RT/AT Impact

A newsletter of the Center on Effective Rehabilitation Technology service delivery

Fall 2014

RESEARCH SNAPSHOTS

1. Preliminary Findings on the Qualitative Study on Workplace Accommodations

We conducted in-depth interviews with 20 employees who represented a wide range of disabilities as well as occupations. This qualitative study is a companion to a national survey that included over 2,000 participants and focused on the costs, benefits, effectiveness, types, and nature of workplace accommodations. The sample of interview participants consisted of survey respondents who indicated, upon survey completion, that they would be interested in participating in a follow-up phone interview. We designed a semi-structured interview guide that would allow us to explore many of the issues raised by the survey in greater depth. Interview questions were open-ended, encouraging participants to respond thoughtfully and to raise further issues of importance. We conducted nineteen interviews by phone and one interview with a deaf participant by email.

Overarching research questions for the interview study included the following:

1. What are the barriers employees with disabilities face in obtaining workplace accommodations at the local level among their supervisors and co-workers?
2. What roles do supervisors and co-workers play in this process?'

In recounting the kinds of accommodations they needed over the course of their careers, the study participants made it clear that they did not consider negotiating for accommodations a singular event, but an ongoing process. *Many described how the nature of their disabilities changed over time, changing their accommodations needs.* Others described the occurrence of secondary disabilities. Most participants discussed the changing nature of technology and the need for upgrades and new equipment. Many needed a number of devices as well as modifications to

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What You Need to Know About Assistive Technology But Didn't Know Who to Ask [Youtube Video]

TECHNOLOGY ACCESS IN THE NEWS

Southeast ADA Technology Access Highlights

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SHARE YOUR NEWS

RT/AT Impact aims to promote and cultivate knowledge sharing on the current trends and best practices in improving access to and acquisition of technology that best matches a person's needs, desires, and environment. We are happy to disseminate your news and recent research findings, upcoming events, or archived

2. Improving RT/AT Selection and Use

VrXCERT, our evidence-based expert system to improve counselor and consumer decision making on the technology that best matches the consumer's needs, is ready and seeking testers!
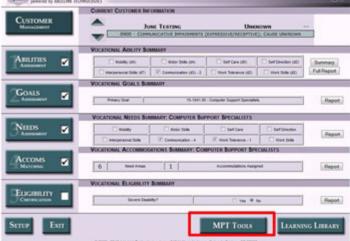
This project brings together Dr. Marcia Scherer's Matching Person and Technology model and the VrXpert system developed by AbleLink Technologies, Inc to develop a comprehensive methodology that combines functional capability assessment, consumer preferences and goals, job task analysis, and accommodation attributes to identify specific accommodations for VR customers. This web-based expert system is a revolutionary tool to facilitate positive accommodation outcomes for vocational rehabilitation clients.

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What You Need to Know About Assistive Tec...

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CERT is currently conducting an experimental study with VR Counselors to test the effectiveness and usability of the system. If you would like to take part, please contact Dr. Marcia Scherer at IMPT97@aol.com or John Connelly at JConnelly@Rehabnetwork.org.

3. Business Roundtable: Learning from effective practices in providing technology in the workplace

In October of last year, under the leadership of the Council of State Administrators of Vocational Rehabilitation (CSAVR), CERT hosted a business roundtable to hear directly from businesses about their strategies for reasonable accommodations and bringing assistive technology into the workplace. The five business participants represented partners from CSAVR's National Employment Team (NET) from both the private and public sector.

There were several common themes shared by the business roundtable participants. Among them were **the need to address reasonable accommodation requests expeditiously, having centralized administration of and funding for addressing reasonable accommodation requests, and ensuring that websites where jobs are listed are fully accessible and provide a clear process for requesting a reasonable accommodation.**

All of the business roundtable participants are leaders in hiring and accommodating applicants, employees, and customers with disabilities so we asked them for their tips or best practices. First and foremost was their comment that the NET and state VR agencies are excellent partners and wonderful source of information for businesses. Among other **tips** were to verify yourself that products are fully accessible rather than relying totally on the vendor, survey employees after they receive an accommodation as part of your evaluation of the process, and maintain a catalogue of the most common accessibility software for employees to review once they have requested an accommodation so the process can move as expeditiously as possible. In this regard an interesting tip was checking possible vendors' websites for accessibility because if their website is not fully accessible then the chances are that their products are not either.

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