

## **TIE THAT BINDS**

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**ATTITUDE IS THE REAL DISABILITY**

### **WORK READY OR READY TO WORK**

On a LinkedIn discussion board, there is a discussion about being work ready or ready to work. This is in connection with people with disabilities becoming employed. Since 1974 I have been helping people find jobs. It was not until I started in the disability field that I heard those two terms. Does it even apply?

I remember asking someone who was returning to work after surgery if he was ready to work. It is not a question that even enters my head. People know what I do. I assume that they come to me because they want to work. As a professional I help them find that position that fills their need. I do not need to qualify them by asking if they are work ready or ready to work. Try asking that question to someone not in the disability field, someone standing in the unemployment office or at the Career Center.

Are you ready to work, or are you work ready? The fact you want to work is good enough for me.

### **BEING PART OF THE COMMUNITY**

For 25 years I have worked to include people with disabilities in the community. The most noticeable and life impacting way to be part of the community is to have a job in the community, not a sheltered workshop.

This has been my thought that people with disabilities should have a normal life; normalized in the way that people should work and reduce their reliance on the government.

We are living in confusing times. CNS News, Forbes and the US Census Bureau report that 49% of the population receives some sort of government assistance. What is normal?

It is hard to urge and encourage someone to work when they have no role model what working does for someone. I used to talk to people in my employment program about going to work because that is the expectation and everyone works. Now I run into pushback when I say that.

When I started in 1988, going to work was an expectation or my program, individuals in my program and family members of people in my program. I came across a 2<sup>nd</sup> generation where no one had worked. That is “why should I work, my parents don’t work!” Then it followed with “why should I work my parents and grandpa haven’t worked.” That’s 3 generations without a work ethic. Last month I interviewed someone who had 4 generations of drawing down government assistance. This could be a long time in re-shaping their opinions on work and developing a work ethic.

This is not the community inclusion that we want. They are part of a community and don’t see it as being out of the mainstream.

## IYDWYHADYWGWHAG

When I started this job in 1996, Dr. Debra Martin Luecking gave me a sign with these letters on it. If you do what you have always have done, you will get what you have always gotten. This applies to many things in the disability field, but I was thinking of its application in job placement activities.

Where is everyone going to? There seems to be certain employers or fields that we gravitate towards. Maybe we should avoid competition. In Tennessee, there are over 110,000 businesses and over 110 community rehabilitation providers. I think you can blaze a trail where no one else has gone before.

Identify the traditional approaches that don't work. Employers have told us that we are all a blur, everyone is the same. What can you say and do that makes your approach stand out.

When do employers make a decision? The feedback is that employers are forming their decision when they meet the employment consultant, not necessarily the job seeker. Their decision is based on the quality of interaction, the job developers overall professionalism and the sense of empathy for the needs of the business. Employer's base hiring decisions on the fact the person has skills the business needs or can be taught skills the business needs. Job developers need to frame their presentations to businesses around this.

## INTERESTING WEBSITES

There have been requests for finding jobs that may not be the ordinary jobs we are used to looking for. Others have requested ideas for employment in rural areas or jobs that you can tele-commute. On November 17, I stumbled on to this site:

[www.flexjobs.com/blog/post/100-surprising-flexible-and-remote-jobs/](http://www.flexjobs.com/blog/post/100-surprising-flexible-and-remote-jobs/).

Many states have adopted policies that require school students to develop and maintain an individualized learning plan in order to make schools more personalized and improve student outcomes. You can view a map at: [www.dol.gov/odep/map](http://www.dol.gov/odep/map).

One more time on the Diversity Initiative. If you have more than \$25,000 in Federal contracts, you need to have a diverse workforce.. This info is available at: [www.Fedspending.org](http://www.Fedspending.org). Click on contracts, click on state and then congressional districts. My congressional district has over \$585 million in government contracts. Do you think they need to diversify their workforce?

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I LIKE WORK,  
IT FASCINATES ME  
I CAN SIT  
AND  
WATCH YOU WORK ALL DAY.

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