

Creating a Work First Organisation and Culture



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A little bit about us and why we exist.

Fifty years ago, it was assumed that real work for people with disabilities was largely impossible. As we collectively discovered that people could learn and be productive, the discussion shifted from "it is possible" for people to work - to a discussion of how beneficial "it is to work."

As the data in the USA, and indeed worldwide, have shown, the benefits of work for people with disabilities are the same as the benefits of working for everybody else. The discussion then evolved into how to make employment outcomes "allowable" in a government system and in social services originally designed to avoid employment outcomes (p2).

David Mank, 2007.

Setting the Scene - NDIS Park

- * The Folly of the Dinosaurs - something to ponder!**
- * The NDIS presents a once in a generation opportunity to create disability services for the future.**
- * It will build on the past, but can't be the past dressed up to look exciting and all new.**



Hi, I'm Pete Smith

What do you do for a living?



If it isn't obvious why we need to take Work First approach by now, then as a society we'll continue to fail people with a disability or for that matter everyone with barriers to employment, including those about to leave school.

This is a big challenge!

Don't underestimate the task ahead and don't under invest in change. Yes, it is life and death - your organisation, not to mention the impact on your clients and community.

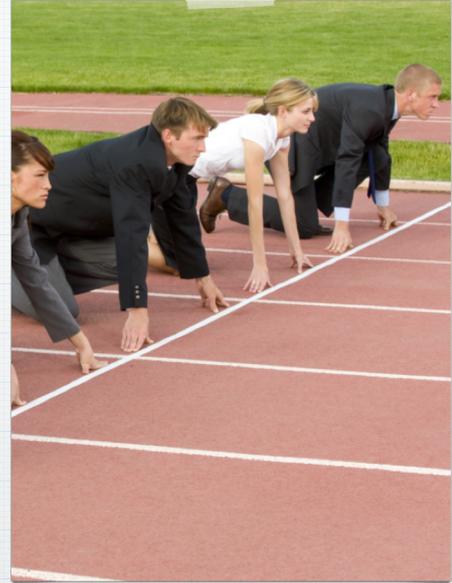


What are we trying to do?

- * Well, nothing less than a change in how the organisation supports clients to achieve their employment dreams and whether your staff actually believe employment is possible and how they will work in a setting that doesn't just talk about it, but makes it happen.

The Starting Line

It's easy to pull the trigger, but where is the finish line?



Step One

Understand where you are and investigate the potential of where you will go. You will need a plan.

Not everyone will come along with you - accept that people will leave, but get excited about the new and existing people who will believe in your vision of the future.



Step Two

Have a conversation with everyone!

Why?

Well you don't exist in isolation, you exist in the community with a family.



Step Three

Start small, create a pilot project to test out your new model.

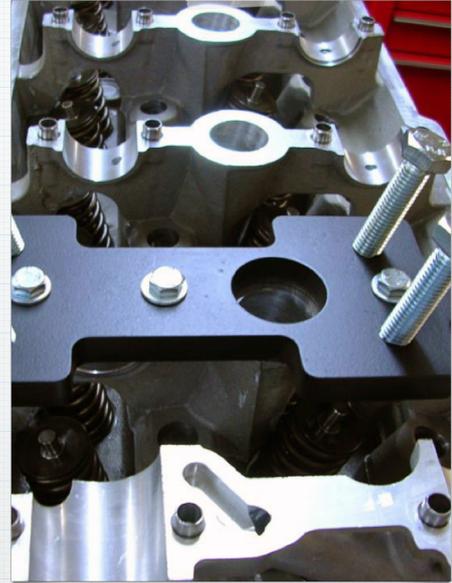
No project will ever start out perfect, you need to trial, fail, refine and keep going. Remember to document what is happening, you are creating evidence for practice and evidence supports change.



Step Four

The tricky bit!

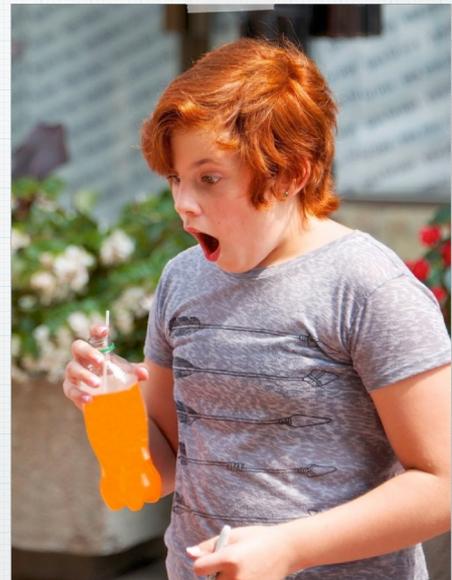
Pilots will make things messy, but mess is good. The challenge is to manage expectations, anxieties, slow progress and disappointment while holding onto your vision and continuing to invest in your future.



Step Five

Expect the unexpected, embrace it, learn from it and keep going.

Unexpected or unintended consequences will happen and they are always part of the learning, the growing and the future course.



Step Six

Remember, you are creating community of support. This isn't simply about your organisation, staff and clients.

It's bigger than that, it's about becoming a community organisation that is valued and seen as an active participant in creating community.



What Do We Know?

Something from practice, something from the evidence base.



Lessons from the Field

- * **It Starts at the Top and the Bottom - Everyone is Welcome to Have a Say**
- * **It is More Than Just Training - You Have To Bring Out Your Dead!**
- * **Holding Hands with Staff, Participants and Families**
- * **Employers - We are Not the Enemy!**

Conclusion

There is an overwhelming need for providers to invest in their future through developing staff and setting in place the ideal conditions for the delivery, along with investing in connecting with and educating not just clients but the broader community (Wehman et al., 2018).

This presents with it the opportunity to develop open employment pathways through the creation of social capital within the community and families of participants.

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