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Discovery: Finding the Direction to Facilitate Successful Employment

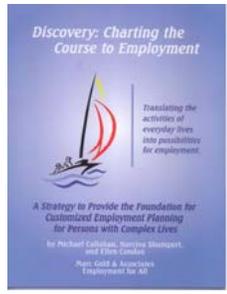
A process for guiding transition to employment for people with complex lives

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A Resource for Discovery

This manual on Discovery and it's companion for Profiles are available from MG&A. Phone number below.



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Discovery

"Discovery consists of looking at the same thing as everyone else and thinking something different"

Albert Szent-Gyorgyi (Nobel Prize winner who discovered Vitamin C)

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The role of discovery

Discovery provides, in a non-traditional, common-sense form, the information needed to determine *the strengths, needs, and interests** of any person with complex life issues.

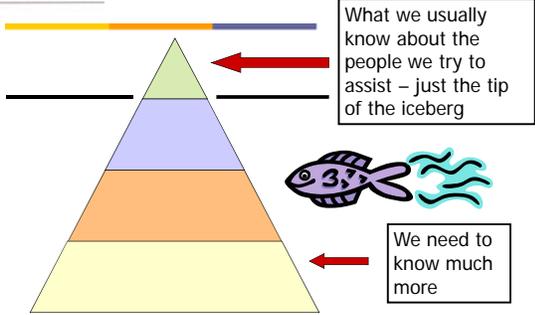
This is accomplished by simply addressing the question, "Who is this person?"

* From DOL/ODEP definition

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The Iceberg Analogy of Discovery



What we usually know about the people we try to assist – just the tip of the iceberg

We need to know much more

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The focus of discovery

- Conditions for Success
- Interests toward an aspect of the Labor Market
- Potential Contributions to Employers

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Characteristics of an Ideal Job

Conditions are characteristics of *any* job developed for the individual. Conditions refer to issues such as days of work, pay, benefits, location of the job, inside/outside work, time of day, hours per week, etc. While it is possible to have too many conditions, these are extremely important considerations in customizing a job. Target *go/no go* conditions for priority consideration.

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Characteristics of an Ideal Job

Interests are characteristics of an ideal job that gives direction toward a certain area of work interest. These should be stated in the broadest possible manner, allowable by the applicant. Interests might include: working around boats, office work or working in a retail setting. Do not confuse work preferences with preferentially-stated conditions. *Avoid* using job titles.

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Characteristics of an Ideal Job

Contributions refer to the individual's characteristics that will be offered to employers. These might include:

- Personality characteristics*
- Skills*
- Credentials*
- Experiences*
- Recommendations*

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Customized Process

- Discovery
 - Capturing discovery through profiles
 - Customized, person-centered planning
 - Portfolio/visual resume development
 - Job development and negotiation
- Here, CE dovetails with Supported Employment*
- Job site analysis, accommodations, support

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Discovery and Customization

These are compatible concepts that are used sequentially to facilitate employment for students who might otherwise not achieve employment. *Discovery* provides the foundation information for individuals that is then used to *customize* a position with an employer.

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We are all like pieces in a complex jig-saw puzzle



MG&A Discovery finds the pieces and puts them together

Profile
This is who I am.

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MG&A Discovery and Traditional Procedures

- Discovery seeks to identify **already-existing information** rather than developing information solely for the purposes of evaluation or diagnosis.
- Identifying a direction for employment is based on a **translation of typical activities of the person's life** rather than on a comparison of the individual with others or with standards.

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MG&A Discovery and Traditional Procedures

- The discovery process focuses more on **ecological validity** than **predictive validity**. It is more important that the direction to employment makes sense in relation to a person's life than to attempt to predict success based on test performance.
- The information of discovery is used only as a **guide for matching and customization** and may **not** be used to systematically exclude a person from employment.

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MG&A Discovery and Traditional Procedures

- By implementing discovery, we try to **identify the real complexities** faced by the individual and attempt to negotiate and match employment that fits, rather than putting the burden of resolving complexities solely on the individual.
- The profile strategy seeks to **empower and involve applicants, their families and friends** rather than to exclude them. Natural, common sense approaches to employment are given priority over strategies which rely solely on professional judgment and service.

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MG&A Need for Discovery

Complexity is like a fog, obscuring the best of who people are.

- Discovery shows us the impact of life complexity on work.
- When we discover rather than presume and diagnose, a useful description of a person starts to emerge.
- Discovery shows possibilities and leads to things a person is motivated to do rather than to fears, negativity and deficits.

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MG&A Discovery is...

- A process that involves getting to know people, or helping them get to know themselves, before we help them plan
- Spending time with applicants, instead of testing or evaluating them, as a means of finding out who they are
- The best way to find out the best that people have to offer
- A common-sense strategy to determine complexities and preferences

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Discovery is...

- A way to identify the unique contributions offered by those who might not compete as well as others
- Enhanced when we get to know people in settings *where they are most who they are*
- Not a plan, but the foundation of employment planning, that seeks to customize outcomes
- Compatible with self-determination and customer choice

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Discovery = Translation

The finesse of discovery is to identify typical aspects of life and to translate those activities into *Conditions* for success, *Interests* toward employment and potential *Contributions* to be offered to employers.

Discovery is essentially an activity of *translation*.

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Successful life factors > ideal work factors

Successful life factors During Discovery facilitators look for the conditions that are present in successful performance of life activities.

Successful working factors The conditions for successful performance of life activities are translated into the conditions that should be present in any employment situation.

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Intrinsic personal interests > Areas of work interest

Intrinsic personal interests refer to activities that individuals do without being expected or reinforced to do by others.

Areas of work interest refer to general types of work that have been translated from the individual's intrinsic personal interests.

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Skills of Life > Potential Work Tasks

Current Skills of Life refer to any performance activity that the individual currently performs without support or with support, as described in notes.

Potential Work Tasks refer to current skills of life, *translated* into employer language, that the person can reasonably be expected to perform at work, with training, supports and accommodations as necessary.

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Discovery allows us to determine who the applicant is, their complexities, and potential contributions to employers.



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Meet Andrew in High School

Andy was a typical young person with a disability



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The school's view of Andy

At eighteen years old, he was still viewed as a young child who was not "ready" to enter into a life as an employed adult



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Testing results...

- "able to remain focused for approx. 30 minutes"
- "he would say 'too hard' and cease work"
- Reading Comp: 1.6 grade level
- SRA non-verbal reasoning test: 4th percentile
- Minn. Clerical test: 1st percentile, timed & un-timed
- WREST: "very poor range in all areas"
- Productivity rate 6%
- On work samples: "accuracy improved very slowly with practice and constant one-one supervision"

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The negative impression of testing

"Relative to all work samples administered, it appeared that Mr. Cosel's performance was best when tasks involved no more than one or two steps."

"Due to Mr. Cosel's very low level of productivity and his need for constant supervision, traditional employment is not feasible at this time. Training and education which enables him to practice simple manual skills such as packaging and sorting should be explored in the future."

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Beyond the Presumptions of Evaluation

In order to find an optimistic path towards employment, in light of poor test performance and low expectations, it was necessary to get to know Andy much more deeply than who he seemed to be those who knew him professionally.

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Discovery provided a new picture of Andy



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New dimensions of his personality, skills and interests

His pastime activities gave us insight into skills that the tests did not identify



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Andy's hobbies and interests gave perspective to his overall character

From Computers



To musical interests...



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Getting personal

From bathing...



To toileting accommodations



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Family and friends



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Support from his service dog




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Employment experiences

Delivering cash receipts



Assisting warehouse personnel



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Importance of Discovery

Facilitated Discovery provided a clear, alternative picture of Andy. It provided sufficient information and direction to develop a plan for customized job development.

Andy started work at teaching hospital at SUNY Stony Brook on Long Island after job development by his family.

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Andy is responsible for delivery of data processing information to 82 depts. within the hospital



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Still working...

Andy is still working today, fifteen years later.



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And still painting...



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The "Who" of Discovery

- The person of concern
- Their family and loved ones
- Close and trusted friends
- Neighbors with good relationships
- Professionals who care
 - Counselors
 - Teachers
 - Case managers
 - Service providers

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The "Where" of Discovery

- Home/Living Context: Discovery starts where relationships start - where we live
- Neighborhood
- Local Community
- Ethnic group/peer group
- School
- One-stop center
- Church
- Places where the person is "most who they are"

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The "What" of Discovery: Identifying the best aspects of the person

- Routines
- Relationships
- Responsibilities
- Challenges
- Associations
- Friendships
- Shops and Services
- Tasks
- Solutions
- Connections
- Education
- Location
- Life performance
- Community inventory

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Discovery Reflections

Before we wrap up our discussions on Discovery, let's reflect on how this process led us to customized employment opportunities for individuals with significant disabilities.

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We discovered that Jenni enjoyed opening Christmas presents. This led us to her first job.



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We learned that Sal enjoyed people and made them comfortable, even with his technology and his significant disability



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James loved live-action cop shows and he has a unique skill for organizing materials



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We learned that Marci was "present" when her body was still and that she was still when hearing music.



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We discovered Larry waited for the mailman every day at three o'clock...



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We learned that Glen and Otto insisted on working together. We also learned that Glen was "addicted" to afternoon Soap Operas and that Otto rarely awoke before 11:00 AM



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We discovered Katherine made and served coffee at all family gatherings...



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We discovered the men in Robert's family were all woodworkers...



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We discovered that Kevin had always dreamed of being a club DJ...



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Elizabeth always carried a book around. It made her feel she was part of her professionally oriented family.



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Buddy and his sister wanted to work in the convent



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Anna loved her camera, always taking pictures that were perfectly centered



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Caloah always dreamed of being a nurse



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Phyliss wanted to work where her friends worked, in a hospital dietary department



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Let's all go do Discovery!

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