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## **JOB COACH IN SUPPORTED EMPLOYMENT**

**Ключевые слова:** *инструктор по поиску рабочего места, квалификационные требования, профессиональное развитие, работник с ограничениями к трудовой деятельности, поддерживаемая занятость.*

*Рынок труда – место, где происходит постоянная конкуренция между желающими получить работу и теми, кто хочет ее сохранить. Конечно, в лучшем положении находятся те, кто имеет образование и профессию, относящиеся к востребованным. Нельзя забывать, что в настоящее время на рынке труда предложение рабочей силы превалирует над спросом. При такой конкуренции, мало шансов найти работу людям, страдающим от социальной изоляции. К ним относятся, наряду с другими, и люди с ограниченными к труду возможностями. Другая проблема – это демографические изменения, наблюдаемые во многих странах, которые свидетельствуют о том, что из-за низкого роста народонаселения и отсутствия прямого замещения поколений, рынок труда будет сложно управляемым. В результате во многих странах наблюдается тенденция к увеличению работоспособного возраста. Авторы полагают, что такие меры не являются достаточными и страны будут вынуждены использовать ресурсы, которые ранее не учитывались или незначительно принимались во внимание. К ним относятся и люди с ограниченными возможностями к труду. Данная статья знакомит с системой поддерживаемой занятости. Эта концепция, несмотря на относительную новизну, набирает все больше и больше сторонников. Основной акцент в статье сделан на профессию будущего – инструктора по поиску рабочего места. В статье описываются квалификационные требования, необходимые для данной профессии, а также формы профессионального развития человека в данной профессии.*

**Keywords:** *job coach, qualifications, professional development, disabled employee, supported employment.*

*The labour market is a place where a constant competition between candidates eager to get employment and those who want to maintain it takes place. Of course, the best chance of getting a job have people who are educated and qualified in occupations within a deficit group. We cannot forget that nowadays on the labour market there is a surplus of labour supply over demand. With such a competition, little chance of getting a job have people affected by social exclusion. They are, among others, people with disabilities, including intellectual ones. Another problem is the demographic changes observed in many countries of the world, which indicate that due to low population growth and lack of direct replacement of generations, the labour market will run out of hands to work. As a result of this, in many countries working age is extended. Authors assume that such treatments may not be sufficient and countries will have to use the resources previously unaccounted for or included in a small proportion, for example people with disabilities. This paper introduces reader to the system of supported employment. This concept, although new, is gaining more and more supporters. In the study the authors focus special attention on the future profession – job coach. They describe the qualifications necessary to perform this function, and also show the forms of professional development of a person employed for the job.*

### *Introduction*

Supported employment was created in the United States and Canada in the seventies and eighties of the last century and its goal was to fully include people with disabilities into the labour market. As a result of several projects carried out in the United States, the importance of professional asset of people with intellectual disabilities was observed. The myth that people with disabilities do not have sufficient potential to find work in a normal environment was abolished. A turning point here was the work of Marc W. Gold (the creator of an innovative approach to work with people with disabilities). The research concerned enabling people with profound disabilities to master a complicated task (assembly of the bicycle brake) by combining several techniques. He proved that people requiring intensive support in conceptual abilities, can in the same time learn to perform fairly complex tasks. Gold's work and other research initiatives exploring the ability to develop of mentally disabled have shown that after

proper training and support, these people can perform complex tasks and work in positions previously reserved only for the able-bodied [3]. This has changed the way of life, including professional careers of many people with disabilities.

Supported employment is: «supported employment is provision of support to people with disabilities and to other groups of excluded people, aimed at providing them with paid employment in the open labor market and maintaining it» [4, p. 7].

The process of supported employment, in model form, consists of five stages. At all stages, the parties of supported employment get help from experienced supervisors, i.e. job coaches.

The first stage – customer engagement. Most treatments at this stage come down to supplying the person with information, in available form, and to support them in the process of using the information and learning by experience, which is to allow the customer to make choices based on their knowledge. After finishing this stage, the person concerned must decide whether to use supported employment or not.

The second stage – creation of a professional profile. At this stage, a recognition of competence and skills of the client, their strengths and weaknesses is carried out. This action allows to build a detailed professional profile, which will have an impact on further stages of the road to employment. The basis of this process is becoming independent by the person concerned. They take an active part in the construction of their vision of employment, which is consistent with their needs, opportunities, career plans and interests. This phase is focused on the person who makes their own choices.

The third stage – a job search. Conditions of employment should be well matched to the needs and expectations of both sides of supported employment (employee and employer). When making the final decision about the offer, the type and degree of limitation of the customer is not important, and the role of supported employment agencies is only consulting. Every method of job search is good. The most important feature is its effectiveness in finding employment.

The fourth stage is the involvement of employers. At this stage, it is the employer who presents conditions of employment to the candidate. This is done usually at a

meeting of the future contract parties, in the presence of a job coach. The subject of discussion and negotiation may be the following:

- conditions of employment (for example type of contract, salary, hours of work);
- requirements for experience and skills of future employee;
- forms of support provided by supported employment agencies;
- scope of support of prospective employee from the employer and co-workers;
- adherence to health and safety regulations;
- training for future employers and colleagues shaping their consciousness of how a cooperation with a disabled person should look like;
- possibility for the employer to get a financial support from government or other programs;
- legal requirements to the employer in respect of their duties and responsibilities.

The talks are aimed at determining the rights and obligations of each party to the agreement.

The fifth stage of supported employment is to support the disabled. The name itself of this form of employment shows that its most important feature is support. The intensity of support varies, depending on the type and degree of disability. With properly selected forms of support, the disabled person has a chance to become a full member of workers' community and provide for the enlargement of its potential. Changing the environment of support and forms of support should be discussed between three parties (i.e. employer, worker, job coach) and selected individually for each person. Support may relate to the place of employment and the living environment. Support measures in the workplace can be:

- finding a mentor/coach among colleagues;
- supporting adaptation to workplace and position;
- focusing on social inclusion and preventing discriminatory attitudes;
- identifying opportunities on potential career development;
- drawing attention to the practices and customs in the workplace.

Support package outside the place of employment, most of all:

– discussing on a regular basis interpersonal relations in the workplace, in order to avoid misunderstandings and build a friendly atmosphere that can effect on friendly relations outside the company;

– solving everyday practical problems that can make it difficult for a disabled person to function in the work environment;

– assisting in dealing with all the formalities at the workspace and beyond;

– contact with healthcare professionals who exercise ongoing care over worker;

– openness and empathy towards the disabled person's matters.

The work providing satisfaction is the one that corresponds to the competences and professional aspirations of employee. The entire process described above is intended to provide employment in accordance with the competence and skills of a particular disabled person. The customer receives paid employment consistent with a job agreement and tailored to their abilities. They work in an integrated environment receiving a salary provided for in a remuneration system of employees in a given company. Leading people with a disability and employment should be implemented so that a disabled person regarded the proposed actions as valuable and useful. In this way, the employed will feel included in the team, satisfied and their commitment will affect further development of their professional career [1]. A key role in the process of supported employment plays a job coach. They perform a variety of tasks that require them to have certain personality traits, ability to work in a team, as well as extensive sociological, psychological, legal knowledge and knowledge of the local labour market.

#### *Job coach – profession of the future*

«Job coach» occupation is associated with great responsibility and puts high demands. Due to the work environment, a person performing this role should be characterized by good manners, emotional maturity, tact and high level of ethical principles. Responsibilities of a job coach essentially focus on helping a disabled person in finding their place in a professional environment. People seeking employment expect from a job coach individual support in accordance with a five-step process of supported employment, in order to obtain and maintain permanent jobs. However, professional approach to the tasks requires from the coach also building a relationship with the client's

environment, i.e. a possible future employer, specialists (for example psychologist, vocational counselor, doctor, etc.), family, experts or support institutions. So the job coach is a profession in the service of others and cannot be performed by any random person.

Profile of competences developed for the profession of job coach takes into account two elements: basic and workshop. The first part refers to their personality traits. One can distinguish here:

1) attitude towards the profession – practicing it with passion, having a commitment oriented towards helping others, initiating new solutions and overcoming difficulties, being able to work in a team;

2) ability to work with people disabled people – being able to establish contacts, noticing the needs of others, respecting different views, not judging;

3) ability of empathic perception of others' problems – having the ability to empathize with a situation of other people (including people with disabilities), while maintaining the ability of proper overview of the problem and managing real help;

4) subjective approach to a client – treating all cooperating people equally, taking into account both their individual needs and ability to make sovereign decisions, remembering that the principle of this work is to support;

5) professionalism and responsibility – complying with binding legal regulations and ethical standards, being discreet while maintaining professional secrecy, preventing situations with negative consequences;

6) mental strength and assertiveness – having a high ability to rule over their own emotions and an ability to relieve the emotional state of a client, being able to verbalize their position while maintaining respect for the customer's different views, not manipulating or putting pressure, coping with possible failures.

The second part includes social, cognitive and executive competence, necessary for conducting workshop with the client. Social competence indicates having interaction skills, for example: effective verbal and written communication, knowledge of the elements of non-verbal communication, motivating others, following the principles of fair play and savoir-vivre. Cognitive competence refers to the ability of organization

of their own work, for example gaining and storing information, making analysis and drawing conclusions, strategic planning, focusing on self-development (learning sign language, labour law, marketing principles, etc.). Executive competence focuses on the modus operandi of the coach with a client (person with a disability and/or employer). In this area, it is important to professionally carry the client through all stages of supported employment, including establishment of contacts with employers and cooperating institutions. Knowing local labour market as well as health and personal determinants of the client, the coach is able to negotiate terms of a contract, indicate solutions of difficult or problematic situations [6].

Each type of indicated above competences requires from a job coach a constant knowledge increase in the process of lifelong education. Restoration of a disabled person to a full participation in social life through a full-fledged performance of professional roles depends on the coach's professional development.

#### *Professional development of a job coach*

It is most likely for vocational counselor, psychologist, sociologist, therapist, educator, mediator to become a job coach, but also other people working with the disabled or who would like to support this group in the open labour market. Job coach is a person who helps a customer not only in choosing the direction of education and occupation, contact with employer or self-employment, as for example vocational counselor does. This profession is very different from the previously mentioned one, because it provides simultaneous support for two entities: the disabled person and the employer. Assistance provided is not a one-time, ad hoc help, but it covers the entire process of preparation, adaptation and professional activity.

A job coach, to ensure a proper and permanent place of employment to his client, using them and their environment (work, private) tries to eliminate existing barriers and problems.

A candidate for a job coach, besides the education (about which above) should pass a series of trainings on supported employment and receive appropriate certificate authorizing them to perform the specified profession. The main aim of the training is to develop critical knowledge and key skills of a workshop participant. Specialized

trainings set the standard for obtaining a certificate of entitlement to practice. Certified training should not last less than 72 hours [6] and individual topics should be realized in a number of modules corresponding to the 5 stages of supported employment:

1. Introduction to supported employment – definitions, assumptions, goals, stages.

2. Role, competences and organization of coach's work – knowledge, skills, ethics, effective time management, cooperation with specialists and the environment.

3. Individual professional profiles of a disabled person – evaluation of the experience and capabilities of the disabled person, getting to know their preferences and interests, determining the positions that correspond to strengths of the client, developing an action plan for getting an employment.

4. Trainer as a coach – definitions, stages and objectives of coaching, job coach as a coach at every stage of supported employment (diagnosis of needs, planning the ward's future, performance evaluation, motivation), building trust and appropriate relations between the coach (trainer) and a disabled person.

5. Legal aspects of supported employment – knowledge of legal issues and the efficient mobility around the labour law, used forms of employment, duties and rights of the employee and the employer, financial conditions of employment.

6. Marketing of supported employment – identifying the needs of an employer, preparation of an offer of supported employment, presenting the benefits of employment of a disabled person, methods of acquiring employers.

7. Effective mobility on labour market – ways of seeking employment, creating databases (regarding employers, legal documents, job offers), preparing application documents, job interviews, negotiating terms of employment.

8. Supporting employee and employer – assistance in organizing the workplace, financial opportunities for employer's support, diagnosis of both employer's and a disabled person's needs, a natural social support of work environment, solving problems on the line workplace-environment of the employee (for example their access to the workplace).



9. Disabled employee as a part of the task force – principles of teamwork (objectives, roles, division of labor, cooperation, responsibility, development).

The thematic scope of the above mentioned modules, contains all the necessary elements of knowledge in the field of supported employment, which a job coach should be equipped with. The training includes both theoretical knowledge and practical tips how to work with a disabled person. Classes are conducted in a form of lectures, individual and group work, for example regarding behaviour of exemplary situations or solving specific problems. Students also receive scored tasks that are a verification of knowledge and condition for completing training. Task description requires demonstration of understanding and application of the model of supported employment, as well as the ability to plan, implement and evaluate the process. The most important element of the course is to prepare the listener for the role of job coach at every stage of supported employment. It should be emphasized that the aim of their work is to bring to employment of a person from a group at risk of social exclusion (people with severe and moderate degree of disability in the field of psychiatric disorders, cerebral palsy, epilepsy, or with conjugated disability, for example mental retardation associated with dysfunction of speech). High demands put on a job coach are necessary because they have a direct impact on the attitudes of their wards, and their actions will cause a fundamental change in their lives, not only in terms of professional activity. Due to the broad thematic area of the trainer's activities, constant improvement of their qualifications is an absolute requirement [6].

### *Summary*

The fundamental problem of disabled people is their low professional activity and high occupational inactivity. This is the effect of existing in many countries (including Poland) legal regime that traditionally regulates the employment situation of disabled people with a model – train and place (usually in sheltered workshops). Supported employment presented in this paper should be implemented in a systematic and constant way by promoting model – place, train and maintain (on an open labour market). It offers advantages to both contracting parties: the disabled person and the employer. Thanks to coach's activities, the client gets support throughout the entire period since

notification up to employment, and the employer gets the guarantee that they are given a properly prepared and motivated employee. Highly qualified trainers serve both contracting parties by solving problems of the employer and the disabled worker. Today many employers in Poland may not yet see a problem in finding an employee (for example due to high unemployment), but statistical forecasts are clear:

1) systematic reduction of the number of people, including decreasing number of young people aged 16–24 years (from 6 million in 2004 to almost 4 million in 2015 and 3 million in 2030);

2) significant shift in ratio between the number of people in productive age and those in non-productive age. Until 2030 productive-age population will steadily decrease. The economic burden rate, i.e. number of people in the non-productive age per 100 people of productive age will increase from 60 to 72. The period after 2020 will be characterized by rapid aging of the Polish population. This significant growth will occur in the oldest age groups. The number of people aged 85 years in 2030 will rise to almost 800 thousand (currently less than 320 thousand).

These changes will severely affect labour market. The number of jobs will increase by approximately 200 thousand and it will create a labour market gap of 1.2 million jobs to be filled. This means that it will reverse the roles on the labour market, employers will seek and fight for employees reaching to the current reserves of excluded people (GUS 2004).

Another important component of supported employment is to build a positive image of a company through participation in socially responsible business (CSR – Corporate Social Responsibility). The attractiveness of a company in the labour market increases by its responsible behaviour in social, economic and natural space. The company creates a positive image by taking action in favour of local environment and contributing to mitigation of certain social problems [7].

Actions of a job coach should be a subject to systematic assessment. Monitoring the work would serve primarily to prevent irregularities, but also to improve and analyze data on the support provided [5].

Many European countries recognize for some time the importance of the problem which is the work for the excluded. That is why in 1993 the European Union of Supported Employment was created. Its main objective is to promote used in supported employment. It provides a platform for exchanging information and knowledge about practices in supported employment. The organization includes among others countries: Scotland, Portugal, Greece, Ireland, Northern Ireland, Czech Republic, Germany, Spain, Sweden, Finland, Austria, Italy, the Netherlands, England, Norway, Iceland. Its main activities are: creation of new national organizations, campaigning and lobbying for the rights of disabled people and their access to employment and professional development. Supported employment in Poland is a new concept that quickly gains followers. It is appreciated because it opens up good perspectives for the professional integration of people with disabilities. Taking into account demographic changes, in the light of recognized benefits for people with disabilities, employers, and in the final effect also for society as a whole, the introduction of supported employment is an important element of labour market policy. As a great part of it, the profession of job coach should be included in the European classification of professions and specialties.

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