

Break it Down!

The Impact of Language on Job Training

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About the Presenter

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10 years of experience as a Vocational Counselor

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Interdisciplinary Collaboration

- Customer/Student/Individual
- Vocational Counselor/Job Coach/Teacher
- Influence of Speech and Language Pathologist
- Employer Participation
- Counselor/Service Provider/Teacher/Caregiver Involvement

Impact of Language

- *Influence on Personal, School, & Work Life*
- Ability/Willingness to Self-Advocate
- Relationships with Others (Verbal and Pragmatic Language)
- Language vs. Ability
- Praise
- Self-Efficacy

Why People are Terminated

1. Incompetence, including lack of productivity or poor quality of work
2. Insubordination and related issues such as dishonesty or breaking company rules
3. Attendance issues, such as frequent absences or chronic tardiness
4. Theft or other criminal behavior including revealing trade secrets
5. Sexual harassment and other discriminatory behavior in the workplace
6. Physical violence or threats against other employees

Source: <https://www.thehartford.com>

Job Training

1. Introduction of the Job

a. Who, What, When, Why, Where, How

2. Detailed Instructions

a. Verbal, Written, Demonstration

3. Demonstrate Ability

4. Receive Assistance (if needed)

a. Job Coach, Additional Instructions, Identify Accommodations

5. Feedback / Praise

Goals:

- Identify cues that may signal a language barrier
- Apply common strategies used to gather & distribute information
- Demonstrate the ability to analyze a task

Cues that may Signal a Language Barrier

- Completing the task wrong
- Taking too long to complete a task
- Not starting the task
- Not asking what to do next
- Not initiating
- Not advocating
- Not appearing to enjoy the work
- Not following the rules or social norms
- Dressed inappropriately / Not following dress code
- Not responding to feedback

Melanie - Food Prep Worker

Melanie had a diagnosed language based learning disability and ADD. She was given a work trial at Chili's to assess if she had the ability to complete the food prep tasks independently. During the work trial, Melanie was observed by the manager as well as her job coach. The first task given to Melanie was to prep broccoli, which involved breaking down the heads of broccoli and portioning approximately six ounces into individual containers.

Melanie immediately demonstrated difficulty breaking down the heads of broccoli, appearing to be unable to detach individual pieces. In response, the manager and job coach told Melanie to "twist it" while motioning a similar action with their hands.

Outcome: Melanie held the entire broccoli head with both hands and twisted the entire head at once, which was unsuccessful in detaching the individual pieces. This left the manager with doubts about Melanie's ability to fulfill the responsibilities of this position.

Melanie - Follow up

Feedback was provided from Job Coach to Vocational Counselor.

Melanie identified that the work trial did not go well; she independently shared that she did not understand the directions to “twist” the broccoli.

Helpful Strategies:

- Demonstrate the task
- Job Coach speak with Melanie off to the side
- Melanie advocating for herself -- asking for someone to demonstrate for her
- Asking for Help

Laurel - Office Clerk

Laurel was diagnosed as having autism spectrum disorder. She worked in a sales office assisting the Sales Team to organize and file documents. She worked in her own cubicle approximately 10 hours per week. Laurel had limited contact with her coworkers as they were often out of the office to work within the community; when coworkers were present, the interactions were often limited to work specific tasks (i.e. assigning a task, answering questions). During a routine site visit by the Vocational Counselor, approximately two months into Laurel's work experience, the supervisor asked the Vocational Counselor "Does Laurel enjoy being here?" When asked what prompted the question, the supervisor shared that Laurel did not smile often and did not seem to be interested in getting to know the Sales Team.

Although Laurel was able to complete the tasks, her social skills and nonverbal language caused concern.

Laurel - Follow up

The Vocational Counselor shared the employers concerns with Laurel, specifically identifying the perception of others. Laurel was adamant that she enjoyed her job and wanted her coworkers to know. The topic of self-disclosure was discussed.

With assistance from the Vocational Counselor, Laurel disclosed her disability to her supervisor and shared that her facial expressions may appear to be flat and she may not recognize the need to respond in a different manner. The Vocational Counselor, Laurel, and the supervisor also discussed the Sales Team perception of Laurel not making the effort to get to know them. Laurel shared that she was unaware of the perception, but assumed they were busy doing their job and did not want to interrupt.

Helpful Strategies:

- Self-Disclosure
- Seeking Feedback -- don't settle for "fine"

Jace & Allison - Cleaning Crew

Jace and Allison, both diagnosed with an Intellectual Disability, were on a cleaning crew together. They were scheduled to clean an office building on Mon/Wed/Fri for two hours, a job coach accompanied them. Their tasks included cleaning the restrooms, vacuuming and sweeping offices and general areas, dusting window sills, and taking out the trash. After approximately six weeks of Jace and Allison working, the office staff shared frustrations about the quality of the work, specifically identifying that the wrong cleaning solution had been used to clean the toilet, dusting was not completed on a weekly basis, and dirty dishes were not cleaned.

When the supervisor (Teacher) inquired about the situation, he discovered the “To Do List” was too general and did not include every task requested. There were also several cleaners available to choose from, making it difficult for Jace and Allison to identify the appropriate cleaner to use.

Jace & Allison - Follow up

The supervisor listened to the concerns of the office staff and set up a meeting with the main contact to ensure all expectations were clearly identified. The supervisor also spoke with the Job Coach to ensure she felt comfortable in her role and offered additional training.

Helpful Strategies:

- Label Cleaners
- Provide Clear Task List
 - If necessary, provide a task analysis
- Encourage Jace & Allison to finish each shift by asking the office staff “Is there anything else that we may do to help you today?” to ensure that expectations were met.

Common Strategies Utilized in Job Training

- Ask Questions
- Clarify Information -- “What I hear you saying is..... correct?” “What do I...?” “How many....?”
- Paraphrase Information -- “Okay, so you would like me to
- To Do List
- Demonstration
- Identifying appropriate learning method -- Verbal/Written/Demonstration/Hand-Over-Hand Prompting
- Clear Deadlines or Quotas
- Timers
- “Cheat Sheets” -- Alphabet, Phone Script
- Chunking Tasks or Assigning a limited number of tasks at a time
- List of “What to do When there’s Nothing to do”
- Labels

Task Analysis

Task analysis is the process of breaking a skill down into smaller, more manageable components.

Typically identifying one target skill.

Example: Cleaning a Mirror

- Obtain materials needed (paper towel, cleaner)
- Remove lid from cleaner
- Spray Cleaner on mirror in a “S” shape
- Remove two paper towels from roll and fold together
- Wipe mirror with paper towels in an up and down direction
- Throw away paper towels
- Replace lid on cleaner
- Put materials away

Office Cleaning List, Example 1:

- Clean Bathroom
- Clean Break Room
- Collect Trash
- Dust
- Wipe light switches/door handles
- Vacuum
- Sweep entry area

Office Cleaning List, Example 2:

Clean Bathroom

- Clean Mirror
- Clean Sink
- Clean Toilet
- Wipe down shelf

Collect trash from each office

Dust window sills

Wipe light switches/door handles

Refill towels/soap as needed

Clean Break Room

- Wipe down Table
- Wipe down Microwave
- Wipe down Fridge/Coffee Area

Vacuum carpeted areas

Sweep entry areas

Animal Caretaking List, Example 1:

- Open outside doors on kennels
- Remove waste from kennels
- Spray kennels down
- Feed and Water dogs

Animal Caretaking List, Example 2:

Open outside doors on kennels

Remove food bowls from each kennel

- Place each bowl outside of kennel door

Remove waste from kennels

- Use shovel to remove waste and place in bucket

Spray kennels down

- Extend water hose to end of kennel area
- Spray water in each kennel at an angle to push waste outside
- Spray water until all waste is removed

Feed and Water dogs

- Throw away any leftover food
- Pour 2 Cups of food into each bowl
- Empty water bowl and refill with hose

Take Away's

- “Employees work most effectively when they clearly understand what is expected of them and know that their performance will be measured against a standard that is fair and applied even-handedly.” (www.eeoc.gov/facts/performance-conduct.html)
- Strategies can create inclusivity if utilized with all employees
- Observation and open communication can be the best tools!

Questions?

Resources:

Job Accommodation Network: <http://askjan.org>

U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission <http://www.eeoc.gov>

American Speech-Language-Hearing Association <https://www.asha.org>

Learning Disabilities Association of America <https://ldaamerica.org>

The National Professional Development Center on Autism Spectrum Disorder
<https://autismpdc.fpg.unc.edu>