

New Year, New Challenges - the One Constant.

Hard to believe that we're already into the third month of 2020. Seems like only yesterday that we were running around trying to solve the world's problems before Christmas staged its usual process of shutting Australia down for summer.

For people who occupy the ADE space, it wasn't digesting the impact of the Fair Work Commission decision regarding support wages. We saw a wide variety of responses, most of which would have been foreshadowed in the submissions made to the commission. I took the time to read all the submissions and was struck by how many organisations took on loss making work because they believed it was about the only thing that their employees (clients?) were capable of.

Effectively these organisations were saying that their clients / workers were not capable of working in the community and need to be protected. This is at odds with the original intent of many of these organisations and in this day and age seems like an antiquated idea that should have disappeared with the medical model of disability.

From my vantage point I can see three paths forming; pray like mad that the government will relent and save us., bail out in a hurry., and let's create a new profitable business model that supports our mission. Depending on where you sit, your path may look valid, but I wonder about that? Take path one - prayers. It's highly unlikely that the government will roll over, the creation of the NDIS has effectively closed that path and the raising of community and client expectations makes it highly unlikely that significant numbers of your clients will want this, certainly future clients won't.

The second path is interesting and simply may be a recognition that it's too hard and the investment to continue and change the business isn't something that they want to take on. Understandable, but how do you propose to

participate in employment supports without investing in change and new skills? Future clients will want employment and let's be honest DES isn't the answer for everyone. DES is an interesting program with the most recent figures highlighting that its biggest caseload is people over the age of 55, clients with either physical or psychiatric disability and who work for more than 15 hours per week.

This is certainly not the profile of ADE clients and presents as something of a challenge for DES. It does however highlight an opportunity outside of the DES ecosystem, a client driven opportunity.

The third path in my view is both the obvious and hardest path. The upside is that you control your destiny, the downside is that you have to invest and innovate, something that Australian providers have a distinct aversion to, not all, but most. Based on my experience and observation in Australia and overseas, this is the smartest path. It's also expensive and requires a commitment at all levels to stay the course over what will be a two to three year journey. It is both exciting and extraordinarily messy, but the outcomes can be brilliant.

Overseas I've seen providers go from having over a thousand people in the shop to having a thousand people outside working in the community and a handful inside because that was their choice. In Australia, we are starting to see magic happen with providers embarking on directions that make sense for them - that's the key, you have to find your niche and own it.

The NDIS provides a once in a lifetime opportunity to reimagine how we deliver disability employment services, where the silos come down and the participants drive the program - their individual program, not beholden to one system or the other. No one should transfer from one system to another unless that system has failed them or they chose otherwise.

Time to create your own path.

New Developments

CDERP has a new website, which is live now. Let us know what you think and be gentle!

This has taken several months and it has also given us the opportunity to revisit some of our professional development programs. We've researched and redeveloped our PD offerings and have focused them on the needs of families / self-advocates and employment consultants. Recent experiences have shown us that families and self-advocates have a thirst for knowledge to support them to understand what is going on and support those that want to take the employment journey under their own steam. This is important in an era of increased self management.

You'll find information on the training page of the new site. We'll also be releasing dates and venues for PD sessions, initially in Melbourne, then Adelaide, Perth and onwards north.

Customised Employment training takes a leap forward with our CE Leaders program with the University of Melbourne starting in June 2020. The uni expects to begin taking enrolments in late April, details of which and a link to the enrolment site will be available on our website shortly. The Certificate 4 Disability Employment Support is winding its way through the system. It meets the ASQA compliance regime, so we are rapidly developing the supporting materials, including shooting all new videos in Australian settings.

To support the evolving training model (which still includes face to face onsite), we've opened up our online shop to include an increasing list of practice support material that we've been developing and have until recently been using exclusively with our clients. We'll be adding more resources as we go along.

2020 Retreat

Yes, it's that time of year again where we plan and inform you of this year's Retreat. This year we'll be examining the theme **"Building a New Boat and Finding New Horizons"**. We'll be exploring the metaphorical and looking at how we change organisations to be fit for the future and finding new business opportunities.

The new employment paradigm is simply one of change and we'll be looking at some great examples of change and how they've pursued

different paths to the future. We'll also explore working with the big end of town and the opportunities and challenges that exist in that market.

Expect to hear from leaders treading their own path to the future - we're excited! We'll let you know when registrations open.

New Research New Reads

Temp by Louis Hyman is an interesting read about employment inequality and the future direction of employment. It will give you pause to think about what we're doing now and how we can look at employment differently in a time of app driven employment. Penguin Random House.

Disability, diversity, and corporate social responsibility: Learning from recognized leaders in inclusion. This research by Gould, Parker Harris, Mullin and Jones (2020) looks at the failure of big business to adequately include disability and inclusion in their diversity practices.

An exploratory factor analysis: Factors influencing employers' disposition to hire and retain persons with disabilities. This research by Rodriguez, Marini, Chen and Tanguma (2020) looks at factors through the lens of the ADA, settling on four factors, these being; Fears and Concerns, Employers Resources for Persons with Disabilities, ADA Competence, and Knowledge of Disability. The research is interesting, however in my view it contains a cultural sampling bias and they also chose not to explore employer attitudes in any qualitative way. This in my view limits its generalisability.

Final Thoughts

2020 promises to be a challenging year for everyone, but that doesn't mean we stop going forward. Now is the time to invest and create your own path, now is the time to reimagine disability employment and create a system that responds to the client and business. We don't have to change the system, we simply need to build a new one that makes the old one obsolete (to paraphrase Fuller). We're not stopping, but we need you to come with us.

Join us!

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