

Hot Topics and Cases in Vocational Rehabilitation

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2:05 – 2:55pm

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Disclosures

- We do not have disclosures to report

Emerging Trends in Vocational Rehabilitation

- TECHNOLOGICAL REVOLUTION
- CHALLENGES FOR NON-ENGLISH SPEAKERS
- MOTIVATION
- THE VR COUNSELOR

Case Study

Maximizing the Appointment

36-year-old Spanish speaking man with shoulder injury

Works in a warehouse

Married with 3 children

Wants to go back to work as soon as possible

Has initial appointment with orthopedic surgeon to discuss treatment

How to best address the most important issues in this appointment?

WHEN ENGLISH IS NOT YOUR PRIMARY LANGUAGE

- Difficulty understanding complex medical restrictions and how to communicate these to potential employers
- Language barriers in job search/application processes (online applications, interviews, workplace communication)
- Access to translated vocational materials
- Educational credential translation challenges
- Cultural differences in self-advocacy and workplace expectations
- Transportation and geographic limitations to access language-specific employment opportunities
- Digital literacy barriers compounded by language differences

TOOLS TO SUPPORT SERVICES

- Interpreter services (both for counseling sessions and job interviews)
- Translated assessment materials and vocational documentation
- Connections to ESL programs and literacy services
- Transferable Skills - Helping clients recognize skills despite language barriers
- Partnerships with culturally specific employers and community organizations and nonprofits
- Assistance with credential evaluation services
- Education about U.S. workplace norms and expectations
- Job placement support with multilingual employers or roles where language is less critical

Definitions of Motivation

Intrinsic: A drive that comes purely from within; it's not due to any anticipated reward, deadline, or outside pressure.

For example, people who are intrinsically motivated to run do so because they love the feeling of running itself, and it's an important part of their identity.

Intrinsic motivation is powerful because it is integrated into identity and serves as a continuous source of motivation.

Extrinsic: Any reason someone does work other than the joy of doing the work itself. Anything promised for completing the task or received as a result of completing the task are extrinsic motivators.



WHAT ROLE DO EMERGING TRENDS PLAY ON MOTIVATION

IS THE SEEMINGLY
UNMOTIVATED
CLIENT LACKING
MOTIVATION?

Case Study

Michael worked his way up over 19 years. His injury happened while covering an understaffed shift — lifting something he'd normally have assigned to someone else. He was known as a reliable, committed employee.

Work Restrictions of 20 lbs max, no prolonged standing or bending rule out almost everything he's ever done professionally.

Upon referral to VR he is described as “not making an effort” and “resistant”

Is He Unmotivated? Or...

Unmotivated Behavior May be a Logical Response to an Overwhelming Situation

Difficulty seeing a Path forward

Transferable Skills or Development of Skills

Accurate Labor Market Information

Navigating the System in order to move forward

Technology Revolution - Job Search

Job searching has changed dramatically, feels completely foreign to many job seekers and has created additional barriers for many of our clients.

- Elimination of paper applications and in-person submission
- AI-driven applicant tracking systems (ATS)
- Virtual job fairs and video interviews require technology access, digital literacy, and performance skills our clients never needed before
- LinkedIn and professional online presence as job search requirements
- Automated scheduling systems and communication (no more calling to follow up)

The VR Counselor

We're not just "finding jobs" for people. We're conducting comprehensive barrier assessments, connecting clients to wraparound services, and serving as translators between the medical, legal, insurance, and employment systems.

- Increased case complexity, concurrent diagnoses and mental health integration: Recognizing and addressing underlying issues rather than accept “motivation” as a diagnosis.
- Technology: Actively teaching clients how to use ATS systems, create LinkedIn profiles, navigate online applications and participate in virtual interviews.
- Labor Market: Hiring trends, AI, work environments and expectations – educating and supporting the IW in returning to work.

Thank you!

*Work Is Not A Separate Compartment Of
A Person's Life.*

*Work Is The Central Structure Which
Gives It
Purpose And Meaning.*

*Mary Switzer
Vocational Rehabilitation Pioneer*