

3

WHAT IS THIS JOB ALL ABOUT?

Using Realistic Job Previews in the Hiring Process

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Realistic job previews (RJPs) improve retention of new employees by providing potential new hires with an accurate picture of the job for which they are interviewing *before* the organization makes a job offer. This hiring practice allows applicants to make an informed decision about whether they wish to accept a job offer should one be made. An RJP includes information on both the positive and the negative aspects of the job. This chapter describes how and why RJPs can reduce turnover and identifies what components should be included in an RJP. Various methods for delivering an RJP are also described.

TARGETED FRONT-LINE SUPERVISOR COMPETENCIES

Competent supervisors incorporate RJP strategies into their hiring practices; this skill is assessed in the Personnel Management competency area. Front-line supervisors (FLSs) use the related skills of seeking input from key stakeholders, including current direct support professionals (DSPs) and individuals receiving supports and their family members. Competent FLSs also use communications skills from the Staff Relations competency area to gather information, develop a plan, and implement an RJP.

Primary Skills

5

FLSs schedule and complete interviews with potential new staff in collaboration with DSPs and individuals supported and family members.

FLSs understand the importance and components of an RJP in the hiring process and use these methods effectively with potential new hires.

Related Skills

5

FLSs seek input from other staff and from individuals receiving supports and their family members in making hiring decisions.

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FLSs effectively communicate with staff by listening to their concerns, supporting and encouraging their ideas and work, thanking them for their contributions, and providing positive feedback regarding their performance.

FLSs seek staff opinions and input regarding various issues (e.g., program plans, budgets, procedures) and empower staff to make decisions.

UNDERSTANDING THE PROBLEM

Although not all turnover is bad, all turnover is costly. Long-term DSPs who leave their jobs take with them skills and knowledge that are not easily replaced. This is especially true in human services work, in which much of the critical knowledge DSPs take with them is the history and needs of the people they support. The loss of long-term employees typically means the loss of deep knowledge and skills. In addition, from the perspective of the organization, DSPs who leave their jobs take with them a significant investment in time and money spent recruiting, hiring, training, orienting, and supervising.

Turnover rates for DSPs in community residential service settings have averaged around 50% since at least 1981 (see Chapter 1). Even more important than the number of DSPs who leave their positions is how soon after being hired they leave those positions. In a longitudinal study of more than 100 small residential support settings, 45% of DSPs who left the organization left in the first 6 months of employment (Larson, Lakin, & Bruininks, 1998). An additional 23% of all leavers left 6–12 months after hire. Ultimately, the majority of people who leave DSP positions do so within their first year on the job.

Depending on the way in which people are recruited, hired, and trained, the quantifiable cost of getting a new DSP into an organization and ready to start work with even moderate independence can meet or exceed \$2,500. Many of the financial costs of filling a position are the same whether the DSP who left was with the organization a day or a decade. The longer the new employee stays, however, the more the overall hiring costs are offset. Recruiting and training new employees are critical organizational investments, and their value can be measured by the amount of time a new employee stays with the organization. Early turnover, therefore, is much more costly to the organization than other types of turnover in terms of financial viability and best use of resources.

The human cost of repeated, early turnover in this industry is significant as well. From the perspective of existing employees, this cost is harder to quantify. There surely is a loss of trust, energy, and the will to support the next new DSP who is hired. In addition, long-term DSPs and supervisors can become jaded toward new DSPs and therefore, directly or indirectly, be less welcoming and willing to share their current knowledge and skills with new DSPs. Often, existing employees believe that it is a waste of time to demonstrate correct job procedures and to encourage the development of new skills because the new DSP is most likely going to be gone within a few days, weeks, or months. Early turnover is also disruptive and detrimental to the individuals receiving supports from the organization. People receiving supports become more vulnerable because they must repeatedly share intimate details of their lives with people they barely know. New DSPs do not always know these individuals' unique needs, desires, and preferences. As a result, new DSPs may make decisions that do not take those needs, desires, and preferences into account and the individuals supported bear the loss of quality in their lives. It is impossible for a new DSP to provide the same high-quality supports as a long-term DSP who more clearly understands the people being supported.

Extremely early turnover, in which the new employees are hired and then resign within a few hours, days, or weeks of accepting a position, is an indicator to existing employees and people being supported that the organization is not being effective in its hiring practices. Early turnover is often caused by poor screening and selection practices, which result in poor job matches and disenchanted and underperforming DSPs. In addition, other employees may believe that the organization does not care about finding the right DSP. People who receive supports and their families may have difficulty believing that the organization cares about the overall quality of support services. To be successful in reducing turnover and increasing retention, and to maintain the viability of the organization overall, the organization must make a commitment to address the problem of DSPs leaving early in their tenure.

RESEARCH SUPPORT FOR SOLUTIONS

RJPs inform potential employees about details of the job that they are unlikely to know, thereby reducing turnover caused by new employees' unmet expectations. Unmet expectations held by newcomers about important aspects of the job and organization cause low job satisfaction (Porter & Steers, 1973). Low satisfaction, in turn, causes newcomers to quit. The principle is that if employers provide better and more complete information to potential recruits and if they encourage those candidates to use the information to make an informed decision about whether the organization and job are a good match, those individuals who do accept positions will have fewer unmet expectations and will therefore be less likely to leave the job. This theory has substantial research support. For example, in a study of newly hired residential DSPs, those who had fewer unmet expectations about their jobs and about the organization were significantly less likely to quit in the first 12 months after hire than those who had more unmet expectations (Larson, Lakin, & Bruininks, 1998).

Several meta-analyses that compared the findings of many studies have reported that providing RJPs to reduce unmet expectations can be effective in reducing turnover. For example, one meta-analysis found that RJPs improved retention rates by 9%–17% (McEvoy & Cascio, 1985). Another meta-analysis found that RJPs increased retention of employees 12% for organizations with annual retention rates of 50% and 24% for organizations with annual retention rates of 20% (Premack & Wanous, 1985). These studies, some of which included research conducted in organizations that support individuals with disabilities, suggest that RJPs have a positive effect and that this effect is larger for organizations with higher turnover rates.

More recent research has provided a more refined understanding of the effectiveness of RJPs. One summary of studies using meta-analysis reported that RJPs delivered after a job offer has been made but before an applicant decides whether to accept a position are more effective in reducing turnover than RJPs offered when an applicant first makes contact with the organization (Phillips, 1998). The reason suggested for this is that applicants who are close to making a decision about the job will pay closer attention to the RJP than would applicants who are just learning about an opening. This suggests that pairing the RJP with the final interview may be most powerful in reducing turnover. That same study also found that RJPs that involve a

verbal exchange of information (in which the applicant can ask questions about the RJP) are the most effective in reducing turnover but that written RJP are also effective. Videotaped RJP were much less effective in reducing turnover. Interestingly, videotaped RJP shown after hire, during a socialization or acculturation process for new employees, were associated with improved performance. If done effectively, RJP also provide a comprehensive picture of the organization and its mission to applicants so that they can make an informed choice about whether they are a good match for the organization and the position.

STRATEGIES FOR RESPONDING TO THE PROBLEM

RJP help ensure that recruits who accept a position will be less likely to leave due to problems with personal job satisfaction because the recruits have made an informed decision about whether to take the job based on realistic information provided by the organization. Unfortunately not only are RJP underutilized in the human services profession, but it also could be argued that in these desperate times many organizations have taken the opposite approach in dealing with recruitment. Organizations that were not forthcoming about potentially difficult duties and assignments when a newspaper ad brought a pool of 20 people to choose from might likely be even less forthcoming in times when a newspaper ad brings only 1–2 responses. When learning about RJP, some organizations will react negatively at the thought of “deliberately chasing away” potential employees, particularly when staring down the barrel of double-digit vacancy rates! This view of RJP, however, is shortsighted at best.

An examination of an organization's internal data about turnover and vacancy rates will show whether early turnover is a problem. This assumes, of course, that the organization is actually tracking the number of people hired who never show up for training, as well as those who leave in the first few days after hire. Many organizations brush off this early turnover as insignificant and do not see the need for tracking it. An organization might be shocked, however, at the magnitude of resources being used on this early turnover. These resources include the cost of recruitment (including ads; marketing materials; background checks; employee testing; and salaries of those involved in interviewing, screening, and other applicant review) and overtime wages paid to current employees whose workload increases due to vacant positions. Even one person who does not show for his or her first day of work could be costing the organization hundreds or thousands of dollars. In addition to causing increased recruitment and hiring costs, DSPs who actually start working and quit shortly after devastate the overall financial health of the organization, employee morale, and service quality.

In the long run, RJP are a vital part of the hiring toolkit used by community human services organizations. The RJP approach includes both community education and outreach and specific RJP materials and approaches for use with applicants. Direct support to people with disabilities is part of one of the most invisible industries in the country. Because of this lack of visibility, human services organizations must spend time informing people of the importance and characteristics of available positions. This is especially true as more applicants come from increasingly diverse pools of em-

ployees and as consumer-directed community supports continue to be developed. RJPs help people understand the work they are being asked to do and how a particular organization goes about doing it.

For instance, although recent immigrants, displaced workers, and retirees are nontraditional pools of potential employees to which many organizations are reaching out, many people in these potential applicant pools will have little experience in facilitating community inclusion and networking for people with disabilities. Younger employees may have more exposure to regular interactions with their peers with disabilities, especially if they went to an inclusive school. Younger employees, however, may have less experience with and understanding some of the other tasks that are associated with providing support to people with disabilities. Such tasks may include doing laundry, cooking, and documentation. Organizations should understand these potential skill deficits and ensure that job candidates clearly understand that they will be expected to develop and use skills in those areas.

The RJP development process includes keeping the job description up to date, gathering information from new and long-term employees about the positive and negative characteristics of the job, summarizing information that potential recruits are unlikely to know or are likely to have unrealistic expectations about, developing a strategy to present the information to candidates before they decide whether to take the job, and implementing and evaluating the RJP (Wanous, 1992). Because of the relatively low profile of the community human services industry, RJPs must contain information about direct support work in general, the organization specifically, and the specific needs of the people with whom the employee will be matched.

The following subsections describe the components of and the steps in creating an RJP. Figure 3.1 summarizes the steps graphically.

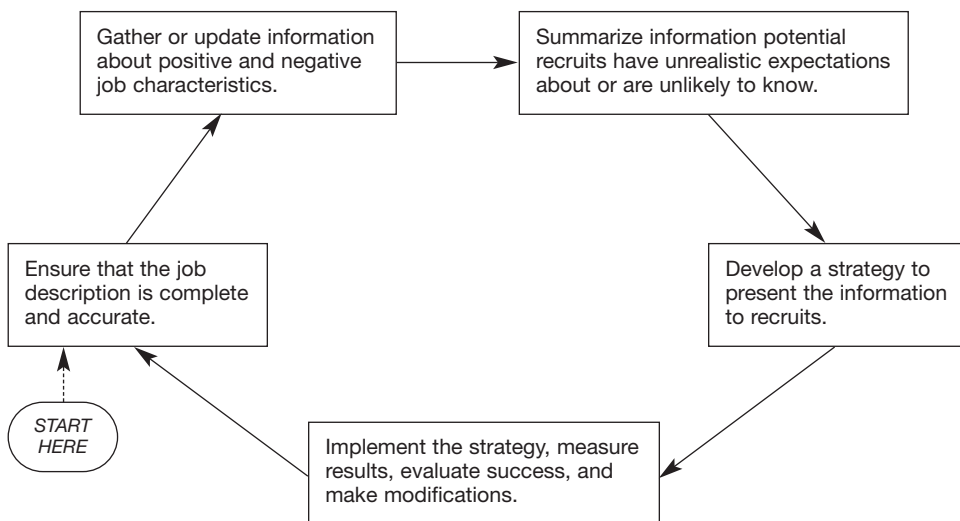


Figure 3.1. The realistic job preview (RJP) process.

Ensure that the Job Description Is Complete and Accurate

Having a job description that accurately summarizes the key functions of the position is critical for many of the interventions discussed in this book. In addition, the very act of providing an accurate, up-to-date job description to all applicants is an important part of the RJP process. Depending on how long it has been since job descriptions have been updated and what process was used, this may require quite a bit of work. (Chapter 11 provides guidance on how to develop job descriptions for FLSs; those principles can be applied to developing meaningful job descriptions for DSPs.) An accurate and complete job description can help the organization to select topics to describe in the RJP.

Gather or Update Information About Positive and Negative Job Characteristics

The next step in developing an RJP is to identify the characteristics that current employees like and dislike about their jobs. There are many ways to accomplish this task. One of those ways is to develop and distribute a job satisfaction survey that asks current employees about their jobs. A variety of questions can be helpful, but here are some of the most effective questions:

- What is the best part of your job?
- What makes you want to stay at this organization or in this job?
- What could your employer do to make your job better?
- What was the hardest part of starting this job? Give specific examples.
- What specific incidents make you want to leave this organization or job?
- What would you tell a friend who was applying for your job?

The responses to these questions can help the organization in determining the information to share in an RJP as well as in identifying issues that need to be addressed by supervisors or managers. An alternative to conducting a survey would be to use focus groups of current employees to discuss these questions. Focus groups or team discussions can be particularly useful when an RJP is being developed for a single site with a small group of employees.

Because relationships between new employees and people who receive services and their family members have an effect on the overall success and satisfaction of the new employee, it is important to gather information from family members and individuals receiving support about their expectations of DSPs and their hiring priorities. They often have a slightly different yet critically important perspective on this issue that will be very illuminating to the potential recruit. In addition, information provided by people who receive services and their family members helps the potential recruit get a realistic feel for the interaction and tone of the relationships they can expect to have with the people they will support.

Another important part of this assessment process is identifying the unique characteristics of the organization and/or the people being supported. Important questions to ask when gathering this information include

- How is this organization different from other organizations (or sites) that provide similar services?
- Why would someone want to work here?

- What organizational and procedural aspects should the candidate be made aware of that will have an impact on his or her ability to perform the job?

A well-rounded RJP will require input from a variety of people affiliated with the organization. People who currently work in the position, however, should provide the majority of the information about the job and its impact on new employees. When creating the RJP, it is best to involve a mix of newer and more experienced employees who work in the position. Relying on people outside of the position, even if they worked in the position for many years (e.g., employees who have been promoted or otherwise re-assigned), is not sufficient. Job duties and requirements for DSPs change on a regular basis. In addition, people outside the position are apt to focus on their own needs rather than providing a DSP's perspective.

Summarize Information Potential Recruits Have Unrealistic Expectations About or Are Unlikely to Know

After the information has been collected, the next step is to review the information to identify issues that newcomers are unlikely to know or about which they are likely to have unrealistic expectations. The organization should rely mostly on recently hired recruits to help understand what information to include or emphasize in the RJP for DSP positions. The organization can develop a list of themes, both positive and negative, that will be included in the RJP. Information to highlight might include the following:

- A description of the organization and its vision and mission
- Basic information about the job (e.g., hours and scheduling; pay; paid leave time policies; skill prerequisites such as ability to read and comprehend complex medical information and the ability to lift a certain amount of weight; DSP job prerequisites such as a driver's license, a negative criminal background check, and the need to have a working and insured vehicle to use on the job)
- A description of typical job duties (e.g., cooking; shopping; assisting with personal care; helping people develop and maintain friendships; helping people manage their own behavior; supporting people to use community environments such as restaurants, stores, doctor and dental offices, and recreation venues; keeping records of supported individuals' activities and progress toward personal goals)
- Basic expectations about work behavior (e.g., the importance of showing up and being on time for every shift, the amount of notice required when the employee has a personal conflict with a shift, expectations about respectful interactions, ability to work without daily direct supervision)
- General information about the interests and needs of the people supported
- Testimonies from current employees about why they love their jobs
- Testimonies from current employees about the hard parts of their jobs

The selection of topics to include should be made in conjunction with current employees with the goal of using the most important information applicants need to make an informed decision about whether to take a job if it is offered.

Develop a Strategy to Present the Information to Recruits

Many different strategies can be used to share RJP's with potential employees. Those approaches include structured observations; meetings with current staff, individuals,

and family members; videotapes; photograph albums or scrapbooks; booklets or brochures; web-based multimedia presentations; group RJPs; and internships or volunteer programs. Tables 3.1–3.8 review development issues, implementation considerations, cost implications, and advantages and disadvantages of each approach. Each method has strengths, weaknesses, and factors to consider when making a choice about the best type of RJP for an organization. Since the goal of RJPs is to present undistorted information to job applicants about the job and the organization before a job offer has been made, the organization should select the format that will best convey the information in the most affordable and practical manner given current resources and needs. For example, it may be practical and affordable to purchase a professionally done, customized RJP videotape in an organization that hires 500 DSPs each year but not for an organization that hires 5 DSPs annually.

In addition to the eight specific types of RJPs reviewed in Tables 3.1–3.8, an organization could also choose to use a hybrid method that combines two or more of the methods to create a more flexible and comprehensive RJP. The use of multiple methods should be coordinated to avoid overlap as much as possible. A hybrid approach may be advantageous because it provides more perspectives or more comprehensive information than could be covered in a single approach. For example, a hybrid approach might pair an industry-, state-, or organization-specific RJP videotape with site-specific scrapbooks.

This chapter describes several formatting options for an RJP, but organizations should not limit themselves to only these ideas. Other strategies such as developing slide presentations (delivered via a projector, computer, or in print) may also work. The organization can take advantage of creative ideas developed by the project team to develop an RJP to match the organization or site as well as possible. Also remember that the tables in this chapter simply describe formats for delivering RJP information. Regardless of which format is chosen, the content should be developed through the processes previously outlined in this chapter. We encourage organizations to think creatively about what would be the best approach for them based on available organizational resources and needs.

Regardless of the method or strategy the organization uses for its RJP, to be effective the RJP must have the following characteristics:

- The purpose of the RJP must be clear to the applicant (e.g., to help him or her decide whether to take the job if offered).
- The RJP must use credible information (e.g., real people and events, not actors and scripts; testimony from job incumbents rather than a discussion with supervisors).
- The RJP should include information about how current employees feel about their jobs.
- Positive and negative information should be balanced to reflect actual experience (a topical outline can be used to keep this balance when live people are part of the RJP).
- The RJP should be presented before or at the time that a job offer is made.

Several strategies can be used to determine whether an RJP is effective. The first strategy is to review the completed RJP and evaluate the process used in its development. A worksheet to evaluate the RJP is included at the end of this chapter. That tool asks current employees to rate the extent to which the criteria just listed were met from A (*excellent*) to F (*very poor*).

Table 3.1. Structured observation realistic job previews (RJPs)

Overview	Structured observation RJPs occur at a work site and give the applicant a comprehensive overview of job characteristics. For the session to be most effective, the applicant should take primary responsibility for gathering the information he or she needs so that working staff are focused on performing duties in their usual way. Providing the applicant with a checklist and scheduling structured observations during busy but routine activities is one way to ensure that staff and individuals receiving supports act naturally during the observation.
Development considerations	<p>Structured observations should have set criteria and should not be informal processes in which the applicant merely shows up and watches what happens. A checklist or other method for ensuring that important information is gathered should be used (see the Structured Observation Worksheet in the Tools section of this chapter).</p> <p>People receiving supports should be consulted about the structured observation before its implementation. They may find the opportunity to prescreen prospective employees appealing. Their advice should be sought on how to ensure understanding of private care duties without intrusion and of other types of duties, such as documentation, that may not be consistently observed.</p> <p>Direct support professionals (DSPs) should be involved in identifying critical job components to be highlighted and in deciding how DSPs will be involved in the observations.</p>
Implementation considerations	<p>Observations should be in the exact site the candidate would work, if possible.</p> <p>Observations should be at times or in situations that help the applicant get a realistic expectation of what the job responsibilities would be (typically at a mealtime or another busy time when individuals receiving supports and staff are less focused on the visitor and are acting more naturally.)</p> <p>The candidate should be prompted to watch for certain information, to ask specific questions, and to provide specific types of feedback about what he or she saw. It is helpful to provide the applicant a written worksheet with a list of the information and questions to answer (see the Tools section of this chapter). It is also helpful to schedule time for the person observing to interact with both the DSPs and the people receiving supports during the observation.</p> <p>Observations should be followed by a debriefing to address questions and to provide information about job components not observed.</p> <p>The applicant could be asked to turn in the worksheet (or a photocopy of it) as a work sample test so that his or her documentation skills can be assessed.</p> <p>Observations should be scheduled with employees and individuals receiving supports in advance and should respect individuals' privacy and comfort level with the process.</p> <p>Observations should be scheduled so that the observer sees other DSPs, not front-line supervisors, at work.</p>
Cost effectiveness	<p>Structured observations require thorough planning 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 (e.g., checklists) are inexpensive to produce and update.</p>
Pros	<p>Structured observations are inexpensive to develop and implement.</p> <p>They are easy to update.</p> <p>They are easy to customize to individual sites and individuals receiving supports.</p> <p>They directly involve individuals receiving supports and DSPs in the hiring and selection process.</p> <p>They provide information to the potential hire from the people who understand the job best.</p> <p>The debriefing provides the applicant opportunities to ask questions about job aspects that were not observed and to establish a dialogue about what was observed.</p> <p>The structured observation sets the expectations that the DSP role includes supporting and informing new and potential staff and that new staff should seek information.</p>
Cons	<p>The structured observation is potentially invasive to individuals receiving supports and current employees.</p> <p>Each visit is different.</p> <p>During the observation, it is difficult to show all areas that might be important to new employees (e.g., pay and benefits, personal care, documentation).</p> <p>It might be difficult for people to act naturally when they are being observed.</p> <p>The observation sessions can be difficult to schedule.</p> <p>Structured observations are not portable.</p>

From O'Neill, S., Larson, S.A., Hewitt, A., & Sauer, J. (2001). *RJP overview*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota, Institute on Community Integration, Research and Training Center on Community Living. Also available on-line: <http://rtc.umn.edu/pdf/rjp.pdf>; adapted by permission.

Table 3.2. Realistic job preview (RJP) meetings with current direct support professionals (DSPs) and people receiving supports and/or family members

Overview	In these individual meetings, current DSPs and people receiving supports and/or their family members explain in their own words what the job is like; what the benefits and drawbacks are; and what their hopes, needs, and expectations for new hires are.
Development considerations	<p>Current DSPs and people receiving supports and their families who participate should be trained about the purpose of RJPs and coached about how to make the meetings productive.</p> <p>It is important to clarify to all involved whether the meetings will be used solely for the purpose of an RJP or whether these participants will also be making recommendations about whether applicants may be a good match for the setting.</p> <p>As with structured observations, there should be guidelines for information to be shared during these meetings, and planning time is required to make sure that the organization has identified those criteria.</p> <p>The people who will conduct these meetings need to be willing to make a long-term commitment and must be coached on the goals of the RJP and what types of information will be helpful to share with recruits.</p>
Implementation considerations	<p>The prospective employee should be given a set of suggested questions 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 after the job interview on the same day or on another day. The applicant should have the opportunity to gracefully opt out of the hiring process if the RJP reveals job characteristics for which they are ill-suited.</p> <p>Individuals receiving supports and their family members may be offered a stipend for their participation.</p> <p>People receiving supports who do not speak may wish to put together a collection of photographs or use other methods to show their routines and preferences.</p>
Cost effectiveness	<p>Development costs are similar to those for structured observations.</p> <p>Implementing the meetings requires staff time, making this method relatively expensive to maintain long term.</p> <p>The cost of bonuses or stipends paid to current DSPs and individuals receiving supports and family members who participate in the RJP should be considered.</p>
Pros	<p>The meetings are portable (if participants are willing).</p> <p>The meetings can provide opportunities for individuals receiving supports and their families and DSPs to be directly involved in the hiring process.</p> <p>The meetings provide direct information to potential hires from the people who understand the job best.</p> <p>The meetings allow candidates to ask questions that might not be answered by a structured observation.</p> <p>Each meeting is adaptable to the unique characteristics of, benefits of, and difficulties involved in working at each site.</p>
Cons	<p>Without good training and clear focus, the DSP or person receiving supports and his or her family may not provide adequate information.</p> <p>The meetings require that staff spend time away from their regular job duties.</p> <p>The meetings can be difficult to schedule.</p> <p>Each applicant's experience can be highly variable because each meeting is different.</p> <p>Prospective employees may be uncomfortable and less inclined to ask important questions in this form of RJP.</p> <p>The meetings may be a burden on current DSPs and people receiving supports and their families.</p> <p>The organization may be unable to find DSPs and people receiving supports and their families who are willing to participate.</p> <p>If the organization offers a stipend to participating DSPs and people receiving supports and their families, the stipend has to be paid, even if the prospective employee does not show up.</p>

From O'Neill, S., Larson, S.A., Hewitt, A., & Sauer, J. (2001). *RJP overview*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota, Institute on Community Integration, Research and Training Center on Community Living. Also available on-line: <http://rtc.umn.edu/pdf/rjp.pdf>; adapted by permission.

Table 3.3. Videotape or DVD realistic job previews (RJPs)

Overview	<p>RJP videotapes or DVDs are often professionally produced and cover all jobs in a particular job classification. Amateur videos specific to a site can also be used, or the two methods may be combined. Videotapes show an applicant what the job is really like. They focus on situations that show the job most realistically or that typically cause early turnover due to lack of information about the job. It is important to include actual DSPs and individuals receiving supports in the video (rather than actors without disabilities) to make the video realistic. High-quality videos produced by groups of provider organizations or other entities may serve as a useful adjunct to other RJP methods.</p>
Development considerations	<p>Videos and DVDs require significant work beyond identifying the critical aspects of the job to include in the videotape. Writing a script; gathering consent forms; preparing settings; and coordinating participants, equipment, and video crews are also necessary. For a professional-quality video or DVD, access to high-end equipment and experts in camera work, sound recording, production, and duplication are needed.</p> <p>These RJPs need careful script development to ensure that critical components are present both visually and in words. Consultants or others who are familiar with the job and the organization and who are skilled videographers should develop the script.</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>
Implementation considerations	<p>Videos or DVDs can be made accessible at multiple sites but require a TV and VCR or DVD player and a staff person to be present to run the equipment and to answer questions.</p> <p>RJPs that are too long can lose impact; those that are too short may not contain all necessary information.</p> <p>Research suggests that video RJPs are less effective than other approaches in reducing turnover (Phillips, 1998) but that they may be helpful in improving job performance if shown during initial posthire socialization.</p>
Cost effectiveness	<p>Videos and DVDs are very expensive to produce and to update.</p> <p>If a video or DVD is well produced and content is not date sensitive, it can be used for a long time, increasing cost effectiveness. Updates, however, can be nearly as expensive as initial development.</p> <p>A TV and VCR or DVD player must be available at every site where the RJP is going to be used.</p> <p>Usually staff time is required to use RJP videos or DVDs. This usually will be time taken away from another task rather than additional hours added to the schedule.</p>
Pros	<p>Videotapes and DVDs are portable.</p> <p>Videos and DVDs are realistic without being repeatedly intrusive.</p> <p>Videos and DVDs can cover a variety of topics that might be concerns to the applicant (e.g., pay and benefits, major job duties)</p> <p>A video or DVD provides comprehensive look at the organization.</p> <p>This kind of RJP shows people actually engaged in the tasks required by the job, thereby providing credible information to newcomers.</p> <p>A video or DVD gives highly consistent information to each prospective employee.</p>
Cons	<p>Special equipment and expert filming and production are required for the video to look polished.</p> <p>Developing and updating a video can be very expensive and difficult.</p> <p>A TV and VCR or DVD player are needed for the video to be shown.</p> <p>Videotapes with poorly developed content will not be effective, and those with poor production quality may be discounted.</p> <p>Someone must be present when the RJP is shown to ensure that questions raised by the RJP are answered effectively.</p> <p>Capturing special needs or characteristics of people in many different individual sites in a professionally done video is very expensive.</p> <p>Videotapes or DVDs do not provide applicants with direct contact with DSPs or individuals receiving supports and their family members</p>

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Table 3.4. Photo album or scrapbook realistic job previews (RJPs)

Overview	Photo albums or scrapbooks compiled by the people working in and/or supported at a specific site can tell the story, using pictures and words, of what it is like to work at that site. These books are a low-technology option that can be developed and modified at the local level.
Development considerations	<p>Photo albums or scrapbooks need to be carefully designed to attract applicants and maintain their attention and to include all the necessary information.</p> <p>Organizations need to be careful to be specific about the tasks of the job and avoid (or explain) jargon that may not be understood by prospective employees. For example, avoid using only generic words such as <i>personal care</i>; mention or illustrate specifics such as helping people brush their teeth, helping people use the toilet, and so forth.</p>
Implementation considerations	<p>Simply handing an applicant a scrapbook may not accomplish the intent of an RJP. The person may not read all of the materials or may not fully comprehend them (especially if there are language barriers and if examples are not specific).</p> <p>A checklist similar to the one necessary for structured observations (see the Tools section of this chapter) should be used to ensure that the applicant understands the information.</p> <p>To be most effective, the applicant should view the RJP in the presence of individuals receiving supports and their family members and/or current direct support professionals (DSPs), who can explain what is pictured in more detail and can answer questions.</p> <p>Time with an album or scrapbook should be followed by a debriefing with the supervisor or hiring authority to answer questions and to provide information about job components that the applicant does not understand.</p> <p>Outdated information should be removed or replaced. (Using an album or scrapbook with removable pages facilitates this process.)</p>
Cost effectiveness	<p>Film and other supplies must be purchased and used creatively to tell the story effectively.</p> <p>This format is very inexpensive overall.</p>
Pros	<p>Photo albums and scrapbooks are highly portable.</p> <p>They provide a vehicle to encourage individuals receiving supports and their families and current staff members to share their lives with potential new hires in a relatively nonthreatening format.</p> <p>Photo albums and scrapbooks can be developed by current DSPs at a site as a team-building exercise.</p> <p>Photo albums and scrapbooks can be adapted to a variety of settings, individuals receiving supports, and so forth.</p>
Cons	<p>A separate album or scrapbook is needed for each site.</p> <p>Quality photo albums or scrapbooks require creativity and a significant amount of effort to create.</p> <p>Impact depends on the amount of energy the applicant spends engaging with the materials.</p>

From O'Neill, S., Larson, S.A., Hewitt, A., & Sauer, J. (2001). *RJP overview*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota, Institute on Community Integration, Research and Training Center on Community Living. Also available on-line: <http://rtc.umn.edu/pdf/rjp.pdf>; adapted by permission.

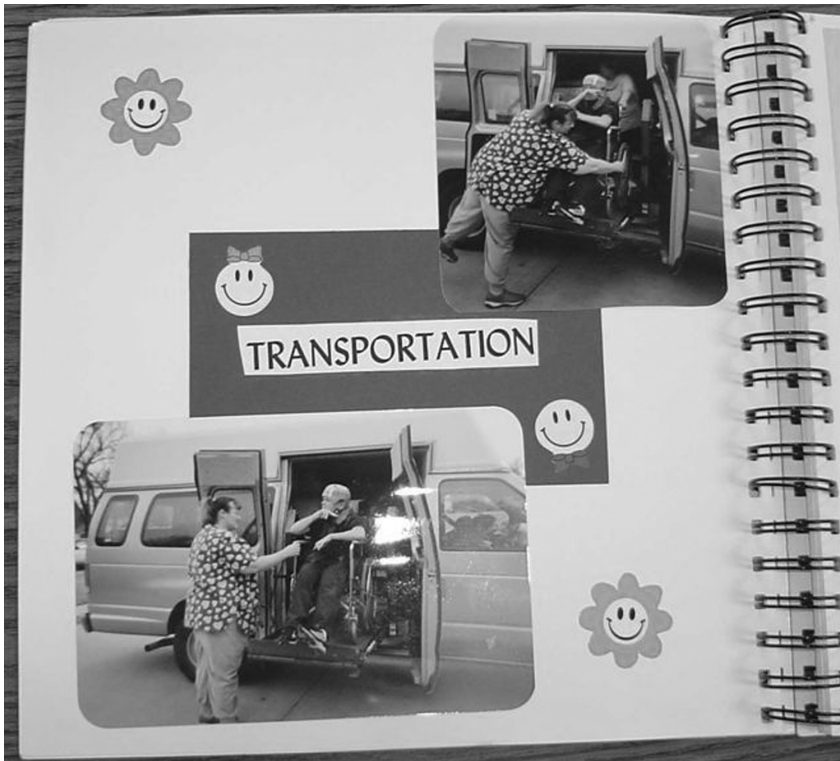


Figure 3.2. Pages from realistic job preview (RJP) scrapbooks. (Top page created by Marcie Grace.)

Table 3.5. Booklet or brochure realistic job previews (RJPs)

Overview	Booklets or brochures can be of varying lengths and levels of sophistication but should include the components of an effective RJP that are discussed in this chapter. Booklets or brochures are typically printed in bulk and given to each applicant.
Development considerations	<p>Booklets or brochures need to be carefully designed to attract applicants and maintain their attention and to include all the necessary information.</p> <p>Organizations need to be specific about the tasks of the job and avoid (or explain) jargon that may not be understood by prospective employees. For example, avoid using only generic words such as <i>personal care</i>; mention or illustrate specifics such as helping people brush their teeth, helping people use the toilet, and so forth.</p> <p>If booklets or brochures contain photographs or identifying details of real DSPs and individuals receiving supports, then consent must be obtained.</p>
Implementation considerations	<p>Simply handing an applicant a booklet or brochure may not accomplish the intent of an RJP. The person may not read all the materials or fully comprehend them (especially if there are language barriers and if examples are not specific.)</p> <p>Booklet or brochures should be site specific or should be paired with other information about the site(s) where the person would be working.</p> <p>The information presented should be balanced so that there is adequate detail and so that the booklet or brochure is not too long.</p> <p>Booklets or brochures should be supplemented with opportunities for applicants to meet people and ask questions or to view videos about the kind of work the job entails.</p>
Cost effectiveness	<p>Professional-quality brochures and booklets are expensive to produce and design. Organizations with staff members who have graphic design skills, however, could tap that talent to produce a good product.</p> <p>The organization may need to purchase computer hardware and software and may need to work with layout and design professionals, consultants to help identify what information should be presented and how, and professional printers and photographers.</p> <p>Printing decisions need to balance the cost effectiveness of large bulk orders with the potential for waste when it is time to update materials.</p> <p>Costs can be reduced by using black-and-white rather than full-color materials; however, such materials may not be received as positively by applicants. Using volunteers to collate, fold, and staple brochures or booklets can also reduce the cost.</p>
Pros	<p>Booklets or brochures are highly portable.</p> <p>Booklets or brochures can be distributed by current employees, individuals receiving supports and their families, board members, and others.</p> <p>Potential employees can take the booklet or brochure with them to consider further in the privacy of their own home.</p> <p>Booklets or brochures can be adapted to a variety of settings, individuals receiving supports, and so forth.</p> <p>Even if the organization works with a graphic designer or a consultant, current DSPs can work together to help develop the booklet or brochure as a team-building exercise.</p>
Cons	<p>Expertise is required to create effective and attractive materials.</p> <p>Booklets or brochures do not provide opportunity for prospective employees to interact with individuals receiving supports and their family members and DSPs.</p> <p>Organization-wide brochures or booklets are not likely to include the unique characteristics of a specific site or individual receiving support.</p> <p>Because booklets and brochures are not interactive, they may be less effective than other methods in helping an applicant understand the job (Phillips, 1998).</p> <p>Organizations may hesitate to be specific enough with information in this format because the needs and characteristics of supported individuals change over time and because a mass-produced brochure or booklet may not be long enough to provide specific information about particular sites.</p> <p>The value of booklets or brochures may not be understood by applicants unless the reason for using them is clearly explained.</p> <p>The organization can print a lot of brochures, but if the staff are not committed to using them, the brochures will sit unused.</p> <p>Outdated versions may be circulating.</p>

From O'Neill, S., Larson, S.A., Hewitt, A., & Sauer, J. (2001). *RJP overview*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota, Institute on Community Integration, Research and Training Center on Community Living. Also available on-line: <http://rtc.umn.edu/pdf/rjp.pdf>; adapted by permission.

Table 3.6. Web-based multimedia realistic job previews (RJPs)

Overview	<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. Web sites can be used for more than simply presenting an RJP. They can be developed as part of a recruitment portal that includes items such as on-line applications, postings about current position openings, e-mail contact information, and links to other targeted sites (e.g., public schools, community centers). Web-based multimedia RJPs may include photographs, verbal descriptions, video clips, and/or written information about the organization and about the job.</p>
Development considerations	<p>Web-based multimedia RJPs are most effective if they are well designed. Organizations are advised to work with consultants who understand design issues, such as how to display content most effectively and how to limit access to sensitive materials.</p> <p>Organizations need to buy or have the computer hardware and software to produce and maintain a web site and train or hire someone to do updates.</p> <p>Organizations may need to rent computer server space and register with on-line search engines.</p> <p>Development and quality testing can take a significant amount of time.</p> <p>If photographs, video clips, or identifying details of real direct support professionals (DSPs) and individuals receiving supports are used, then consent must be obtained.</p>
Implementation considerations	<p>Organizations should to train current staff (especially those doing hiring) on how to access and use the on-line RJP.</p> <p>Web sites need to be checked regularly for dead or inaccurate links. A system should be created to ensure that all information is updated and accurate (e.g., contact person, available positions) and that any e-mail contact is answered promptly.</p> <p>Organization 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>
Cost effectiveness	<p>Web-based multimedia RJPs can be expensive to produce but are relatively inexpensive to maintain and update, especially if they are developed thoughtfully (e.g., automatically updated when new positions are posted).</p> <p>Development costs vary but would be no more than and potentially much less than a video, especially if current staff have computer expertise.</p> <p>The greatest costs are felt by organizations that do not have any existing hardware, software, or internal expertise.</p> <p>Updates can often be made by a person with basic computer skills.</p>
Pros	<p>Web-based multimedia RJPs are flexible in terms of the type and form of information presented.</p> <p>These RJPs are highly portable and are easily accessible to job seekers (can be viewed in homes, in libraries, at the organization's sites, and at workforce and community centers).</p> <p>Web-based multimedia RJPs can be part of a comprehensive on-line recruitment portal for the organization.</p> <p>RJPs in this format are easy and inexpensive to update frequently.</p> <p>An on-line RJP provides younger, web-savvy recruits a way to access information in a familiar format.</p> <p>Updated information is immediately available, with little chance of outdated materials being accidentally distributed.</p> <p>Web-based multimedia RJPs can be customized to the organization's sites and to the needs of the applicant seeking information.</p> <p>This kind of RJP can provide potential recruits with direct e-mail contact with DSPs, other organization staff, and (with their permission) individuals receiving supports or their family members.</p>
Cons	<p>To access a web-based multimedia RJP, computer equipment and Internet service are required.</p> <p>Existing personnel may hesitate to use this kind of RJP without training and encouragement.</p> <p>Creating web-based multimedia RJPs requires expertise in how to use the web environment most effectively.</p> <p>Slow or outdated equipment, download times, or server problems may make the process annoying or irritating to people trying to access information.</p> <p>Not all applicants have web access or knowledge of how to use computers or the web.</p>

From O'Neill, S., Larson, S.A., Hewitt, A., & Sauer, J. (2001). *RJP overview*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota, Institute on Community Integration, Research and Training Center on Community Living. Also available on-line: <http://rtc.umn.edu/pdf/rjp.pdf>; adapted by permission.

Table 3.7. Group realistic job previews (RJPs)

Overview	In a group RJP potential applicants are given information about the job. The meetings can be divided into three or four 5- to 10-minute segments. During each segment, information about the job is provided and questions are answered. A variety of presentation methods including panel discussions, videotapes or DVDs, brochures, and formal presentations, can be used. After each segment, a break allows people to leave if they decide this job is not a good match for them. At the end of 30–40 minutes, those who remain fill out a job application and interviews are scheduled.
Development considerations	Like other RJP formats, planning time is required to identify which aspects of the job to highlight and how. This is a method for presenting an RJP and requires that one or more of the other methods (structured observations, meetings, videotapes, photo albums or scrapbooks, booklets or brochures, web-based multimedia presentations) be developed first to communicate the RJP content.
Implementation considerations	Potential applicants should be informed of any job prerequisites before this meeting so that they do not come if they do not meet these requirements. People attending the group RJP may be influenced by the behavior of others and may leave or stay depending on how others behave. Group RJPs may work best at recruitment fairs or similar presentations at schools, workforce centers, or other places.
Cost effectiveness	Development and implementation costs vary depending on the materials and methods used. When direct support professionals (DSPs) and individuals receiving supports and/or their family members are involved and stipends are offered for their participation, it is less expensive to have them meet with a group than to do so with individual applicants and will likely make the process more illuminating as more questions will be asked and explored.
Pros	A group RJP provides information to more than one person at a time, reducing the time commitment per potential applicant. This RJP method shows potential applicants that it is okay to decide to not pursue the job. The structure can help keep information more consistent than when current employees meet with individual applicants. Group RJPs are somewhat portable (but require space to present to a group).
Cons	Group RJPs require prospective employees to be available at the scheduled times (low flexibility). Cost–benefit ratio may be low due to the need for planning, scheduling, employee time, materials needed, and so forth.

From O'Neil, S., Larson, S.A., Hewitt, A., & Sauer, J. (2001). *RJP overview*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota, Institute on Community Integration, Research and Training Center on Community Living. Also available on-line: <http://rtc.umn.edu/pdf/rjp.pdf>; adapted by permission.

Table 3.8. Internships or volunteer program realistic job previews (RJPs)

Overview	<p>More of a long-term strategy, internships or volunteer opportunities provide people who are not sure whether this job or career is of interest to them a chance to try it out. Some internship programs focus on high school students who are fulfilling course or community service requirements for school.</p>
Development considerations	<p>This method requires a dedicated person within the organization who will guide the program through development and implementation.</p> <p>Planning must include consideration of the guidelines regarding what interns or volunteers are allowed to do and what the conditions of the internship or volunteer experience will be (e.g., supervision requirements, whether any compensation will be provided, hours). The guidelines should consider liability and insurance issues and whether background checks are needed.</p> <p>Intentional opportunities should be built into the internship or volunteer program to provide specific information about the positive and negative characteristics of the job that are not immediately apparent to individuals interacting with individuals for a short period of time (e.g., interns and volunteers may not experience the full range of duties that paid staff are expected to perform, such as paperwork and assistance with personal care).</p>
Implementation considerations	<p>Internships can be paid or unpaid.</p> <p>Providing recognition of people who were interns or volunteers (e.g., at banquets and award ceremonies, in local newspapers) can help generate interest from other people.</p> <p>The organization must ensure that there is screening and that information is given to the potential interns or volunteers in advance to ensure the best match between these people and their duties.</p> <p>One of the other types of RJPs (structured observations, meetings, videotapes, photo albums or scrapbooks, booklets or brochures, web-based multimedia presentations, group RJPs) may be useful in helping potential interns or volunteers learn more about the organization before they begin.</p>
Cost effectiveness	<p>Internship and volunteer programs are expensive in terms of coordination efforts.</p> <p>Internships or volunteer opportunities are a long-term strategy that may not show immediate benefits.</p> <p>The program will only be cost-effective as an RJP if it leads to new employees; therefore, efforts should be spent on finding people who have a potential for eventually entering the field full time and/or for providing referrals to people who would become employees.</p>
Pros	<p>Internships or volunteer programs provide additional people to enhance quality-of-life outcomes for individuals supported while also giving the interns or volunteers a good picture of what the job is really like.</p> <p>Internships or volunteer programs provide organization staff and individuals receiving supports and their families information about the interns or volunteers.</p> <p>Even if not choosing a career in human services, participants leave with a better understanding of the individuals supported.</p>
Cons	<p>Internships or volunteer programs are time intensive.</p> <p>The actual yield in terms of new employees can be quite low. That is, it may take many interns or volunteers to yield one new staff member.</p> <p>The intern or volunteer may have to go through a “pseudo-hiring” situation (e.g., criminal background checks, training) that may increase the cost to the organization.</p> <p>The organization may spend a lot of time on interns or volunteers who are a poor match.</p> <p>The program may be invasive to people receiving supports and to current direct support professionals.</p>

From O’Neill, S., Larson, S.A., Hewitt, A., & Sauer, J. (2001). *RJP overview*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota, Institute on Community Integration, Research and Training Center on Community Living. Also available on-line: <http://rtc.umn.edu/pdf/rjp.pdf>; adapted by permission.

Additional questions to ask in reviewing the completed RJP include the following:

- Were individuals receiving supports and their families involved in deciding what and how to communicate?
- Was written consent obtained to use photographs or other information about individuals receiving supports that will be shared?
- Have current DSPs reviewed the final product?

Implement the Strategy, Measure Results, Evaluate Success, and Make Modifications

Once the RJP has been developed, the next step is to try it out. This may initially involve a small pilot test in which a small number of new applicants review the materials. This pilot may involve a specific feedback mechanism used to ask the applicants what they thought of the materials and if they had any questions about what they saw (see the Realistic Job Preview Evaluation at the end of this chapter). This pilot can be used to identify minor changes that could make the RJP more effective. Obviously, with materials such as the development of a videotape, piloting may have to take place before final edits are done or at various stages of production to contain costs.

The next step is to implement the RJP for a period of several months to a year. During this phase, the organization can either have all eligible applicants experience the RJP prior to or in conjunction with a preemployment interview, or divide the pool of applicants so that half experience the RJP and the other half (the control group) participate in the hiring practices that do not include the RJP. Piloting the RJP with two such groups is a better way to test the effectiveness of the RJP because the organization can clearly see if the RJP makes a difference in how long new employees stay. If the organization uses this method, it is important to keep records of which applicants and which new hires received the RJP to learn whether their outcomes are similar to or different from others who did not. Minor adjustments can be made along the way to ensure that the process is as refined as possible. For example, if a 30-day follow-up survey shows that new employees continue to have unrealistic expectations about a specific aspect of the job (e.g., scheduling practices), additional information about that aspect can be added to the RJP.

There are several specific indicators of whether the RJP made a difference. The most direct measures of success will probably include tracking the following information:

- How many people experience an RJP? (Count people who are hired as well as those who stopped the application process after using the RJP and were never hired.)
- What proportion of people used the RJP to decide that the job was not a good match for them? (Count the number who applied but stopped the process after using the RJP divided by the total number of applicants.)
- Do people who are hired after receiving an RJP stay longer than those hired without participating in the RJP? (Compare the RJP group with the new hires in the 6 or 12 months before the RJP was implemented.)
- Do new hires who have had an RJP report that more of their expectations about the job were met when surveyed 30 days after hire than new hires who did not receive an RJP? (See the New Staff Survey at the end of Chapter 13 for a tool to assess this.)

To understand how the RJP is working without using a control group, gather data prior to its use, and track the following for all people hired in the 12 months before the RJP was implemented:

- What percentage of people who leave the organization (or site) leave within the first 6 months after hire?
- What percentage of newly hired DSPs remain with the organization (or site) at least 6 months?

If the RJP is effective (and unmet expectations on the part of new employees were the true reason for early turnover before the organization used the RJP), then after the RJP is used, the percentage of people who leave in less than 6 months will decrease and the percentage of new hires that stay at least 6 months after they are hired will increase.

If people who used the RJP still leave in the first few weeks after hire, it is important to ask them what information they wish they had known so that they could have made a better decision about whether the job was a good match for them. This information will then need to be built into the RJP as appropriate. It is also important to ask about other reasons these people may be leaving, such as lack of support on the job in the form of orientation, training, and supervision or other reasons. In this case, strategies such as improvements to the orientation program (see Chapter 5), competency-based training (see Chapter 6), or supervisor training (see Chapter 11) should be implemented to reduce unnecessary turnover that is not related to unmet expectations.

In the Spotlight: Lutheran Social Service of Minnesota—Realistic Job Preview Scrapbooks

Lutheran Social Service of Minnesota (LSS) participated in a multiyear project to assess its workforce challenges and to design interventions to address its most pressing problems. LSS is a large multiservice organization providing services in many parts of Minnesota. The Home and Community Living Services (HCLS) division provides residential services to nearly 700 individuals with intellectual disabilities or developmental disabilities in more than 100 settings, including small group homes (most of which are funded by Medicaid's Home and Community-Based Services Waiver program), parental homes, semi-independent living settings, and small homes supporting senior citizens. In December 2003, the HCLS division employed 1,058 DSPs and 51 FLSSs.

LSS designed a comprehensive RJP program to increase the chance that potential recruits would make informed decisions about whether to accept jobs offered to them. In April 2000, twenty supervisors, managers, and DSPs met for an all-day meeting. Participants learned how to develop an RJP and viewed videotape RJP that had been developed by other organizations. Meeting participants also learned about the advantages, disadvantages, and design characteristics of various types of RJP. Teams from each region of the state then met to develop an organization plan on how to implement RJP in their region. After the meeting, newly hired DSPs throughout the state were surveyed to identify the key challenges facing new DSPs that should be addressed in the RJP. Initially, 11 homes agreed to participate as pilot test sites for the RJP project. An additional 6 homes heard about the project and also developed RJP.

The pilot homes developed several different types of RJP strategies, and several homes used more than one strategy. These homes used photograph preview books

(used by 12 sites), formal structured observations (2 sites), informal site visits for all new hires (10 sites), job descriptions included with all applications (11 sites), participation of a current DSP in the recruitment interviews (11 sites), a work sample test composed of a worksheet turned in by the recruit at the end of a structured observation (2 sites), interviews including individuals receiving supports (1 site), and hiring practices that incorporated the results of a parent survey (1 site).

In spring 2001, the results of the pilot test were evaluated. The RJPs yielded striking improvements in the pilot homes. In 2000, 24 new employees were hired with an RJP in pilot study homes. All of those individuals stayed in their new jobs for at least 3 months, and 91% were still employed 6 months after hire. This compares with an organizational benchmark statewide of 79% of new hires staying for 3 months and 53% staying for 6 months.

One supervisor who developed an RJP scrapbook brought it home to show to her husband. When her husband saw the book, he remarked, "In all the years you have been working in this field, I never understood what you really did. Now I get it." Other pilot study homes reported that the very act of developing the RJP scrapbooks turned out to be a great team-building exercise. It provided opportunities for the DSPs to use their creativity in a new way. One administrator who had participated in the training reported that he had been skeptical about RJPs and had decided not to use them. But after noticing the dramatic improvements in retention in other pilot study homes, he changed his mind and decided that the homes he supervised would participate after all.

On the basis of the pilot test results, the LSS management team decided to implement RJPs statewide. Information about the pilot tests and the results was shared at a meeting of all supervisors. Each site was required to use a structured interview for all hiring, a structured observation for all applicants, and at least one other form of communicating information about the job to new applicants (e.g., a photograph album, interviews involving individuals receiving supports). By the end of 2001, the vast majority of units had developed RJPs and structured interviews.

The long-range impact of this intervention has become clearer over time. Between July 2000 and December 2002, 28% of new hires who had used an RJP had left their positions, whereas 69% of new hires who had not used an RJP had left their positions. The biggest impact of the RJP was seen in the first 12 months after hire.

OVERCOMING IMPLEMENTATION BARRIERS

Although effective for reducing early turnover due to unmet expectations on the part of the new employee, RJPs require a significant amount of investment in time and money. An organization may have difficulty sustaining the energy required to create and update an RJP. In addition, there is an inherent desire not to provide potential employees with negative information about the organization or the job, especially in a low unemployment economy. It can be very difficult to help organizations understand that this "airing of dirty laundry" can have a positive impact on the organization as a whole. The reality is that new hires who quit after only a few days not only learn about this negative information but also take with them the negative baggage of not being told the truth about the job before they agreed to accept the position. Organizations that want to develop successful RJPs have to enlist the support of all affected individuals, such as the organization, division, or site leadership team; administrators; human

resources professionals; board members; DSPs; and managers and supervisors. When the RJP planning team has good data, enthusiasm, and a persuasive argument, the team will be more likely to gain the support of those affected by the project and those who have to approve the project. Once the organization has decided to create an RJP, the planning team should assign the responsibility of developing the product to a small group of invested, knowledgeable, and dedicated individuals.

In developing an RJP, it is important to consider the privacy of the people who receive services. Developing an RJP should be a collaborative process in which individuals receiving supports and their family members and current staff members work together to decide what information to share and how to share it. This process probably requires educating stakeholders about how RJP's 1) can help reduce the number of people who are hired who don't work out and 2) can increase the likelihood that people who accept positions really want to be there. Certain types of RJP's, including structured observations, meetings, and photograph albums or scrapbooks, provide excellent opportunities for individuals receiving supports and/or family members to participate in the hiring process. If videotapes or photos are to be used in the RJP, individuals who are photographed or filmed or whose life details are used and/or these individuals' legal representatives or guardians should provide consent.

Structured observation RJP's include a time when the applicant spends 30 minutes to 2 hours at a service site. Obviously these visits should not happen without the permission of the people receiving supports and/or their legal representatives. Visits by strangers can be somewhat disruptive. This disruption during visits, however, can be minimized by building in guidelines and expectations for potential recruits. For example, in *Career Pathmaker*, a toolkit that introduces the human services industry, Taylor, Silver, Hewitt, VanGelder, and Hoff recommended the following guidelines for visitors:

1. You will meet people with disabilities who are receiving support in this service setting. Please do interact in a friendly and respectful manner with anyone you meet. Do greet people warmly—shake hands, have conversations, but don't talk to your host or others about the people receiving services who are right in front of you as if they were not there. It is normal to have questions about the service participants or staff you meet. Ask the person directly or ask your host when you are alone.
2. Do treat adult service participants as you would treat other adults, not as children just because they have a disability or other disadvantaging conditions.
3. Do treat the information you have learned or observed with respect and confidentiality—don't talk about people you have met or what you have observed in public places or to anyone other than your host. Even when discussing your observations, try to use the participant's first name only.
4. Do try to remain quiet and stay in the background when it is clear that service participants are engaged in a work, learning, or medical activity or if they are upset.
5. Do stay with your host or guide at all times. Wandering off without guidance can sometimes be disruptive in a human service setting.
6. Do use "people first" language. This means referring to people you meet by their names and not their diagnoses. For example, "Joan, the woman who uses a wheelchair," not "the paraplegic."
7. Do ask your guide questions about anything and everything that comes to mind. Just remember, do so privately. (1997, p. 33)

When considering the amount of disruption caused by a site visit, compare that with the (usually greater) disruption caused when someone is who is a poor match for

the job leaves after working for an hour or a day when they find out what the work is really like. Not only will you have the disruption, but also you will have endured the significant expense of hiring and training someone who ultimately leaves. The goal of an RJP is to stem the tide, to reduce the number of people who are hired who are simply not a good match for the job.

In the Spotlight: Dungarvin Minnesota—From Technological “Dirt Road” to “Superhighway”

Part of a larger national organization, Dungarvin Minnesota is a provider of community based residential services that participated in a project to improve employee retention rates using technical assistance from the University of Minnesota's Institute on Community Integration (ICI). Dungarvin Minnesota chose to develop an RJP that would be delivered in a multimedia format over the web.

The RJP was designed to be viewed by all potential applicants, and the web format was chosen because it provided multiple options for the organization to have people view it, such as in homes, at workforce centers, at the organization, or in libraries. In addition, the web site offered a high-impact format that allowed for quick, inexpensive, and immediate updates, with no fear of outdated versions being disseminated.

The 16-page RJP (<http://www.dungarvin.com/Employment/Realistic%20Job%20Preview/RJP-page01.htm>) combines text, photos, and voice clips of people receiving support and their families, DSPs, and others speaking about the aspects of the job that new DSPs should know before applying. Some of the topics described include the need to cook, clean, be on time, attend training, support people with medical needs, support people with behavior challenges, and complete job-related documentation.

Developing the web site required organizing the message and content, writing a script, identifying which software and hardware to use, and gathering media to use in the RJP. People who received services and people in direct support or other roles had to be identified so that photographs and sound clips could be created for the RJP. Permission from the individuals in the photographs and sound clips and/or their legal representatives was needed. The web site was completed nearly a year after its initiation.

A four-question survey about the potential applicant's opinion about the information presented in the RJP and how it related to his or her own attributes was combined with the web site for the following purposes: 1) to make sure the person had actually viewed and paid attention to the information, 2) to ensure there was a match between the person's personality and the qualities required by the job, and 3) to evaluate the effectiveness and message of the RJP.

The process required decisions to be made at various junctures about a host of issues such as design, technology, and content. A significant amount of resources and legwork were needed. Based on previous experience in developing marketing tools, the organization empowered a small group of knowledgeable people to make decisions regarding the RJP. This structure helped keep the project moving along; thus, we recommend it as strategy for development of RJP's.

The organization was concerned that not everyone would have web access and that the file size would create long download times for people without high-speed access. The organization itself did not have web access at every site. This problem was overcome by loading the RJP as a static site onto the hard drive of laptop computers so that the RJP could be viewed on those computers even without web access. This approach, however,

introduced some of the problems found with other methods of RJPs, such as the possibility of dissemination and use of outdated versions.

Dungarvin Minnesota started using the web site RJP in 2001. Initially, 3 of 35 program directors used the RJP. They reported some difficulties because most of the candidates spoke English as a second language and were having trouble both with the language and with the technology. Some candidates took an hour to review the material. Another early struggle was that different candidates needed different amounts of time to review the material. This was causing difficulties with the timing for interviews. This challenge was overcome by implementing the RJP after the interview instead of before it.

The process of working on the RJP improved practices in other areas of hiring and orientation. The process of boiling the job down to its essentials helped administrators and supervisors of DSPs to understand that new and prospective employees needed to hear about aspects about the job that seemed obvious (e.g., showing up on time, being nice to co-workers). The organization started to recognize that administrators and supervisors should not assume that people in the workforce have the same perspective and the same understanding regarding job responsibilities.

Upon completion of the RJP project, the staff at Dungarvin Minnesota believed they had made a quick journey from technological “dirt road” to “superhighway.” They also knew that the future maintenance of the web site would be a continuing adventure.

QUESTIONS TO PONDER

1. What are your organization’s current recruiting practices? Do recruiters minimize or hide significant issues (challenging behaviors, limited resources, unpleasant job duties) in an effort to get new employees in the door?
2. How often do people leave before completing their first day on the job?
3. Does your organization recruit from pools of potential employees who are likely to have little information about your services and needs?
4. When developing an RJP, who can provide an accurate picture of the DSP role within your organization, to ensure that both positive and negative aspects are revealed? How can you get this information in a way the feels safe to current employees and people receiving supports?
5. What are the unique differences, issues, or circumstances that DSPs within your organization or site need to handle (e.g., specific characteristics of people supported and their families, vehicle use), and how can these be addressed in the RJP?
6. What mode or modes of delivery would you recommend for an RJP in your organization or site?
7. How will you encourage stakeholder support for an RJP? What will your board of directors, CEO, administrators, recruiters, individuals receiving supports and their families, and others think about the RJP? How can you help them understand its value and encourage their participation?

CONCLUSION

This chapter provides information about RJPs and the importance of using them. It also provides step-by-step instructions for developing an RJP. If you struggle with

turnover of new employees (particularly in the first 6 months), RJPs may help reduce the number of people who leave your organization. If this is your situation, create an RJP and see whether it helps you as much as it has other organizations in similar circumstances.

RESOURCES

Creative Memories (<http://www.creativememories.com/home.asp>)

This company provides ideas and supplies to create innovative scrapbooks. A search engine shows the names of consultants around the world. Ideas can be used for creating RJP photograph albums or scrapbooks.

University of Minnesota, Research and Training Center on Community Living, Institute on Community Integration. (2004). *Direct support: A realistic job preview* [Customizable videotape or DVD]. Minneapolis: Author. (Available from the author, 612-625-1566; <http://rtc.umn.edu/wddsp/tools.html>)

This videotape or DVD illustrates the real, everyday work of DSPs in vocational and residential settings supporting individuals with intellectual or developmental disabilities. It provides first-person stories and advice for people considering direct support as a career choice. Topics include what to expect on the job, the rewards and challenges of direct support, qualities of great DSPs, and lessons learned by DSPs.

Your Responses to the Realistic Job Preview

After reviewing the Realistic Job Preview (RJP), we would like to understand your impressions of direct support work and this organization. You will be asked to respond to the following questions regarding the RJP before scheduling an appointment for an interview. (You may want to use the space provided to make notes.)

Based on the RJP, what do you think will be some of the biggest challenges of direct support work for you? _____

Based on the RJP, what parts of the job do you think you will enjoy the most? _____

What attributes do you have that you think will make you good at direct support work? _____

Based on the RJP and other information about our organization, what about working for this organization appeals to you? _____

Adapted from questions developed by the University of Minnesota, Institute on Community Integration, for use with Dunganvin Minnesota's multimedia, web-based RJP (<http://www.dunganvin.com/Employment/Realistic%20Job%20Preview/RJP-page01.htm>).

Staff Recruitment, Retention, and Training Strategies for Community Human Services Organizations
by Sheryl A. Larson & Amy S. Hewitt.

Realistic Job Preview Evaluation

Organization: _____ Type of RJP: _____

Each member of the realistic job preview (RJP) development team should complete this form. Rate each item from A (*excellent*) to F (*very poor*), and list any additional comments that you may have. Scores should be discussed as a team, with the goal of identifying any changes or modifications that should be made to the RJP.

Key criteria	Quick report: A (<i>excellent</i>) to F (<i>very poor</i>)
1. The RJP makes the <i>purpose clear</i> to the applicant (to help people decide whether to take a job if offered). <i>Comments:</i>	
2. The RJP provides <i>credible information</i> about actual work life (e.g., preparing meals, participating in staff meetings, shopping with individuals receiving supports). <i>Comments:</i>	
3. The RJP includes specific <i>thoughts and feelings of current employees</i> about the job. <i>Comments:</i>	
4. The RJP balances <i>positive/fun and difficult/unpleasant tasks</i> to reflect actual experiences (e.g., participating in a 5K run with an individual receiving support, assisting with personal care). <i>Comments:</i>	
5. The RJP highlights a <i>variety of job features</i> to show the depth and breadth of the work (e.g., salary and benefits, co-worker characteristics, staff training opportunities). <i>Comments:</i>	

Structured Observation Worksheet

We would like to give you an idea of the kind of work that goes on in our organization. You will be observing individuals supported and direct support professionals (DSPs) in action. Before your visit, read through the following guiding questions. After your visit, note your observations.

- What are the various job activities that DSPs do?
- What are the personal characteristics of the staff members that make them appear to be good at their job?
- What was the atmosphere of the home/site when you arrived? (e.g., welcoming, clean, institution-like or home-like)
- What kinds of things do the people you observed seem to like?
- What kinds of assistance do the people you observed need or receive?
- Who prepared the meals? Who cleaned up afterward?
- What chores did you observe the staff members doing?
- Did you see anyone hurting him- or herself or someone else or breaking something? If so, describe the event and how the situation was handled.
- How did staff members figure out what a person wanted to eat or to do? Were choices offered?

Questions to ask of the staff members at the home or site of your visit:

- What do you like best about your job?
- What is the most fun part of this job?
- What is the most difficult part of your job?
- What is your least preferred job task?
- What kinds of supervision do you receive?
- What is your regular shift? How are holidays scheduled? What happens if a staff member calls in sick or is on vacation? What are the overtime policies here?

Questions to ask of the people receiving supports whom you observe:

- What do you like to do for fun?
- Who do you like to spend time with?

After your visit take a few minutes to answer the following questions:

In thinking about the conversations and observations of DSPs and activities during this visit, I am excited about the following: _____

Some things that bothered me about what I observed or heard include the following:

I am confused about the following: _____

I would like to know more about the following: _____
