
**THE SEVEN PHASE SEQUENCE FOR BALANCING
NATURALNESS AND INDIVIDUAL EMPLOYEE NEEDS**

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OVERVIEW

Successful facilitation of employment for persons with disabilities requires a balancing act of two perspectives which are often at odds in community workplaces -- the general decisions made by employers regarding the support given to their employees and the specific needs of individual workers. Traditionally the human service field has assumed that the needs of workers with disabilities, especially employees with severe disabilities, could not be adequately met by employers. Therefore, most training and facilitation strategies have evolved from a human service perspective rather than from a more naturally defined source. However, starting in the early 1990's, employment facilitators began to recognize both the possible contributions of employers, if they are included fully in supported employment, and the limiting effects on integration and full participation if they are excluded from the process.

The inclusion of employers in the facilitation of supported employment has been labeled as "natural supports". This strategy, however, has created its own set of challenges and pitfalls for providers of supported employment services. Questions abound concerning how to best to start implementation, the need for "purity" of natural supports, whether it is acceptable to pay natural supporters, how to identify whether a certain employer will have sufficient capacity and desire to support an employee with a disability and what will happen to supported employees if natural supports are not sufficient for success.

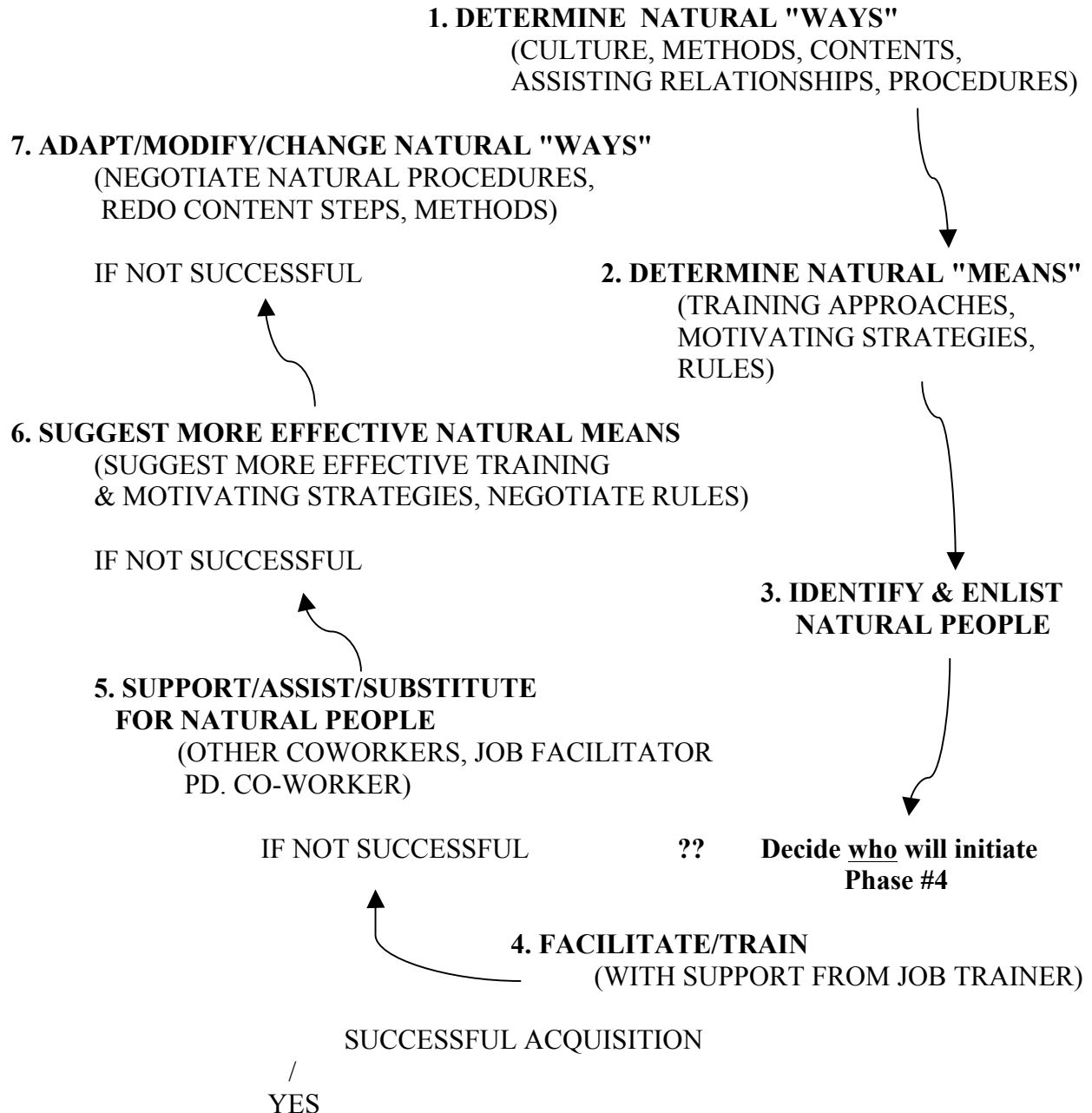
THE SEVEN PHASE SEQUENCE

This approach uses a modification of the Seven Phase Sequence for training originally developed by Marc Gold (1980) and revised for natural work environments by Michael Callahan (1991) to help answer these questions. This sequence represents a conceptual model to balance the natural capacity of community workplaces and the individual needs of employees.

The first four steps of the Seven Phase Sequence clearly indicate a strong preference for using natural processes to assist supported employees to learn and maintain their jobs. This strategy, and the accompanying job analysis activity to be performed, requires the employment facilitator to carefully examine and utilize all the features of "natural capacity" which exist in a work place to assist all employees to learn and perform their jobs.

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The backup phases of the Sequence are designed to provide whatever additional assistance may be necessary, in as natural manner as possible, to teach the job in those cases in which the natural procedures are not sufficient. Employment facilitators are faced with providing creative and effective suggestions in Phases 5 - 7 to supplement the natural supports available on a job site. In some cases it may be necessary for the employment facilitator to completely take over the instructional responsibility for an employee.

This new perspective results in a new role for employment facilitators and raises difficult questions regarding technical assistance and staff competence. For instance, how can a facilitator offer creative solutions if he/she does not know powerful training techniques? How can a facilitator expect to effectively teach an employee who finds it extremely difficult to learn if the facilitator does not have knowledge of effective strategies which can be individually tailored to meet the needs the employee?

THE BALANCING ACT

These questions create a paradox for employment facilitators and their service agencies. Facilitators need to reference and support natural procedures and relationships whenever feasible and they need to be able to go beyond natural capacity, at times, to offer employees with severe disabilities access to necessary skills and relationships.

Perhaps the first key to resolving this dilemma is for the employment facilitator to recognize that there are limits to natural supports and natural capacity. Well-trained employment facilitators will usually have skills and perspectives to meet individual employee needs which are more technically effective than those found in typical employees and supervisors. However, there are many things that human service facilitator can never do as well as "natural" people on job sites. Those natural contributions often relate to the most critically important aspects of success.

Employment facilitators must therefore recognize that even though they need to possess a range of skills to insure their employee's success, those skills serve a secondary, backup role to all the ways, means, and people natural to the job site. However, unless the facilitator knows powerful training strategies, the role of support can be compromised.

The Seven Phase Sequence provides a clear direction to employment facilitators to initiate instruction using the natural ways, means, and people available to any new employee. However, this is not a lockstep model. The facilitator must carefully weigh the features of naturalness, by using the first three steps of the Seven Phase Sequence, in relation to the needs of the employee. Unless there is compelling evidence otherwise, the facilitator should proceed to support, not substitute for, the natural processes of the job site for initial instruction.

THE SEVEN PHASE SEQUENCE

The activity of implementing the plans and decisions made during the Seven Phase Sequence is the first step of a process which is critically important to the success of persons in supported employment. This process involves supporting the direct facilitation of training by natural supporters or providing direct training of the supported employee by the facilitator, as

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appropriate. The decision of who will provide the initial assistance and how the job will be taught and the manner it is to be performed is covered in Phases 1, 2 and 3 of the Sequence.

This implementation begins on the initial day of employment for the supported employee (or possibly during a negotiated orientation period) and continues until all the necessary job routines have been learned by the employee. Additionally, the facilitator must insure that the culture of the setting is translated to the employee.

THE NATURAL PHASES

The first three phases of the Seven Phase Sequence provide all the information necessary for the facilitator to consider the features of naturalness which might be used to provide support and direction assisting the employee to successfully perform the job.

Phase 1 references the **natural ways** in which jobs are performed in work settings. Natural ways include methods of performance for targeted job tasks, step-by-step procedures, the culture of workplace, the manner in which workers interact, the managerial style of the setting, and all other natural features which describe the unique characteristics of performance and behavior desired by the employer.

This phase is crucial because it provides the information necessary for the new employee to "fit in". Employees who perform their jobs in a manner similar to others not only are more likely to be accepted as one "of the gang", it will also be easier for supervisors and co-workers to provide assistance and troubleshoot problems due to the similarity of performance with their jobs.

Phase 2 requires facilitators to examine the **natural means** used by employers to communicate the natural ways desired for employee performance and behavior. This concept concentrates primarily on the teaching strategies, if any, used by employers to introduce new employees to their jobs and to support them when they need assistance and upgrading. A troubling aspect of this phase is the possibility, even the likelihood, that the means used to teach and support employees will vary from person to person in the work site and the approaches may be unstructured and ineffective. Training procedures will certainly vary among work sites in any community.

Perhaps the most effective way to assess the natural means of job sites is to first, ask the employer to describe the procedures used. Second, observe, if possible, teaching done by employees in the setting. Finally, and most importantly, ask to be taught how to perform the job tasks by the persons who would naturally assist the jobs to be performed by the supported employee. This approach will provide the employment facilitator with a valid perspective from which to make later decisions in the sequence.

As noted earlier, experienced facilitators will probably conclude that they possess more effective and systematic procedure than those observed in the natural setting. However, it does not

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necessarily follow that those natural procedures will be insufficient to teach successful performance to the supported employee. There is a strong rationale for the facilitator to take a risk in Phase 4 and allow natural means a chance to be effective. It can even be argued that it would be a reasonable trade-off to accept the lessened performance possible through naturalness over that available through powerful training procedures from the employment facilitator. The Seven Phase Sequence attempts to keep such situations from becoming "either/or" decisions. The back-up phases discussed later will provide all the assistance necessary after natural procedures have been shown to be insufficient.

Phase 3 asks facilitators to identify and enlist the **natural people** who typically support new employees to perform their jobs. This activity is possibly the most novel aspect of natural supports for traditional providers of supported employment services. In the past, job developers often promised employers that job trainers would provide all the assistance necessary for successful performance and that the employer would have no investment in the initial training and support of the employee. This practice resulted in the isolation of supported employees in their own work settings. The job coach often acted as an interpreter for all the information, rules, policies and activities of the work place for the supported employee. This role placed the job coach between the employer and the employee.

The Seven Phase Sequence asks employment facilitators to get to know all the different people who are responsible, or who may be willing, to provide assistance to new employees and to enlist those persons to provide training and support for the new supported employee.

FACILITATING SUCCESSFUL PERFORMANCE

Phase 4 involves the provision of initial and on-going assistance to the supported employee. All the information gained during the first three phases, and in the Job Analysis (described later), is considered in the implementation of this phase. Facilitators must now decide the degree of naturalness which will be used for initial training. It is strongly suggested than unless there are clear indications to the contrary, natural procedures be utilized initially.

Implementing Phase 4

If the facilitator has decided to follow the sequence and allow natural supporters to initiate instruction, it is necessary to plan a strategy to observe the training and to be in a position to offer suggestions and support. This requires the facilitator to be physically at the job site during this initial period. Depending upon the factors determined during the first three phases of the sequence and the job analysis, the facilitator may choose a range of positions varying from a discreet observation point to close proximity to the employee.

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Plans also must be considered to offer feedback and suggestions to the natural supporter. Depending on the needs of the employee and the capacity of the employer, the most appropriate strategy for feedback will vary -- as with positioning of the facilitator. It may be necessary to offer almost immediate feedback in some instances, while in others every hour or even longer may be appropriate. When significant problems arise, the facilitator should implement the back-up phase of the sequence for more individualized attention for the supported employee.

Constraints to the Initial Use of Natural Procedures

There might be several situations in which a facilitator would consider less natural procedures to initiate Phase 4. Often the roles of the job developer and the employment facilitator are performed by different persons. The job developer may indicate to the employer that the employment facilitator will perform all the initial instruction of the supported employee. In this case the facilitator often finds it necessary to initiate training, involving the natural supporters as much as possible, then fade to them as training allows. It is therefore critical that job development reflects the values for natural supports imbedded in the Seven Phase Sequence.

There may also be instances relating to the specific impact of an employee's disability in which the facilitator may feel that it is necessary to model effective techniques for the natural supporters, for example, in the areas of systematic instruction or behavioral interventions, as a way to teach successful strategies.

There might also be situations which are so fragile in relation to the employer's low expectation of success, or of the employee's or the family's low expectations, that the facilitator might feel that a period of greater instructional control is called for than is available from natural procedures.

Finally, job stations and job sites may require modifications to assure accessibility and productivity for employees with physical disabilities. These modifications are often best made before an employee begins work. The employment facilitator however, should seek ways to include the employer in the solutions to these needs rather than assuming the responsibility independently of the employment setting.

MEETING INDIVIDUAL NEEDS: USING THE BACK-UP PHASES

It is important to realize that regardless of who provides the initial training of the supported employee -- natural supporters or the facilitator -- it is likely that there will be adjustments to be made to the features of naturalness identified in Phases 1, 2 and 3. This is to say that the facilitator should not depend on initial strategies and decisions to be sufficient in facilitating successful employment. During the early days of employment, facilitators must constantly monitor the performance of the supported employee. If initial strategies are not successful, then the back-up phases of the Seven Phase Sequence must be implemented.

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Possibly the most significant contribution of the Seven Phase Sequence is its safety net. Rather than blaming acquisition problems on the employee or the employer, the sequence asks employment facilitators to consider increasingly powerful strategies to achieve successful performance. Phases 5, 6, and 7 represent a logical closed loop of decisions which encourage the facilitator to remain positively focused until the employee learns the job.

Another feature of the Seven Phase Sequence is its ability to balance naturalness and the needs of individual employees. The initial three phases are naturally derived and the last three phases allow for more powerful, individualized strategies. However, facilitators must be careful not to switch immediately and completely from natural to individualized approaches. The Seven Phase Sequence provides for a fluid, constant analysis of the ways means and people involved in assisting supported employees to be successful. It is important that if facilitators depart from natural strategies, that it is done in a measured manner by using small, incremental changes from more natural procedures.

Phase 5 involves supporting, or possibly substituting for, the natural people who are responsible for teaching job tasks. The facilitator must be present on the job site to successfully make this and many other back-up decisions. There are a range of ways in which the natural people on a job site can be supported. The facilitator might: a) demonstrate a more powerful technique, b) negotiate a time for discussion and feedback with the natural supporter, c) offer training information formally or informally, or, d) shadow the natural supporter and offer on-going feedback. These strategies represent only a few of the many ways which natural people can be supported. The facilitator might also feel that it is necessary to substitute for natural people by negotiating for a different co-worker or trainer to provide assistance. It is also possible that personal assistance providers, volunteers, parents or other family members might be appropriate substitutes for natural supporters. Of course the most likely substitute is the employment facilitator. The Seven Phase Sequence allows for direct training by the employment facilitator, but other approaches should typically be considered first.

The decisions made during **Phase 6** involve a reconsideration of the natural means used by employers to teach and motivate employees to perform their jobs. It is likely that many work places will not have a single approach to teaching and motivating, but rather a hodgepodge of approaches individually determined by each co-worker and supervisor. Facilitators must be careful, therefore, not to generalize too much in this area. The teaching style of one co-worker may differ significantly from another and further yet from a supervisor. In these cases, it is important to consider those various strategies which seem to be working and who uses them. It may be necessary then to offer specific suggestions to specific natural supporters -- each different from the other -- in order to achieve successful performance.

Phase 7 decisions involve adapting, modifying or negotiating for flexibility in the natural ways that work places operate. Natural ways include task methods, step-by step procedures, rules,

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customs and the overall culture of the work setting. These decisions are logically considered last because they are often the most consistent and unchanging features of work places. It is necessary, in some instances, however, to negotiate for changes in this area even before the employee begins employment. For example, if the natural way to get paper for a copier in an office is to reach up into the storage cabinet to retrieve the paper, a modification would be immediately necessary for an employee who uses a wheelchair and has limited reach.

THE JOB ANALYSIS PROCESS

Job analysis in supported employment is a human service activity designed to assist facilitators to: a) organize the information to be performed by the supported employee; b) recognize the natural ways, means and people used by the employer to typically perform and teach the job; c) develop a plan for balancing the natural features of support available at the job site with the needs of the employee; and d) form the relationships necessary to accomplish the seven phase sequence.

This activity formally begins after the employer has given approval for the job to begin and before the supported employee begins to work. However, the job analysis begins informally even before the job developer's initial contact with the employer. In order to achieve the maximum benefits of natural supports, facilitators must seek to identify factors of natural capacity as a consideration of which employers to call on. During job development, facilitators must consider the features of natural capacity while negotiating with the employer. Care must be taken to set the scene for employer involvement from the onset of employment and to distinguish this naturally-referenced approach from more traditional approaches of supported employment.

The actual performance of the formal Job Analysis by the employment facilitator requires a visit to the job site of at least 1/2 day, but ideally one or more days. Generally speaking, the more time the facilitator invests, the more useful the job analysis becomes in facilitating successful performance and enhancing natural supports./

Given the reliance on and attention to natural supports referenced throughout this paper, readers may wonder why a job analysis should be performed by a human service facilitator. The answer, at this time, is that the facilitator's role remains a critical one. The facilitator must be able to make decisions using the Seven Phase Sequence which balance the needs of the employee with the natural support features of the setting. Effectively making these decisions requires that the facilitator be aware of all of the conditions of the work setting and the job expectations of the employee.

The reason that the facilitator's role remains critical to success is the continuing belief that many persons with severe disabilities require supports, beyond those typically offered by employers, to be successfully employed. At this time, the funding and responsibility for the provision of these supports rest with human service agencies. The use of natural supports does not imply that human service supports are bad, but that they are best used to develop and enhance other, more

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natural supports. Therefore it is vital that employment facilitators be aware of all the conditions and expectations of employment for supported employees.

The usefulness of this approach to job analysis depends on the employment facilitator creating a "chain of logic" throughout the process which results in the maximum use of natural conditions and supports while meeting the individual needs of the supported employee. The sequence of activities used in this process can be divided into three major categories:

- A. Steps performed during job development and before a job site visit;
- B. Steps performed on-site designed to learn and organize the task for decision-making; and,
- C. Steps which enhance the likelihood that the employee will "fit in" the work setting.

The process of performing a job analysis begins with the premise that a well-matched job has been developed for the supported employee and that the employer has agreed, at least to some degree, to the provision of natural supports as suggested by the Seven Phase Sequence. Job development must also effectively negotiate for a set of potentially-achievable tasks which will comprise the employee's tailored job description. This final fitting of the applicant to the job expectations allows the employment facilitator to anticipate any accommodations which must be made in advance by the employer. It is suggested that initial negotiations for technology, accessibility and job station re-design be based on the belief that the accommodations are in keeping with the ADA and Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act. If there are other, more questionable, conditions which might become problematic, it is suggested that the job developer or employment facilitator wait and use the Seven Phase Sequence to resolve any problems.

The steps involving observation and performance of the targeted job tasks are included so that the employment facilitator can gain an accurate mental picture of all the responsibilities of the job. It is from these pictures, and the subsequent content steps which flow from them, that the facilitator will make the decisions on the implementation of the Seven Phase Sequence for initial training of the supported employee.

The final set of steps involves getting a feel for the natural procedures, relationships, politics and other subtle features of the culture of the setting so that the supported employee can be successful as possible during the early days of employment. The facilitator must try to get to know who can and cannot be counted on to provide assistance, who needs to be avoided and who the employee must please in order to stay employed.

A job analysis form is attached to this article and can be used by the facilitator to summarize the findings of the job analysis. This form follows the Seven Phase Sequence and allows the job analysis to follow the perspectives described in this paper.

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The facilitator needs to identify the natural ways the employer wants the job performed, the natural means used to teach and maintain the job and the people who are responsible for training new employees. The job analysis form also requires the facilitator to examine relationships among employees, physical requirements of the job, cultural aspects of the setting and other factors relating to successful job performance.

For those employees who will need job site modifications and technology, the facilitator will conduct an accessibility survey and will attempt to identify for the employer any reasonable accommodations which might be covered under the ADA and Section 504 of the Rehab Act.

Finally, the facilitator must consider how to best proceed with the use of natural supports in relation to the direct support and training available by the facilitator. This may involve providing information to designated co-workers and supervisors, modeling good training techniques or simply answering concerns and questions by the person(s) responsible for supporting the new employee.

The following pages provide hints for facilitators to use in implementing the Seven Phase Sequence.

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PHASE 1: NATURAL WAYS

- This initial phase of the Seven Phase Sequence is accomplished during **job development** and **job analysis**.
- The job facilitator is first asked to identify the unique features of the **culture** of the work setting.
- It is critical to get a clear image of the **ways** in which people perform their jobs, how they interact with each other, the style of management and the relationships between co-workers and supervisors.
- The job facilitator should carefully observe the **specific tasks** which will comprise the supported employee's job.
- If the job(s) to be performed can be learned in a reasonable time, the job facilitator should ask permission to **perform** the various tasks.
- Identify written **policies** and **rules** which describe the official "company line" for appropriate employee behavior.
- Notice all the **subtle, unwritten rules** of the setting.
- Convey the message that the **co-workers** and **supervisors** are the "experts" and that the job facilitator is there to learn and to only assist as necessary.

PHASE 2: NATURAL MEANS

- This phase asks the job facilitator to observe and, as appropriate, experience the **natural means** which the employment settings uses to introduce and maintain the natural ways identified in phase 1.

- Observe **training interactions among employees** in the work setting, especially between new employees and the persons responsible for teaching them their jobs.

- Ask the employer to describe the **manner in which employees receive training and support** and review any written materials and procedures.

- When appropriate, request that the employer provide the job facilitator with **training** on the tasks to be **performed by the supported employee**.

- Look for **informal assistance** provided by co-workers to others in the setting.

- Ask the employer and others in the setting about the **flexibility** which is offered to employees and what the **conditions** are for this kind of consideration.

- Begin to compare the **strategies observed** with the anticipated training needs of the supported. employee

PHASE 3: NATURAL PEOPLE

- This is the final phase of the "**cultural analysis**" of the activity traditionally referred to as job analysis.
- The job facilitator is asked to identify the **personnel** who are typically responsible for teaching new employees how to perform the job to be performed by the supported employee.
- Even though some businesses may have specific personnel to provide training and orientation, it is often necessary to observe - or ask the employer directly - in order to **identify the co-workers or supervisors** who offer this service.
- Proceed with the assumption that the supported employee will receive the **same initial orientation and training** support offered to all other new employees.
- Try to **form relationships** with support personnel as **early** as possible during job analysis.
- Answer direct questions concerning the supported employee's disabilities positively and in terms of the **impact of disability** - - avoid disability labels.
- If specific support personnel are not available, **recruit** co-workers or supervisors who seem to be interested in your job analysis and who are the most willing to provide you with assistance.

PHASE 4: FACILITATE SUCCESSFUL JOB PERFORMANCE

- After completing the job analysis, you must decide **who will facilitate** Phase 4.

- Proceed, with encouragement if necessary, with the **assumption** that the **natural personnel** identified in Phase 3 **will facilitate** Phase 4.

- Phase 4 **requires**, initially at least, the **presence of the job facilitator** close enough to the job that assistance can be offered when necessary.

- Negotiate an **unobtrusive observation position** in the work setting for the job facilitator.

- In some cases, it may be helpful to develop a **facilitation plan** with the employer to cover varying support needs during the initial stages of employment.

- A facilitation plan may include **natural co-workers or supervisors** who typically teaching the assigned tasks, **co-workers from other shifts** paid overtime for support **and the job facilitator**.

- The role of the facilitator in Phase 4 is to **support and build capacity with the employer**, whenever possible --not to simply substitute for the employer by providing direct support.

PHASES 5, 6 & 7: THE BACKUP PHASES

- The backup phases are designed so that the job facilitator provides support, modifications, changes or direct facilitation **first** those **features** of work settings which **change the most**.
- Each change from "natural procedures" should proceed in a **least intrusive to more intrusive** manner or a **most natural to less natural** manner.
- Invite the **employer to solve problems** first, before offering suggestions.
- Treat the employer as the **"apparent customer"** and the **expert** in relation to the work place.
- **"Naturalness"** should always exert a pull on all decisions made to modify the ways, means or people of a work setting.
- Even though the **suggested sequence** of this approach **usually is the most effective** way to proceed, it is not necessary to take each of the backup phases in turn.
- Remember, embracing **natural supports does not mean relinquishing our role** as facilitators and "experts" in the area of disabilities.

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