

Developing The National VR-Business Network: Charting OUR Course

Kathy West-Evans
Director of Business Relations
CSAVR

The Big Picture

- Perceptions, Reality and Politics
- Reactive vs. Proactive Position
- Shrinking Resources
- A “Consolidation” Environment
- Perceptions Become Reality
- Who Controls VR’s Message?

Creating an Opportunity from the Challenge

- Creating and controlling our messages
- Defining our customers
- Understanding what customers are asking for from the VR system
- Developing a customer driven system and service delivery strategies
- Defining our own niche through the values and feedback of our customers

Who is VR's Customer?

What does that mean to VR?

- People with disabilities – funding
- Employers – outcomes
- It's based on their needs, not ours
- When their needs are met,
our needs are met
- Creating a customer service environment
- It's about relationships – do they like you, trust you and have confidence in you?

Consumer

Vocational Assessment

- ✓ Medical
- ✓ Psychological
- ✓ Social
- ✓ Financial
- ✓ Legal
- ✓ Assistive - Technology
- ✓ Independent Living
- ✓ Education
- ✓ Vocational
- ✓ Individual Plan for Employment
- ✓ Career Planning
- ✓ Employment
- ✓ Ongoing Supports

Employer

Needs Assessment

- ✓ Staff Education
- ✓ Job Site Analysis
- ✓ Job Match: KSAs
- ✓ Tech. Assistance
- ✓ A.T./Rehab. Engineering
- ✓ Reasonable Accommodation
- ✓ Financial Incentives
- ✓ Retention Support
- ✓ Customer Outreach
- ✓ Product Development
- ✓ Ongoing Supports

Employee

Employer

VR's Dual Customer Model

How do we know what Customers with disabilities value?

- Satisfaction surveys
- State Rehabilitation Councils
- Public Meetings
- Involvement in the legislative process
- State Independent Living Council
- Community based disability organizations

Customers with disabilities tell us they value:

- VR Counselors that they trust as a partner in the assessment and planning process
- Empowerment
- Informed choice
- Self-determination
- Careers
- Independence
- Support systems at the local level

Dual Customer Approach: Benefits to Consumers

- **Career opportunities....not just job placements**
 - part of the upfront planning
 - Informed choice
 - internal “champions”
 - corporate culture
 - benefits & inclusion
- **Upward mobility opportunities**
 - life-long learning
 - mentors on site

How do we know what our business customers value?

- VR has a history of working with business at the state, regional and national level
- VR has conducted surveys with business customers
- Business has participated in the planning and training in regional and national employment conferences
- CSAVR conducted a focus forum with business

The VR History with Business

- 1970-80's – individual state agencies, PWIs
- 1988 Multi-State Marketing Conference, Michigan
- 13 VR agencies: Alabama, Colorado, D.C., Georgia, Illinois, Maine, Michigan, Pennsylvania, Texas – General and Blind, Virginia – General and Blind, Washington
- Region IV Model

CSAVR Employer Focus Forum

- WIMCO – Ohio
- Washington Mutual – WA.
- Intel – Oregon
- Blue Cross/Blue Shield – NH
- The Southern Company – AL
- CellularOne – WA.

National Employment Conference 2004

- AirTran Airways
- American Red Cross
- Bridges, Inc.
- Cellular One / Western Wireless
- CVS/Pharmacy
- GEICO
- General Motors, Inc.
- infoUSA
- Intel
- The Kennedy Center
- Lenske's Clamping Tools, Inc.
- Manpower, Inc.
- Marriott, Inc.
- Motor World
- Miami University
- Microsoft Corp.

National Employment Conference - 2004

- National Bank of Commerce
- Oklahoma One-Call System, Inc.
- On Our Own
- Principal Financial Group
- Raytheon Company
- Safeway, Inc.
- Social Security Administration
- SouthTrust Bank
- Starbucks Coffee Company
- State of Delaware
- SunTrust Bank
- United States Army

National Employment Conference

- U.S. Department of Homeland Security
- University of Alabama at Birmingham
- Washington Mutual
- West Corporation

What VR Business Customers Value:

- VR has a history of relationships built on TRUST
- VR has long-term relationships with business
- VR has direct access to qualified applicants
- VR staff are uniquely qualified and provide a variety of value added services to business
- VR services are customized to business needs
- VR is responsive to the business customer
- VR understands the concept of company culture
- VR services are cost-effective...tax payer dollars at work in the business community
- VR has access to multiple community resources

Business Customers Value:

- **Pre-Employment**
 - **Training**
 - **Internships**
- **Human Resources**
 - **Recruitment & Promotion**
 - **Benefits & Compensation**
 - **Accommodation Assistance**
- **Staff Development & Training**
- **Diversity**
- **EEOC/Affirmative Action**
- **Retention Supports**
- **Labor Relations**
- **Legal & Compliance**
- **Information Technology**
- **Risk Management**
- **Marketing & Outreach**
- **Contracts**
- **Facilities**
- **Customer Service**
- **Product Development**
- **Financial Supports**
- **Employee Advisory Services**

The Bottom Line for Business Customers

- To work with the national VR network through a single point of contact
- The foundation of the network must be:
 - Trust
 - Responsiveness
 - Deliverability
 - Consistency
 - Quality
 - Sustainability

VR as a Customer Driven System

Internal Challenges and Opportunities

- **Dual Customer**
- **People with disabilities and Business**
- **Business vs. Employers**
- **Careers vs. Jobs**
- **Employer Relations and Business Development or Placement and Job Development ?**
- **Qualified vs. Job Ready**
- **Controlling our own Message**
- **Marketing**
- **Return on Investment (ROI)**
- **Proactive vs. Reactive**

National VR – Business Network 2006 CSAVR Work Plan

Vision Statement

To create a “one company” approach to serving business customers through a national VR team that specializes in employer development, business consulting and corporate relations.

Customers

- 1) Business (public, private and non-profit)
- 2) Vocational Rehabilitation consumers
- 3) State Vocational Rehabilitation agencies

The National Network: Customers and Benefits

■ Business

- Business will benefit from having direct access to the qualified candidates and support services provided by State VR agencies and their partners.

The National Network: Customers and Benefits

■ VR Consumers

- VR consumers will benefit by having access to national employment opportunities and career development resources.

The National Network: Customers and Benefits

■ State Vocational Rehabilitation

- State VR agencies will benefit by having access to a national system for sharing employment resources, best practices and business connections.

The Strategic Plan

- Develop a customer driven strategic plan that will serve as a roadmap for the VR-Business network in defining the goals, objectives, products, services and the priorities of the network.

Strategic Plan VR- Business Network

Strategic Plan Based on Customer Needs:
1) Business; 2) VR Agencies; 3) Consumers



Communication: VR Connections

- **Region 1: CT, NH, MA, RI, VT**
- **Region 2: NJ, NY**
- **Region 3: DE, MD, PA**
- **Region 4: AL, FL, GA, KY, MS, NC, SC, TN**
- **Region 5: Ill, IN MI, MN, OH, WI**
- **Region 6: AR, LA, NM, OK, TX**
- **Region 7: IA, NE, MO, KA**
- **Region 8: SD, ND, CO, MT, UT, WY**
- **Region 9: CA, Guam, HI**
- **Region 10: AK, ID, OR, WA**

Communication

- VR Business Consultants Distribution List
- Intranet
- Website
- Designated Point of Contact Meeting
 - 77 attendees
 - 53 agencies
 - 46 states
- Network Protocols

Marketing

- CSAVR News Updates
- CSAVR Website – Business Relations
- Brand Identity - Committee
- The National Employment Team
 - The NET
 - thenetworks4u.org
 - Logo development
- National Network Intranet/Internet

Marketing

- Launch Awards – PR via Wachovia and Microsoft
- Media –
 - Boston Globe
 - HR Executive
- SHRM National Conference – Hyatt/VR
- Marketing Plan
- Marketing VR Nationally – Are we ready?

Business Development Strategies

- Business relationships in multiple states position VR as a national resource for qualified applicants and business services. They set the stage for development of the corporate relationship.
- Targeted development – based on the vocational goals of VR consumers
- National Business Forums

Business Customers

- AstraZeneca
- Bank of America
- Compass Group
- Convergys
- CVS/ Pharmacy
- EchoStar
- H & R Block
- Hyatt
- Johnson & Johnson
- Merrill Lynch
- Microsoft
- US Office of Personnel Management
- Nordstrom
- Phillips Medical
- Qwest
- Raytheon
- REI
- Safeco
- Safeway
- Starbucks
- Target
- TD Banknorth
- USPS
- Wachovia
- Wal-Mart

Staff Training and Technical Assistance

- 24 Training Sessions
- 1:1 Technical Assistance
- Regional Employment Strategies and Conferences
- National Employment Conference
- IRI : VR – Business Network
- IRI: Train the Trainer

Evidence Based Best Practices

- ESSRTC – Employment Service Systems Research and Training Center
 - Hunter, Hofstra, Drake, Syracuse, Consortia for Employment Success
- Intranet – Collect best practices and validate through research model
- Internet – Feature best practices

Partners and Collaboration

- Abilities Fund
- AHEAD
- CANAR
- COSD
- Hands on Education
- NRA / ARAN
- New Editions – RSA Grant
- PWI
- RCEP Consortium
- SRC
- USBLN

The VR-Business Network: Charting YOUR Course

32nd Institute on Rehabilitation
Issues (IRI)

VR Members of the IRI Team

“It’s Built on Experience”

- **Alabama** Department of Rehabilitation Services – Peggy Anderson, Chair
- **Illinois** Division of Rehabilitation Services – Tom Minta
- **Michigan** Division of Rehabilitation Services – Robert Moore
- **Minnesota** Dept. of Employment & Economic Development, Rehabilitation Services – Jerry Wood
- **North Carolina** Division of Vocational Rehabilitation – Stephanie Vinson
- **Ohio** Rehabilitation Services Commission – Connie O’Brien
- **Washington State** Division of Vocational Rehabilitation – John Evans
- **CSAVR** – Kathy West-Evans, Director of Business Relations

Key Partners

- Hugh Bradshaw, PWI - Vermont
- Craig Colvin, RCEP - TN
- Dan Dickerson, Navigator – Ill.
- Gil Johnson, AFB
- Dana Rosanelli, BLN
- Sally Siewert, RCEP – GA.

How the IRI Supports the National VR-Business Network

- Common ground
 - Customer driven
 - “VR as one company”
 - Formalization of networks
 - State
 - Multi-state
 - National
 - VR-to-Business and VR-to-VR
- Inclusion of VR’s partners in employment

How this IRI supports the National VR-Business Network

- Common language with our customers
 - Dual customer
 - Careers vs jobs
 - Business vs employer
 - Business development vs job placement
 - “Designated point on contact”
 - Qualified vs job ready
 - ROI: Return On Investment

How this IRI supports the National VR-Business Network

- Business perspective on the Network
 - Immediacy
 - Foundational principles of:
 - Trust
 - Responsiveness
 - Deliverability
 - Consistency
 - Quality
 - Sustainability
 - Primary point of contact
 - Feedback loops

How this IRI supports the National VR-Business Network

- Consumer benefits from the Network
 - Enhanced informed choice
 - Careers not just jobs
 - Business profiles
 - State, regional and national connections to employers

Opening with The “BAM”: A VR Call to Action

- Three major issues are highlighted:
 - Dual customer
 - VR as “one company”
 - The time is **NOW**:
 - Formalize VR-business partnerships
 - Delivery through customer driven networks

“BAM” = In the Words of VR Customers and Stakeholders

- Identifies VR customer expectations
- Offers ways for the VR system to respond to customer needs
- Proposes VR expertise as “one company” nationally in responding to business needs
- Incorporates the dual customer approach into VR service delivery
- Suggests VR-to-VR leveraging of business resources and partnerships
- Prepares staff to function effectively in networks with business
- Fosters collaboration with VR’s partners

Introductory Chapter

- Introduces VR as “One Company”
- VR as the leader of its own destiny with business
- Defines VR’s niche in the dual customer model
- Identifies expectations in VR-Business partnerships
 - Businesses
 - Consumers
 - VR-to-VR
- Transitions the VR system to a “National Network”
- Delineates what the national network is and is not
- Links state or regional VR-business networks to a national system
- Offers challenges, consequences, opportunities & benefits
- Defines common language

Creates common language by defining:

- Dual customer
- Career vs. job
- Business vs. employer
- Business development vs. job placement
- Designated point of contact
- Qualified vs. job ready
- Return on investment

Business Customers Chapter

- Entirely driven by input from our business partners in multiple venues over the past 24 months.
- Identifies “foundation principles” offered by business for a national VR-business network
- Explains VR-business partners expectations for a VR-business national, multi-state, or in-state network
- Suggests tips for building VR-business networks

Consumer Customer Chapter

- VR-business networks: How they support consumer informed choice, business & the VR professional
- With consumer focus, it addresses:
 - “**On Your Mark**” – Targeting the right employer
 - “**Get Set**” – Preparing consumers for the hiring process
 - “**Go**” – Guiding consumers toward success
-all through the creation and maintenance of VR-business networks

Framework for a national VR-business network: the “recipe” chapter

- Examines critical network components at the state, regional, and national level
- Offers action steps for network development
 - Leadership
 - Strategy development
 - Continuous quality improvement
 - Infrastructure
 - Human Resources
 - Education, training & technical assistance
 - Point of Contact
 - Processes
 - Protocols

Designated Point of Contact: ~State Level~

- Appointed by executive state leader
- Has expertise/experience in business relationships
- Has support from and access to top leadership
- Coordinates VR-business partnerships
- Connected to VR business-focused staff and resources
- Supports “The Network” infrastructure on business relations through local connections
- Identifies/designs needs-based services to business
- Facilitates training on business relations
- Serves as central point of contact for agency staff

Designated Point of Contact: ~Regional or Multi-State Level~

- Liaison with other designated points of contact
- Builds trusting relationships with above
- Serves as “entry point” for out-of-state inquiries
- Leverages business relationships through the network
 - Shares resources & knowledge across state lines
 - Uses network as a problem solving team
- Shares regional resources with staff
- Keeps exec. leadership updated on regional info
- ID’s businesses w/ multi-state presence
- Provides interface between regional business connections and local points of contact
- Creates/shares regional training in the network

Designated Point of Contact: ~National Level~

- Represents VR agency in the National Network
- Oversees VR's state responsiveness to businesses referred to them through the Network
- Expands relationship building with other designated points of contact
- Participates in national network meetings
 - CSAVR & its employment committee
 - Employment conference
 - Business forums, etc
- Gathers/shares VR-business relations info within the network
- Identifies in-state corporate headquarters
- Participates in national business-related initiatives

Protocols & Communication

■ TRUST

- Respects the “point of contact” for each business partnership
- Shares info with trusted colleagues as needed

■ RESPONSIVENESS

- Timely response to VR, business, consumer or point of contact
- Respects sense of urgency for requests

■ DELIVERABILITY

- Delivers what is promised
- Accurately defines services for customers within capacity to deliver

■ CONSISTENCY

- Maintains comparable level of deliverability with all customers
- Ensures quality and consistency in services to business

■ QUALITY

- Ensures services meet or exceed expressed needs and standards of customer

■ SUSTAINABILITY

- Ensures staff are prepared to meet changing needs of dual customer
- Ensures smooth & seamless transition if contact changes
- Ensures the framework to build effective networks is strong

“Maturity scales” for VR agencies to assess progress and development

- 6 critical components of a VR-business network are addressed:
 - Customer focus; leadership; strategic development; infrastructure (IT & fiscal resources); human resources; processes
- General maturity scale on VR-business networks offered to assess agency
- Maturity scale for each critical component with progression steps for network development

Sample Maturity Scales: Strategy for Business Development

Initiated	Completed	
		1. Business services have not been identified or are not available.
		2. Business Services in some parts of the state.
		3. Business Services are available statewide.
		4. VR Business Services are aligned and coordinated across state lines.
		5. Business services are coordinated, consistent and of the highest quality and meet the needs of the businesses at the state, regional & national levels.

Sample Maturity Scales: Strategy for Marketing

Initiated	Completed	
		1. No marketing strategy in place.
		2. Marketing doesn't portray VR as a resource with expertise for business; just a source for candidates.
		3. Marketing plan begins to highlight various business services available, other than qualified candidates.
		4. Business views and uses VR as experts in disability and employment issues.

Sample Maturity Scales: Continuous Quality Improvement

Initiated	Completed	
		1. There is no mechanism for CQI in the Network
		2. Desire for info gathering, but no resources allocated for VR-business network
		3. Resources allocated and begin to obtain feedback from business customers.
		4. Agency includes business customers in feedback loops.
		5. Change in VR is driven by feedback from all customers. Multiple feedback loops & ability to identify & implement changes.

Network Partners

- State Models: Each state has a unique network for local delivery, the theme of collaboration is woven into the document to accommodate the variety of approaches used at the local level.
- State Rehabilitation Councils
- State Independent Living Councils
- Projects with Industry
- Advocacy Groups
- Community Rehabilitation Programs
- Business Groups: BLNs, SHRM, Chambers
- Workforce Development
- Disability Organizations

Multiple uses for the document

- Creates an opportunity for us to learn from each other: VR-to-VR in-service training
- Internal assessment of current agency position in the VR-business network
- Potential “road map” that points the way to further grow in network development, deliverability and sustainability
- VR management tool for both leadership and resource allocation for the Network
- Role clarification
- A supportive professional guide for national, multi-state, in-state networks

Contact Information

Kathy West-Evans

Director of Business Relations

CSAVR

KWest-Evans@rehabnetwork.org

(206) 999-9455