

## ***Supported employment for immigrants? Why not!***

The Swedish National Labour Market Board have been working with the Supported Employment methodology has in the the last 10 years. In the year of 1993, the project of Supported Employment for people with disabilities started, and this type of support is now given at the different local employment offices throughout Sweden.

The method has proven to be very effective and unemployed individuals with disabilities have obtained jobs on the competitive market.

In the beginning of 2000, discussions took place in Sweden about finding specific techniques in order to increase immigrants into the workforce. There is a significant discrepancy in the employment rate between immigrants and native Swedes. The employment rate among immigrants is estimated to be as low as 61%, compared to 80% among native Swedes. It is estimated that approximately 100 000 immigrants are without employment opportunities. Therefore, the Swedish government has set a goal to decrease the discrepancy rate between native Swedes and immigrants. This example shows, that the importance of diversity in the workplace, plays a crucial part to a country's economy.

Immigration leads to exclusion that can become an obstacle towards the labour market. Language, the lack of networking, "rules and regulations" on the Swedish employment market, government authorities, prejudice toward other cultures etc., are just a few examples of obstacles that immigrants face that leads to exclusion.

During the fall of 2003, the Swedish government gave the Swedish National Labour Market Board an assignment to focus on lowering the unemployment rate among immigrants. The method of Supported Employment was considered to be the most suitable method since it is on an individual basis and an in-depth support that leads to employment.

The pilot project, "Workplace Introduction for Immigrants" is a great commitment from the Swedish National Labour Market Board. The project takes place in 20 different regions, throughout the country, where the immigration rate is high.

Two hundred and seventyfive jobcoaches have been hired and specially trained in the method of Supported Employment. During the first year of



the project, over 4100 unemployed individuals got support from a jobcoach. So far, it means that approximately 2100 people has obtained employment.

The method of Supported Employment has been reviewed by the Swedish National Labour Market Board in order to obtain quality guarantee.

The project started in September 2003 and will be ending December 2005. A report to the Government will already be turned in before the end date.

The assignment has several purposes. First of all, to increase the employment rate among immigrants. Secondly, to promote workplace diversity and prevent discrimination. Another purpose, is to utilize the competence among immigrants. In addition, the assignment would also support employers to get competent employees. Furthermore, the cost of unemployment would decrease.

How does the method of Supported Employment for immigrants look like?

The method includes 5 steps:

It is of great importance, that the job coach works through all the 5 steps for each individual. This will lead to high quality and greater results for both the individual and the employer.

#### 1. Applicant Analysis/Vocational Profile?

This step is vital and the foundation for our support. Questions that may be asked are for example, "type of experience and qualifications?", "Documents and transcripts from native country?". We can assist with translation of documents from another language.

In addition, the jobcoach offers help in different interview techniques, writing a CV and job applications.

#### 2. Job Developing

When looking for a job, the starting point for the job coach, will always be from the individuals choice of occupation. The job coach have a good knowledge of the local labour market. He/She has access to the specific network that immigrants lack. The employer that hold the type of job that the individual is looking for is contacted. The purpose of the contact is to eliminate the competition from others and to book a meeting.



### 3. Workplace Analysis

The job coach visits the company in order to survey the workplace. The visit plays an important part in judging whether the company is a suitable workplace for the individual or not – you cannot see through the phone!

The survey takes different factors into consideration, for example; what type of tasks will be performed?, organizational factors, how does the cultural and social patterns look like?, and so forth.

Social and cultural factors are important to be aware of in order to prevent any cultural clashes from happening.

### 4. Workplace introduction

The job coach will support the individual at the workplace during the beginning of the job. The level of support depends on the individual's needs. It can vary from just being a "door-opener" to more substantial support. Immigrants in general, do not need a substantial level of support in regards to learning the job. The support focuses more on the cultural and social interactions. Even the employer has a need of the support.

The method of Supported Employment is formally called "The 50/50% Support", which means 50% of the support goes to the individual and the other 50% goes to the employer.

If needed, the job coach can assist with translation of the tasks that the job includes and safety instructions to other languages.

### 5. Follow-up

After the individual is employed, the job coach will do continual follow-ups in order to secure that the person remains employed in the workplace.

The follow-up is greatly appreciated from both the employee and the employer. The job coach establishes good relationships with employers that often lead to new employment opportunities for other individuals. A satisfied employer can also be used as a reference for other companies.



In conclusion:

The Swedish National Labour Market Board uses the method of Supported Employment for the target group of immigrants that remains unemployed in

Sweden. We have during the time of the project seen positive effects, the employment rate among immigrants has increased. Unemployed immigrants obtains jobs in their field of work.

Today, there are 275 job coaches employed. During the first year of the project, over 4100 unemployed individuals got support from a jobcoach. So far, it means that approximately 2100 people has obtained a job.

We are convinced that the method of Supported Employment works for all individuals that needs an in-depth support in order to obtain and remain employed.

The methodology of Supported Employment is based on the theory that most individuals can work if they are given the right support. The project of the "Workplace Introduction for Immigrants" can open up for other disadvantaged groups to receive this type of individualized support. All individuals can achieve social and economic inclusion through employment opportunities through individualized and ongoing support from jobcoaching.

The profit will not only be socioeconomic but also highly for the democratic principles. More diversity and opportunities for individuals to support themselves and their families will lead to a decrease in hostility and discrimination towards immigrants. The gain, in total, is obvious for most of us – to protect the open democratic society.

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