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Massachusetts Medicaid Infrastructure and Comprehensive Employment Opportunities Grant

Tips for Job Development During Tough Times

Yes, the unemployment rate continues to increase. Yes, it is a challenging time for job developers. However, there are still jobs out there. If you are a job developer and good at what you do, the most important thing is to continue doing what you know works - and recognize that you're just going to have to work a bit harder for those placements you do make. However, given the state of the economy, some additional strategies may be in order. In that vein, here are my 5 tips for job development in tough economic times. This is just a start, so please feel free to add your own:

1. Turn a lemon into lemonade – Employers are absolutely being flooded with applicants for open positions. On the surface it may seem that this makes the job developer's job even harder. However, take what seems to be a challenge and turn it into an asset. It takes enormous time and energy for businesses to process and weed through all those applicants, which is a particular challenge when resources are tight. As a job developer you can help out by providing a much needed business service, through identifying candidates that are a good match (saving employers time and money), and in turn helping employers avoid advertising open positions, which results in a candidate flood.

2. Work your networks more than ever – Particularly with positions harder to find, and with potential employer hesitancy to even advertise openings, now is the time to use your networks to identify those openings that do exist and ensure that you are the first to know when positions become available.

3. Use job tryouts and similar strategies – Given the hesitancy that employers may have in hiring in the current environment, job developers need to "sweeten the deal" with low-risk strategies. Having the applicant do a short-term job tryout prior to the final hiring decision, and use of OJTs funded by MRC, can assist in making employers more open to hiring.

4. Emphasize financial incentives – While it's a never a good idea to focus on things like the Work Opportunity Tax Credit as a primary reason businesses should hire an individual, given the financial strains many employers are dealing with, being more aggressive in pushing the WOTC and other financial incentives makes sense.

5. Enhance your services to business – It would be very naïve to approach an employer in "business as usual" mode, given the tough economic times. In my view, job developers should be straightforward with employers, essentially stating, "I know times are tough. How can I help?" or more pro-actively "Here's how I can help." In addition to the ideas above, job developers may want to offer such services as increased job coaching, and use their general business expertise to assist employers in getting through these tough times. This will not only help now, but such assistance will pay off huge dividends when the economy gets better.

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