things you want. If people talk about you, so what? While they are talking, you will be succeeding.

Stop Making Mountains Out of Mole Hills

Practice not exaggerating the size and difficulty of normal tasks and decisions related to reaching your goal. See, hear and feel them as manageable. Yell "STOP" to yourself when you start magnifying them. Examples of these thoughts are: *This will take forever. I've got SO much to do. I don't have enough time. This is too big a job for me.*

- Take a deep breath and look at the situation. Set priorities. Order your tasks according to most important and nearest deadline. Once you know what needs to be done first, concentrate on the first step to accomplish the first task. When you finish the first step, move to the second. Concentrating on one step at a time will reduce the size of your mountain to a molehill.

Stop Disaster Thinking

This is when worrying is taken to a higher level. Your thoughts are in a looping pattern that won't allow you to think rationally about some possible future challenge or problem. Disaster thinking can cause overreaction in all types of situations. Disaster thoughts are: *I could die. I'll go broke. I'll lose my house. I'll kill myself if she says no. I'd never forgive myself.*

- When disaster thoughts begin, yell "STOP" to yourself. You will have to do

this many times to break the cycle. Still, disaster thoughts will keep occurring. Reassure and remind yourself that you have survived many real problems. The problems related to disaster thinking are only fantasy problems. They are not real.

Thought Patterns and Stress

Our thoughts control our body's response to stress. The body can be very resilient against stressors in everyday life if we train our thoughts to be positive. If our thoughts are negative, then our body will respond with: *headaches, diarrhea, irritable bowels, heart troubles, immune deficiencies, infections, high blood pressure, hair loss, panic attacks, cancers and more. Stress can kill.*

- Making up your mind to take control of your thought patterns will reduce stress and allow you to achieve your goals.

Practice Positive Self Image

Types of Change

- ♣ Have each trainee give an example of a straightforward change they made, such as *changing hair style, route to work, etc.*
- ♣ Have each trainee give an example of how they changed the way they did something that they already knew how to do. For example: *golf swing, put groceries away, sorted clothes, fixed a car, etc.*
- ♣ Have each trainee give an example of how they made a point of view change that was connected to a belief system. For example: *help their wife with the house work even though all their lives it was considered women's work, not becoming upset when their husband spent their time watching sports which made them feel neglected, etc.*
- ♣ Have each trainee give an example of an imposed change and how he or she dealt with it. For example: c*hange of supervisors at work, change in jobs due to a disability, etc.*
- ♣ Have each trainee give an example of how they changed something that obviously needed changing. For example: *a habit like smoking, swearing, etc.*

Self-Image

- ♣ Have each trainee choose one self-image concept they want to work on.
- ♣ Have each trainee develop three positive self-statements that will counteract their negative self-image.

Appendix C How to Develop a Strong Work Ethic
By an eHow Contributor

Globally, there is an enormous emphasis on education and skill preparation for future employment. Many employers indicate that a strong work ethic ranks at the top of the list along with proficiency in a chosen profession. Follow these steps to develop yours.

1. Arrive to work at least 15 minutes before your scheduled start time. This offers the ability to mentally prepare for tasks. Plan to work the time and days agreed upon. Schedule all appointments outside of the times you've committed to your employer. A great attendance record is an essential attribute of a strong work ethic.

2. Maintain a professional demeanor at all times. Be cordial and friendly to all staff in the company. Refrain from allowing your home life to spill over into your employment environment. Conversations should focus primarily on work related issues. Respect yourself and others.

3. Put a positive spin on negative comments. A positive attitude is crucial to having a strong work ethic. Bring a fresh perspective to problems at work.

4. Developing a strong work ethic involves taking initiative. Attempt to solve problems at work independently. Use your training materials to assist in locating a solution. Be confident and self-motivated in your ability to handle job responsibilities.

5. Honor your commitments. Being dependable creates confidence in your capacity to handle more responsibility. Seek to serve the interest of the company's goals, objectives and mission. Do your part to create a productive place to work.

6. Strive to do the job right the first time. Quality and quantity of work is a direct reflection of personal character and integrity. A productive worker with strong work ethic takes the time to produce quality work. Take pride in your work.

7. Respect what others contribute to the work environment. Concentrate on your job and commitment to a proactive attitude. Be a team player. Help others at work without being asked.

8. Go the extra mile whenever necessary to ensure that your verbal and written interactions with others are productive. Communication skills are an indispensable asset to any organization. Use empathy and self-control when diffusing disagreements.

Appendix D How to Develop Good Communication Skills
Wikihow

Understanding the Basics of Communication Skills

1. Know what communication really is. Communication is the process of transferring signals/messages between a sender and a receiver through various methods (written words, nonverbal cues, spoken words). It is also the mechanism we use to establish and modify relationships.

2. Have courage to say what you think. Be confident in knowing that you can make worthwhile contributions to conversation. Take time each day to be aware of your opinions and feelings so you can adequately convey them to others. Individuals who are hesitant to speak because they do not feel their input would be worthwhile need not fear. What is important or worthwhile to one person may not be to another and may be more so to someone else.

3. Practice. Developing advanced communication skills begins with simple interactions. Communication skills can be practiced every day in settings that range from the social to the professional. New skills take time to refine, but each time you use your communication skills, you open yourself to opportunities and future partnerships.

Engage Your Audience

1. Make eye contact. Whether you are speaking or listening, looking into the eyes of the person with whom you are conversing can make the interaction more successful. Eye contact conveys interest and encourages your partner to be interested in you in return. We feel a person who is blind may want to practice this behavioral model by keeping his or her face directed at the speaker/listener.

2. Use gestures. These include gestures with your hands and face. Make your whole body talk. Use smaller gestures for individuals and small groups. The gestures should get larger as the group that one is addressing increases in size.

3. Don’t send mixed messages. Make your words, gestures, facial expressions and tone match. Disciplining someone while smiling sends a mixed message and is therefore ineffective. If you have to deliver a negative message, make your words, facial expressions, and tone match the message.

4. Be aware of what your body is saying. Body language can say so much more than a mouthful of words. An open stance with arms relaxed at your sides tells anyone around you that you are approachable and open to hearing what they have to say.
5. Manifest constructive attitudes and beliefs. The attitudes you bring to communication will have a huge impact on the way you compose yourself and interact with others. Choose to be honest, patient, optimistic, sincere, respectful, and accepting of others. Be sensitive to other people's feelings, and believe in others' competence.

6. Develop effective listening skills. Not only should one be able to speak effectively, one must also listen to the other person's words and engage in communication on what the other person is speaking about. Avoid the impulse to listen only for the end of their sentence so that you can blurt out the ideas or memories on your mind when the other person is not speaking.

Use Your Words

1. Enunciate your words. Speak clearly and don't mumble. If people are always asking you to repeat yourself, try to do a better job of articulating yourself in a better manner.

2. Pronounce your words correctly. People will judge your competency through your vocabulary. If you aren't sure of how to say a word, don't use it.

3. Use the right words. If you're not sure of the meaning of a word, don't use it. Grab a dictionary and start a daily habit of learning one new word per day. Use it sometime in your conversations during the day.

4. Slow your speech down. People will perceive you as nervous and unsure of yourself if you talk fast. However, be careful not to slow down to the point where people begin to finish your sentences just to help you finish.

Use Your Voice

1. Develop your voice – A high or whiny voice is not perceived to be one of authority. In fact, a high and soft voice can make you sound like prey to an aggressive coworker or make others not take you seriously. Begin doing exercises to lower the pitch of your voice. Try singing, but do it an octave lower on all your favorite songs. Practice this and, after a period of time, your voice will begin to lower.

2. Animate your voice. Avoid a monotone and use dynamics. Your pitch should raise and lower periodically. Radio DJ's are usually a good example of this.

3. Use appropriate volume. Use a volume that is appropriate for the setting.

Speak more softly when you are alone and close. Speak louder when you are speaking to larger groups or across larger spaces.

Appendix E Time Management Tips
Wikihow

- Managing your time can be as simple as scrawling the day's tasks on a piece of paper, or as complex as a spreadsheet with linked tables and calendars. The supplies you need will be dictated by the method you choose.
- Do a task beginning to end. You know those "I deserve a cookie!" moments? Those are good. Set way-points, and each time you reach one, reward yourself with something that takes little time, and if to be done during the project, little concentration.
- Pick subjects and not verbs. List ideas and allot time per subject.
- Beware the Pareto Principle. One of the greatest time wasters is spending 95% of one's time on 5% of the tasks needed to be completed. The assumption is that this is a reality because the 5% seem to be the most profitable. This is not always the case.
- Set your own rules to measure your achievement per time intervals.
- Allow a brief interval between tasks for random happenstances—a phone call, a sudden craving for yogurt, or for you telecommuters, popping that roast in the oven.
- Take advantage of all the small gaps of time that tend to go wasted during the day. Whether it's the fifteen minutes you have between class and lunch, or the twenty minutes from when you wake up in the morning to when your kids wake up, use those spare minutes to accomplish something. Little increments of time add up.
- Don't "spread yourself too thin" by overwhelming your day with an unrealistic schedule that would be difficult to accomplish.
- Set aside the concept of "everything has to be done yesterday" in order to create realistic priorities.
- Keep track of your productive time with a chess clock. Set up a more realistic schedule once you understand the actual time it takes to complete a task. Just knowing that a certain task will take no more than a half hour will motivate you to complete it.

Appendix F How to Improve Problem Solving Skills
WikiHow

1. Alert people affected by the problem, if any. This gives them a stake in resolving it. As you work through possible solutions, keep these people informed of your progress. This lets them know what to expect and when to expect it. Be as optimistic as you can, but also as realistic as you can.

2. Define the problem clearly. Avoid making snap judgments based on a few symptoms, but look for root causes whenever possible. Poor performance may not be caused by an individual's lack of skills but by ineffective communication of expectations and insufficient training in how to meet those expectations.
    a. Choose a problem-solving strategy. The approach to solving the problem, once it has been defined, can be handled through a number of methods, some of which are listed below:

        i. Brainstorming is the generation and recording of ideas as they occur to you, either alone or in a group. You do this for a set period of time, then go through the list of solutions to evaluate their suitability.

        ii. Appreciative inquiry develops solutions by analyzing what's currently going right and determining whether it can be applied to solve the problem at hand.

        iii. Design thinking means thinking like a product designer, observing how people interact with a product or service and noting what problems they are having with it. In some cases, a combination of strategies may be the best approach to solving a problem.

3. Gather information. Coupled with clearly defining a problem is gathering information about it. This may mean consulting with people closer to certain aspects of the problem to get a proper grasp of its scope, or researching similar situations elsewhere to see what the root causes of those problems were and how they were resolved, if at all.

4. Analyze the information. The information needs to be analyzed for its relevance to the problem and its importance. The most critical, or key, information should be drawn upon in formulating a solution, while the remaining information may be needed to ranked for its importance and relevance.

5. Develop possible solutions based on the information you've collected and your strategy.
6. Evaluate the solutions generated. Just as it was necessary to analyze the information found for its relevance to the problem, prospective solutions must be analyzed for their suitability to determine which is best to handle the problem. In some cases, this means constructing prototypes and testing them. In other cases, this may mean using computer simulations or "thought experiments" to analyze the consequences of using that solution.

7. Implement your solution. Once the best solution is determined, put it into practice. This may be done on a limited scale at first to verify that the solution is indeed the best, or it may be implemented system-wide if the need for it is critical.

8. Get feedback. While this step should be implemented while testing prospective solutions, it is also helpful to continue getting feedback to verify that the best solution will perform as expected and to find ways to adjust it if it isn't.

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My-AT Summary *[DRAFT]*
Currently Used Assistive Technology
(Not to be considered an evaluation)

Date:

Name: _____ Age:
Phone: _____ email:

Diagnosis:
Functional Limitations:
Primary Interests/Activities:
VR or IL Goal or Area of Interest:

Current Focus:

HS Transition Post-Secondary Career Exploration Job Ready Employed

Environment/s:

DESCRIBE ASSISTIVE TECHNOLOGY BELOW:

Communication:

Mobility/Seating:

Vision:

Hearing:

Cognition:

Reading Supports:

Writing Supports:

Mobile Technologies:

Notetaking:

Computer Access:

Telephone:

Community Access:

Transportation:

Other: