University of Massachusetts Boston
ScholarWorks at UMass Boston

Tools for Inclusion Series, Institute for Community Inclusion

Institute for Community Inclusion

10-1-2002

Tools for Inclusion: A Common Path: Navigating Your Way to Successful Negotiations in the Workplace

Kelly Crow
University of Massachusetts Boston

Susan Foley
University of Massachusetts Boston, susan.foley@umb.edu

Follow this and additional works at: http://scholarworks.umb.edu/ici_toolsforinclusion

Part of the Work, Economy and Organizations Commons

Recommended Citation
Crow, Kelly and Foley, Susan, "Tools for Inclusion: A Common Path: Navigating Your Way to Successful Negotiations in the Workplace" (2002). *Tools for Inclusion Series, Institute for Community Inclusion.* Paper 9.
http://scholarworks.umb.edu/ici_toolsforinclusion/9

This Occasional Paper is brought to you for free and open access by the Institute for Community Inclusion at ScholarWorks at UMass Boston. It has been accepted for inclusion in Tools for Inclusion Series, Institute for Community Inclusion by an authorized administrator of ScholarWorks at UMass Boston. For more information, please contact library.uasc@umb.edu.

Fall 2002

Working it Out Together

Improving the employment opportunities of women with disabilities

A Common Path: Navigating Your Way to Successful Negotiations in the Workplace

By Kelly Crow & Susan Foley
with contributions from Carol Menton, Michael Muehe, & Marie Trotter

Creating change in the workplace can be a difficult process, especially if it requires asking for job accommodations from your supervisor or boss. For many, requesting assistance can feel like an intimidating task. If an individual has decided not to disclose his or her disability or significant health issue to an employer, this situation may feel even more difficult. Yet often times accommodations are necessary to create a comfortable and effective working environment. The good news is that this interaction between employee and boss is not nearly as scary as it can appear to be. It can be, in fact, a very rewarding and empowering experience. With this in mind, "Working it Out Together" held an exciting seminar with three expert panelists. These guest speakers presented on a variety of tools and tips aimed at creating **win-win situations**.

Working it Out Together is a three-year study funded by the National Institute on Disability and Rehabilitation Research (NIDRR). The project is aimed at understanding the experience of women with disabilities in the workplace. For more information, contact Susan Foley, Ph.D. at susan.foley@umb.edu or 617-287-4317.

The panelists outlined the benefits of being **proactive** in the workplace, especially when approaching **a negotiation**, and offered strategies that will help women establish themselves comfortably in their job. They also emphasized the importance of maintaining a positive attitude when facing a negotiation, recognizing that it can be an intimidating prospect. Approaching a supervisor or boss is not always easy, but the following information can help you develop a negotiation strategy of your own. This strategy should steer you and your employer down a path to *working it out together.*

What is a "win-win situation"?

A win-win situation is the ultimate goal of negotiations. In the workplace, it happens when a solution is found that benefits both sides of the negotiation. Both parties will have found a **compromise** that is agreeable to their needs and expectations, and ideally everyone will be satisfied with the solution produced. In addition, the process of reaching a win-win situation may foster learning and growth. This can lead to greater understanding and a more positive relationship between everyone involved.

What is a "job accommodation"?

A job accommodation is a change or modification made to a workplace to allow a person with a disability to have equal access to all aspects of work. This could include (but is not limited to) a physical modification to the job site, the integration of assistive technology, the trading of work duties to cater to specific needs or abilities, or a combination of many of these. Each job accommodation will be unique and specific to an individual employee's needs.

What is a "negotiation"?

A negotiation is the process of consulting with another to arrive at a new set of circumstances. To be effective, this process requires a positive attitude, an open mind, communication, and willingness to compromise on the part of all parties involved.

What does it mean to be "proactive"?

Being proactive means recognizing and taking charge of circumstances within your control. In the workplace, it means recognizing when and where you need accommodations and making a request **before** a problem develops. A proactive person will anticipate a needed change as well as the necessary supports to create it. Being proactive is a learned skill and therefore needs practice and patience when developing your personal style and technique.

ICI
Institute for Community Inclusion
University of Massachusetts Boston
100 Morrissey Boulevard • Boston, Massachusetts 02125
www.communityinclusion.org
UMASS. BOSTON

These next three guidelines are essential to keep in mind when you feel that a negotiation may be necessary in the workplace. Adopt these strategies as a permanent part of your workday experience. They can be helpful in daily life as well as the negotiation process.

Know yourself!

Know what your strengths and weaknesses are in terms of both personality traits and workplace skills. Also, be aware of what kind of work environment suits you well and what kind of place is difficult for you to thrive in. For instance, perhaps a quiet, organized office atmosphere helps you perform the best, or perhaps you succeed more easily in a loose, flexible environment. Either way, it is important to be aware of what environments are most comfortable for you. Finally, know how you react to workplace situations and how that reaction can affect both you and your co-workers. Your attitude can have a profound effect on how satisfied you are with your job and how others view your work performance.

Stay positive!

Always keep interactions in your work environment positive, constructive, and considerate of everyone. Work on fostering good workplace relationships by maintaining a friendly, optimistic attitude. Don't let anger or frustration get the best of you, and never go into a negotiation upset. Remember, Babe Ruth struck out more than 50% of the time and he is still considered one of baseball's greatest players.

Use the 24-hour rule.

The 24-hour rule is an invaluable self-assessment tool. If you feel yourself too upset to approach a negotiation, allow 24 hours to pass. In that time you will have a chance to cool off and gain a better perspective on the issue at hand. This is a great way to avoid overreacting and making rash statements or decisions when situations present themselves. If 24 hours is not possible when you feel angry, still try to take some kind of break. Get a glass of water, ask for five minutes... do whatever you need to do to regain your composure. This will help you to keep your focus on the goal, be clear about what you are trying to accomplish, and avoid getting distracted by emotions or personality conflicts.

With these things in mind, you are ready to discover...

...The Proactive Path To Negotiation

The first thing to think about when approaching a negotiation is not what your supervisor needs to do, but rather what you need to do to successfully create the necessary change. Use this list of tips to help you be proactive in negotiations; ideally this should lead to a more effective and positive experience for everyone involved.

Proactive Tip #1

Know your specific accommodation needs. Be clear about what is acceptable and what is not acceptable for you in the work environment. Always ask yourself whether you need the accommodation you will be asking for. Then, if you do need accommodations, ask an authority person for what you need before you encounter performance problems.

(The more honest you are with yourself in this tip, the less negotiating there should be. By requesting only what you truly need, you increase the likelihood that your supervisor will respect your requests. Don't be afraid to reject an offer that does not meet your needs, but know when to compromise. For guidance, ask yourself: 1) Is this the best possible solution? 2) Does this meet my goal? 3) Am I losing a battle but winning a war?)

Proactive Tip #2

Learn to ask questions of the people around you. Spend some time learning who knows what in your office and whom you should approach for help in various situations. Your goal is to identify the people with the information you may need. Office networking can help you in unpredictable ways!

Proactive Tip #3

Spend time developing relationships and building a network in your workplace. Often, knowing people you may not work with daily, such as support staff or people in Human Resources, greatly enhances your support network. One good way to do this is to join as many activities and events as possible. You'll meet people and establish a comfort level in the workplace. This networking can be very valuable to Tip #2.

Proactive Tip #4

Keep a journal of accomplishments, such as workshops or trainings you've completed, networks you've formed, challenges you've tackled, problems you've solved, etc. This journal can be compared to a list of goals you've set and can be a helpful resource during performance reviews and assessments. It can also help you illustrate to your boss that you are a valuable and productive employee.

"If you don't ask, you won't get it!"

From this proactive foundation, you are ready for...

...Venturing into Negotiations

This may seem like the scary part, but it can be a rewarding process if you've established yourself as a positive, proactive employee. From this position you may calmly and professionally request what you need from an employer. While frustrations may still arise, you can be confident that you are approaching the situation in the best way. To help negotiations go as smoothly as possible, keep these suggestions in mind...

Negotiation Tip #1

You have skills! Emphasize these skills when asking for accommodations. For example, approach a request for trading duties by saying, "I really enjoy working with data and I do this well. Could this become a larger focus of my work duties in exchange for this task that is difficult for me...." Be sure to be confident and realistic when describing yourself... your tone is very important.

If your employer does not accept or believe your disclosure and need for accommodations...

Negotiation Tip #2

Ask your employer to describe his or her specific expectations of you and then explain very clearly how accommodations are necessary for you to fulfill those expectations.

Negotiation Tip #3

Often your employer may not know about a specific accommodation. He or she may not even know what accommodations are! **Do what you can ahead of time to anticipate this possibility** and educate yourself on the costs of equipment, the resources for getting the equipment, or other logistics of the accommodation. See the "Additional Resources" section for places to find this information. Be prepared to share this information with your employer, and try not to become frustrated if he or she doesn't understand immediately. Don't be afraid to use the 24-hour rule!

Ideally these tips will help and your employer reach a common path of agreement, one that produces a win-win situation for all!

Additional Resources

If you would like additional information on negotiations, accommodations or the surrounding issues, check out these helpful resources:

Abledata
www.abledata.com
Abledata is an extensive database of over 19,000 products and 2000 accommodation product suppliers. You can search the database by keyword, product type, company, or brand name, or customize a search specified to your personal needs.

Alliance for Technology Access
www.ataccess.org
ATA is a network of community-based resource centers, developers and vendors, affiliates, etc., of assistive technology.

Job Accommodation Network
www.jan.wvu.edu
JAN is a free consulting service offering a wealth of information on accommodation tools, disability legislation, employment resources, and much more. The site also offers free publications and an online search program.

Assistive Tech
www.assistivetech.net
This website features a multi-tasked search (may search by keyword, function, disability, etc.) information links, discussion groups, and other similar disability-related contacts.

Legal Information
www.eeoc.gov/facts/ada17.html
This site offers official, accurate information about the legal responsibilities of employers concerning assistive technology. It also includes a FAQ list with clear and thorough explanations.

National Center on Workforce and Disability
Institute for Community Inclusion
www.onestops.info
This is a website designed to help One-Stop Career Centers be more inclusive for people with disabilities. For you, it has a very informative and helpful section about Job Accommodations as well as a thorough list of Disability Resources sorted by topic.

Institute for Community Inclusion
UMass Boston
100 Morrissey Boulevard
Boston, Massachusetts 02125

NON PROFIT
US POSTAGE
PAID
BOSTON, MA
PERMIT NO. 52094

www.communityinclusion.org

Meet the Panelists

Carol Menton

Carol has a Masters degree in Social Work from Salem State College, a certificate in community mediation and conflict resolution from the North Shore Community Mediation program, and a certificate in ADA Title I employment mediation from the Institute for ADA mediation at the University of Louisville Labor-Management Center. She is the past president of the Boston Chapter of the Association of Late Deafened Adults (ALDA) and was the program chair for the 2001 ALDA Conference.

Michael Muehe

Michael has worked for over 20 years in the areas of disability policy, independent living, health care, and the civil rights of individuals with disabilities. He has been active in advocacy, economic issues and policy matters, and the nationwide American with Disabilities (ADA) Training and Implementation Network. Previously, Michael worked as the Director of Chapter Services for the National Spinal Cord Injury Association as well as for the Massachusetts Office on Disability and the Boston Center for Independent Living. Currently he is serving as the Executive Director of the Cambridge Commission for Persons with Disabilities and the ADA Coordinator for the City of Cambridge.

Marie A. Trottier

Marie is the Section 504/ADA Coordinator at Harvard University, where she works with the school in the area of compliance. She is also currently the Co-Chair of the Governor's Commission for Employment of People with Disabilities in Massachusetts, Co-Chair of the New England ADA Technical Assistance Center Regional Advisory Group, and Secretary of the Board of Trustees of Mt. Wachusett Community College in Massachusetts. In addition, she does extensive public speaking and training on the American with Disabilities Act and disability policy and compliance for educational institutions, businesses, and employers.

This is a publication of the *Working it Out Together: Women with Disabilities and Employment* grant at the Institute for Community Inclusion. It was supported in part by grant #H133A990019 from the National Institute on Disability and Rehabilitation Research (NIDRR) of the US Department of Education.The opinions contained in this publication are those of the grantees and do not necessarily reflect those of the US Department of Education.

Institute for Community Inclusion
UMass Boston
100 Morrissey Boulevard
Boston, Massachusetts 02125
617 287-4300 (voice)
617 287-4350 (TTY)
ici@umb.edu

www.communityinclusion.org