

RJP Overview

Realistic Job Previews (RJP) are any method an agency or business uses to help prospective employees get a balanced picture of the positive and negative aspects of work they will be doing and the organizational climate, prior to the offer of a position. This is especially important in “hidden” industries, such as human services where many people may not have any information about the tasks and responsibilities of the job. An accurate RJP, combined with opportunities for prospective employees to choose not to go further in pursuing a job, can reduce turnover and hiring and training costs by weeding out people who do not want the kind of work the agency has to offer.

There are a number of methods for conducting an RJP, each with their own set of benefits and disadvantages. The following table can give you a quick snapshot of possible methods and considerations when developing and implementing an RJP. Remember all RJPs should be developed with input from existing direct support staff (DSS) (as well as frontline supervisors (FLS), human resource (HR) and other administrators), and should provide a real preview of the task and responsibilities of the job. All RJPs regardless of format need to convey the same content. This chart does not list what should be included in an RJP, only methods and considerations in the process and implementation around those methods. Agencies can use this chart to understand what method might be best based on budget, time and other considerations.

Parents, consumers, and DSPs should be part of any realistic job preview.

With any of these methods, it is critical that the prospective newcomer be informed that the reason they are participating in an RJP is to help them make a decision about whether this company and this job is a good match for them. This needs to happen before a job offer has been made and should allow an opportunity for the prospective employee to decide that they do not wish to continue the application process. In addition, agency should take the opportunity to identify what makes them unique and why someone should work for them rather than for another agency.

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Type of RJP	Development Considerations	Implementation Considerations	Cost Effectiveness	Pros	Cons
<p><u>Structured Observations</u> These are observations at a work site that are structured by the employer to give the person a comprehensive overview of job expectations. In a structured observation existing employees may spend some time talking with the observer but to be most effective the observer should take responsibility for gathering the information s/he needs so that working staff are focused on performing duties in their usual way. Scheduling Structured Observations during busy but routine activities such as meals or recreations is one strategy for ensuring staff and consumers are more likely to act naturally during the observation.</p>	<p>Structured observations should have set criteria rather than being an informal process where the person merely shows up and watches what happens. The person should have a checklist that guides them or some other way of knowing what information they should gather during the visit, as well as feeling free to seek additional information.</p> <p>Employees and people receiving services should be asked about this component prior to implementation -- although they may find the opportunity to “prescreen” prospective employees appealing.</p> <p>Development of Structured observations should not be shortchanged. They require a similar planning process as other methods including DSS and identification of critical components.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Observations should be in the exact site the person would work if possible. • Observations should be at times or in situations that help the person get a realistic expectation of what their job responsibilities will be (typically at a meal time or other busy time when consumers and staff are less focused on the visitor and acting more naturally.) • Observations should be followed by a debriefing to answer questions and to provide information about job components not observed. • Observations should be scheduled with employees and consumers in advance. • Observations should be scheduled so that the observer sees other DSS not FLS doing their job. 	<p>Structured observations require thorough planning (i.e. time) to make them effective and comprehensive.</p> <p>They are the least expensive method to implement because extra staff time is not required during the observation and materials (checklists, etc.) are cheap to produce and update.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Inexpensive to develop/implement • Easy to update • Easy to customize to individual sites/consumers • Can provide consumers and DSS opportunities to be directly involved in the hiring process • Provides direct information to the potential hire from the people who understand the job best. • Offers easy access to people to ask questions that may not be covered in the structured RJP. • Sets the expectation that the DSS role includes supporting and informing new and potential staff. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Potentially invasive to consumers and current employees • Experience will vary each visit. • Difficult to hit all areas that might be an issue for new employees (i.e., pay and benefits, all job duties, etc.) • Might be difficult for people to “act naturally” during observations. • Can be difficult to schedule. • Not portable

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<p><u>Meetings with current workers, consumers and/or parents</u></p> <p>In RJP meetings, current workers, consumers and/or parents explain in their own words, in person, what the job is like, what the benefits and draw backs are, and what their hopes, needs and expectations for new hires are.</p>	<p>Current workers, families and consumers who are going to be part of an RJP process should be trained about the purpose of RJPs.</p> <p>It is important to clarify to all involved whether the interview/meeting will be used solely for the purpose of an RJP or whether they will also be making recommendations about whether this person may be a good match for the setting.</p> <p>Like a Structured Observation, there should be guidelines for information to be shared during these meetings and planning time is required to make sure that the company has identified what that criteria is.</p> <p>Parents, staff and consumers willing to make a long-term commitment must be identified and trained.</p>	<p>Prospective employees should be given a set of suggested questions they may wish to ask during the meeting.</p> <p>These meetings should occur in the actual work setting but in a private location whenever possible.</p> <p>These meetings can be scheduled to precede a job interview on the same day or on another day, but the person should have the opportunity to gracefully opt out of the interview.</p> <p>Parents and consumers may be offered a stipend for their participation.</p> <p>Consumers who don't speak may wish to put together a collection of photos showing their routines and preferences.</p>	<p>Development cost are similar to Structured Observation</p> <p>Implementing this method requires staff time, making this method relatively expensive to maintain long term.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Portable (if people are willing) • Can provide opportunities for parents, consumers and DSS to be directly involved in the hiring process • Provides direct information to the potential hire from the people who understand the job best. • Offers easy access to people to ask questions that may not be covered in the structured RJP. • Adaptable to the unique characteristics, benefits and difficulties involved in working at each site. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Requires staff time away from their regular job duties. • Can be difficult to schedule. • Experience can be highly variable. • Prospective employees may be uncomfortable and less inclined to ask important questions in this form of RJP. • May be a burden on current DSS, parents and consumers. • May be unable to find DSS, parents, and consumers willing to participate. • Have to pay the DSS, parents and consumers, even if the prospective employee doesn't show up.

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<p><u>Pre-application screening-</u> This type of screening is usually done at the time in which a person calls an agency or otherwise asks for an application. It is usually brief and designed to help the agency find out if the prospective employee meets minimal criteria.</p> <p>Prescreens can be adapted to include basic RJP information including pay scale and benefits, generic responsibilities and requirements of the job, and hours or locations of jobs</p>	<p>Prescreens should be consistent for each applicant. An agency should come to consensus about what information should be gathered and shared at this point.</p> <p>Like other RJPs Prescreen questions should be based on what current and newly hired DSS identify as the most important things they wish they knew about before being hired, but didn't.</p>	<p>Having a checklist and limiting the number of people who do this pre-screen will help maintain consistency.</p> <p>Pre-screening alone should not serve as an agency's only RJP</p>	<p>If they are brief and to the point they may save both the person and the agency time should the person be ineligible or not interested in this type of work.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Helpful for quickly screening out ineligible people (i.e. BCA, transportation, etc.) or those who have no idea of what the work entails and decide it is not for them. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Not comprehensive. • Mixes two different types of activities: screening to help the employer decide whether a potential employee would be good for the job and RJP which are designed to assist potential employees decide if the job is something they might be interested in. • Information is provided by a supervisor or human resources person rather than directly by a direct support professional, consumer or parent making it potentially less convincing.

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<p><u>Videotapes</u> RJP videotapes are most often professionally done and cover all of its jobs in a particular job classification. Other forms, such as “home” videos specific to a site can be used as well or the two methods may be combined.</p> <p>Videotapes are created to show an applicant what the job is really like by showing people actually engaged in that job. The agency will have to assess what situations show the job most realistically and are the ones that typically cause early turnover due to lack of information about the job. Including actual DSS and consumers in the film (rather than actors without disabilities) makes the video much more realistic.</p> <p>Videos produced elsewhere may serve as a useful adjunct to other RJP methods.</p>	<p>Videos require significant legwork beyond identifying the critical aspects of the job to include in the videotape. Writing a script; gathering consents; preparing settings; and coordinating participants, equipment and film crews are also needed. In addition, consultant or experts should be used to develop the script and for a professional-quality video, access to high-end equipment and experts in filming, sound recording, and production are needed.</p> <p>Videos need careful script development to ensure critical components are present both visually and in words.</p> <p>Because of the expense and time involved in production and updates the planning process should be meticulous and only the most critical pieces of information should be included.</p>	<p>Videos can be made accessible at multiple sites, but require a VCR/TV to be available and a staff person to provide the video, equipment, and to answer questions.</p> <p>Videos that are too long can lose impact but if they are too short they may not contain all necessary information.</p>	<p>Videotapes are very expensive to produce and to update.</p> <p>If they are well produced and content is not date sensitive they can be used for a long time making them more cost-effective, however, updates can be nearly as expensive as initial development.</p> <p>A VCR must be available at every site where the video is going to be used.</p> <p>Usually use of videos requires staff time to implement, however, this may or may not be additional staff hours.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Portable • Strong impact/effective • Can cover a variety of topics that might be an issue for new employees (i.e., pay and benefits, all job duties, etc.) • Provides comprehensive look at the agency • Shows people actually engaged in the tasks required by the job thereby providing credible information to newcomers. • Highly consistent information to each prospective employee 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Difficult to update. • Requires expert filming and production to look polished. • Can be very expensive. • Need special equipment to develop • Requires access to a television and VCR to implement • Poorly developed videotapes (content) will not be effective. • Poorly produced videos may be discounted. • Requires supplemental efforts to ensure that questions raised by the video are answered effectively. • Capturing special needs or characteristics of individual sites in a professionally done video would be too expensive. • Does not provide potential recruits with direct contact with DSS, consumers or family members

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<p><u>Booklets or brochures</u> Booklets or brochures can be of varying lengths and levels of sophistication but should include components of an effective RJP (i.e., both positive and negative aspects of the job, information that current workers report they didn't know but wish they had before they took the job). At one end of the spectrum are glossy agency brochures. At the other end are photo albums or photo scrapbooks compiled by the people working in and/or supported at a specific site.</p>	<p>Booklets, brochures, or photo scrapbooks need to be carefully designed to attract readers and maintain their attention and to include all the necessary information.</p> <p>Agencies need to be careful to be specific about the tasks of the job (i.e. not using generic words like "personal cares" instead of specifics like helping people brush their teeth, helping people use the toilet, etc.)</p> <p>Should include information about what makes the agency unique and why someone may want this job instead of a similar one somewhere else.</p>	<p>Simply handing someone a brochure may not accomplish the intent of an RJP. The person may not read all the materials or fully comprehend what the material implies (especially if language and examples are not specific.) It may be difficult to capture the level of detail needed in a format that is short enough.</p> <p>Booklets or brochures should be supplemented with other opportunities to meet people and ask questions or to view videos about the kind of work they will be doing.</p>	<p>Quality brochures and booklets are expensive to produce and design.</p> <p>There may be the need to purchase computer hardware and software as well as working with layout and design professionals, consultants to help ID what information should be presented and how, and professional printers and photographers.</p> <p>Printing decisions need to include the cost effectiveness of large bulk orders with the potential for waste when it is time to update materials.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Highly Portable • Can be distributed by current employees, family members, consumers, board members etc to people they know who might be interested in a position • Provides information that the potential employee can take with them to consider further in the privacy of their own homes. • Can be adapted to a variety of settings, consumers, etc. Site specific or consumer specific materials can be developed. • Can be developed by a team of DSPs at a site as a team building exercise. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Requires expertise to create effective and attractive materials. • Does not provide hands on opportunity for prospective employees to interact with consumers, DSS, family members etc. • Agency wide brochures or booklets are not likely to include the unique characteristics of a specific site or consumer. • Potential that this medium will be least effective for helping someone understand the job. • Agency may hesitate to be specific enough with information in this format • May be distributed to various people, but not used unless they are committed to its use.

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<p><u>Web-based multimedia</u></p> <p>A web-based multimedia RJP involves putting comprehensive information about the positive and negative features of jobs on a web site for prospective employees to review.</p> <p>Websites can be used for more than simply presenting an RJP. They can be developed as part of a Recruitment portal which includes items such as on-line applications, current position openings, email contact and links to and from other targeted sites (such as public schools, community centers, etc).</p> <p>Web-based multimedia RJP's may include photos, verbal descriptions, video clips, and/or written information about the agency and about the job.</p>	<p>Web-based RJP's will be most effective if they are well designed. Agencies are advised to work with consultants who understand design issues as well as potential for displaying content most effectively and how to limit access to sensitive materials.</p> <p>Agencies will need to buy or have the hardware and software to produce and maintain a site and train someone internally to do updates. (Or, agencies can hire a service provider to develop and maintain the site)</p> <p>Agencies may need to rent server space and register with online search engines.</p> <p>Development and quality testing can take a significant amount of time.</p>	<p>Agencies will have to training current staff (especially those doing hiring) on how to access and use the online RJP.</p> <p>Sites need to be checked regularly for "dead" or inaccurate links. A system should be created to make sure that all information is updated and accurate (i.e. contact person, available positions, etc.) and that any email contact is answered promptly.</p> <p>Agency must provide access to a computer and assistance to potential new hires who do not have computer access or who are not computer literate.</p>	<p>Web-based RJP's can be expensive to produce but are inexpensive to maintain and update.</p> <p>Development costs will vary but would be no more than a video and potentially much less.</p> <p>Heaviest cost will be felt by agencies that do not have any existing hardware, software, or internal expertise.</p> <p>If developed properly they require minimal personnel time to update and maintain, especially if they are developed thoughtfully (i.e. automatically updates position openings, whenever central position list is updated.)</p> <p>Updates can often be made by a person with only basic computer skills.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Web-based RJP's are flexible in terms of the type and form of information presented • Highly Portable • Easily accessible to job seekers (private homes, libraries, at agency, workforce and community centers) • Can be part of a comprehensive online recruitment portal for agency. • Easy and inexpensive to update frequently • Updated information is immediately available with no chance of outdated materials being accidentally distributed. • Can be customized to site as well as flexible to the needs of the person seeking information. • Can provide potential recruits with direct contact with DSS, agency, consumers or family members through email options. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Need special equipment to access. • Existing personnel may hesitate to use without training and encouragement. • Requires expertise in how to use the web environment most effectively. • Slow or outdated equipment or sever problems may make process annoying or irritating to people trying to access information. • Not all applicants have web access or knowledge of how to use internet applications.

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<p><u>Group RJP</u> This type of RJP involves inviting groups of potential applicants to gather to get information about the job. The meetings can be divided into three or four 5-10 minute segments. During each segment information about the job is provided and questions are answered. After each segment a break allows those who decide this is not a good match for them to leave. At the end of 30-45 minutes those who remain are given an application to fill out and interviews are scheduled.</p>	<p>Like other methods this requires planning time to identify which aspects of the job to highlight and how.</p>	<p>Potential applicants should be informed of any job prerequisites prior to this meeting so they do not come if they cannot pass needed background checks or drivers license requirements.</p> <p>This process could easily incorporate strategies such as videotapes.</p>	<p>Development and implementation cost will vary depending on the materials/methods used.</p> <p>When DSS, Consumers, and/or Family members are involved it will be less expensive in a group than to do so individually.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provides information to more than one person at a time reducing the time commitment per applicant (efficient). • Clearly shows potential applicants that it is ok to decide to not pursue the job. • The structure can help keep information more consistent than when a single prospective employee meets with them 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Requires prospective employee to be available at the scheduled times (low flexibility). • Cost/benefit ratio may be low due to need for planning, scheduling, materials needed, etc. versus accessibility.

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<p><u>Internships or volunteer programs</u> More of a long-term strategy, internships or volunteer opportunities provide people who aren't sure whether this job is of interest to them a chance to actually try it out.</p> <p>Some internship programs focus on high school students who are fulfilling course or community service requirements for school.</p>	<p>This method requires a local champion who will guide the program through development and implementation.</p> <p>Planning must include consideration of the guidelines regarding what volunteers or interns are allowed to do and what the conditions of the internship/volunteer opportunity will be.</p>	<p>Internships can be paid or unpaid.</p> <p>Providing recognition of people who were interns or volunteers (e.g., at banquets, award ceremonies, in the local newspapers) can help generate interest from other persons.</p>	<p>This type of program is expensive in terms of coordination efforts.</p> <p>It is a long-term strategy that may not show immediate benefits.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provides an additional person to enhance opportunities for quality of life outcomes while at the same time providing a very good picture of what the job is really like. • Provides employers, coworkers, consumers and families information about this person. • Participants leave with a better understanding of people with disabilities even if they don't choose a career in human services. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • This is a very time intensive strategy. • The actual yield in terms of new employees could be quite low. That is, it may take many interns or volunteers to yield one new staff member. • May have to complete a "Pseudo-hiring" situation (BCA, training, etc.) minimizing the benefits
<p><u>Hybrid method</u> Combining one or more of the methods to create a more flexible and comprehensive RJP</p>	<p>Requires coordination across the methods to ensure that the most effective methods are being used in each situation</p> <p>Development considerations depend on methods chosen.</p>	<p>Implementation considerations depend on methods chosen.</p>	<p>Depends on the types of materials used. May reduce cost of some materials (e.g., video –if shorter, etc.).</p> <p>Could be more expensive if cost is not attended to during development and implementation.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Can be adapted to individual site and person's needs. • Could be more thorough and effective than any one method alone. • Could use a method that is cheaper to produce to confirm the RJP effectiveness and then create a method that is cheaper to implement (e.g., web-site, video) once comfortable with effectiveness. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • May lose track of what information a person has received.