Business Relations Units: What We Know So Far From the Demand Side RRTC

JDVRTAC Forum on Business Relations Unit
March 3, 2016
San Antonio, Texas
Susan Foley
May-Lorie Saint Laurent
Demand Side RRTC

- Partners: Alabama, Nebraska, Vermont, CSAVR, Dennis Moore

- Research activities: Surveys, Index of Practices, VT Progressive Employment Learning Collaborative (VT, NE, FLB, ORB, ME), NE Middle Skills Initiative, AL LMI Dashboard Study, Data Analysis.
Wave II

• The 2014 survey was the first activity in a series of web-surveys and in-depth interviews

• In-depth interviews or wave II slated to begin in the Spring
  – Select participants based on responses provided in Wave I
  – 45 to 60 min. telephone interviews
We are seeing some distinct models

- Two units working in parallel.
- Expansion of local teams to include business relations persons.
- Specific persons with Business Relations functions to support the local offices.
- CRPs filling this role, in whole or in part.
- Combinations of the above!
Mini Poll!

• Who has had a formal business relations unit/function for more than 10 years?
• Who had a business relations function for less than 10 but more than 2 years?
• Who has recently built one in the last two years?
• Who is currently starting to build one?
Mini Poll 2

• Who has a business relations unit with staff that report to a BR lead?

• Who have business relations folks embedded on local teams are report through to Field Services Directors

• Who has a central or regional BR person (s) who do not have supervisees?

• Who contracts this function out to CRPs in whole or in part?
Top 3 Components Considered Most Important to Managing Business Relations

**National**
1. Communication
2. Timeliness of response
3. Trust

**Alabama**
1. Communication
2. Effective tracking system
3. Use of accurate/up-to-date local labor market information

**Nebraska**
1. Communication
2. Timeliness of response
3. Follow-up after placement

**Vermont**
1. Timeliness of response
2. Effective tracking system
3. Trust
So you want to build or expand a BR Function...
The Big Picture
Why This Might Help You!!!
The Working RTAC Model
What You Value

What Will You Do

Who You Have

What Do You Need

- Mission
- Vision
- Principles

- Services
- Operations
- Management
- Measure

- Partnerships
- Resources
- Leadership

- Hiring
- Skill Building
- Evaluation
- Support
Mission, vision, and beliefs

• Survey Tidbit: 89% (59 of 66) of SVRAs reported serving businesses as VR customers....

• But what do you all mean by that?
What You Value

As you have business as customer...

• Does it alter your mission?
• Is the “customer” status of business understood agency wide?
• Are any values in conflict?
Respondent 1

We have instituted a Consultative Sales approach to business development. Rather than approaching business when we have a need (a candidate to place) we have shifted our focus to developing relationships with businesses and offering an array of services, and identifying how we can meet the hiring needs based on what we learn as we nurture the relationship. We see our role as very similar to that of a staffing agency, providing recruitment and retention support, flexible tools for businesses to meet candidates through worksite training and work experiences.
Respondent 2

Dual customer with **business being the second customer**. Business relations means **development and maintenance of partnerships** with business that are mutually beneficial, where we **provide products and services** that meet their needs, all in relation to disability.
Some questions to ponder

- How does your state define the term “business relations” in the context of VR?
  - As a service to a customer?
  - As an outreach process?
  - As an extension of a HR function for businesses in your state?
  - All of those?
Who Do You Need?
What Talent Do You Need?

• What latitude do you have to hire, recruit, create new job descriptions?
• Is this a career development option?
• What sort of OJT training support?
• How do you evaluate performance?
Staffing and Organizational Structure

- **25 combined or general VR agencies** have a POC who spends 100% of their time dedicated to business relations.

- **7 VR Agencies for the Blind and Visually Impaired** have a POC who spends 100% of their time dedicated to business relations.
• **70% (46 of 66)** of SVRAs have specialized VR staff (staff that spend more than 50% of their time) implementing business relations strategies

• **55% (11 of 20)** of agencies for the Blind and Visually Impaired have specialized staff performing the same functions
POCs quick stats:

• 31 out of 67 had a business background

• 36 out of 66 are NOT CRCs.

• 41 out of 67 have a Master’s degree
POCs quick stats (BVIs):

• 9 out of 20 had a business background
• 10 out of 20 are CRCs
• 12 out of 20 have a Master’s degree
Staffing and Organizational Structure

- VR counselors, Job placement specialists, Regional points of contact, and VR administrators also have BR responsibilities.

- 52 VR agencies use external resources/staff (e.g. CRPs) for BR.
  - 16 of which are agencies for the Blind and Visually Impaired.
Key qualifications that BR staff must possess:

- Experience developing effective relationships with business
- Knowledge of business and employment practice
- Experience with disability related issues and solutions in the workplace
Skill sets that BR staff possess:

• Top 3 responses:
  – Marketing and outreach
  – Understanding VR services available to businesses
  – Business development
Training requirements for BR staff

• Most SVRAs have something specific for business relations staff

• Examples include:
  – ACRE and CESP Certification
  – DSB Business Relationship Training
  – Training on the 36th IRI Business as Customer and CSAVR VR-NET Peer Network 7 modules
What Will You Do?
Business Relations in Action

• New services?
• Different way of delivering your current services?
• What implications does it have for your internal operations?
  – Contracts with vendors?
  – The order of things.
What are SVRA’s doing?

– 48 have business relations programs or initiatives in place
  • 11 had more than 3 business relations programs or initiatives in place
– 35 SVRAs have business relations programs or initiatives related to section 503
Business Relations Programs and Initiatives (BVIs)

• What are BVIs doing?
  – 10 have business relations programs or initiatives in place
  • 0 had more than 3 business relations programs or initiatives in place
  – 6 BVIs have business relations programs or initiatives related to section 503
## Providing Services to Businesses (Top 4)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Services</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Staff training (e.g., disability awareness, ADA/employment laws)</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>93.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pre-employment services (e.g., internships, training)</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>93.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Financial supports (e.g., Work Opportunity Tax Credit (WOTC), barrier removal)</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>87.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HR/Staffing (e.g., recruitment or retention supports)</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>84.5%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## BVIs: Providing Services to Businesses (Top 4)

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<tr>
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<tr>
<td>Accommodations (e.g., work site assessment, assistive technology)</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>80%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pre-employment services (e.g., internships, training)</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>75%</td>
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<td>75%</td>
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<td>14</td>
<td>70%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Marketing and outreach</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>70.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Compliance support (e.g., EEOC and affirmative action)</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>69.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Diversity programs</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>58.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Universal Design (e.g., contracts/facilities, information technology)</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>44.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Product development</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>13.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Legal services (e.g., Labor relations, policy development, risk management)</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>10.3%</td>
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<td>12</td>
<td>60%</td>
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<td>50%</td>
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<td>50%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Product development</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Legal services (e.g., Labor relations, policy development, risk management)</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
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# Engaging in business relations activities (Top 4)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activities</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>%</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Participating in business networks</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>96.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Establishing business partnerships</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>94.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marketing to businesses</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>93.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maintaining contact with business after initial contact</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>91.4%</td>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Organization employer recognition events</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>75.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Involvement in federal contracting</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>72.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hosting business job fairs or hiring events</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>70.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sending thank you cards to business partners</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>70.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maintaining electronic databases to track business contacts</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>65.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Administering business satisfaction survey</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>29.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>5.2%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Organizing employer recognition events</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>55%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sending thank you and holiday cards to business contacts</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>50%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hosting business job fairs or hiring events</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>45%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Administering business satisfaction survey</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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How do you build Institutional Capacity so that you are effective?

- Partnerships
- Leadership
- Resource Development
- Communication Strategies
Marketing, Outreach, and Business Contacts

- Visibility of POC, services offered, and agency:
  - 32 out of 65 SVRA websites provide the POC’s contact information
  - 55 out of 64 SVRAs have the services that they provide listed on their website
  - 30 out of 63 SVRAs provide links to other state employment websites on their website
Marketing, Outreach, and Business Contacts (BVIs)

- Visibility of POC, services offered, and agency:
  - 7 out of 19 BVI websites provide the POC’s contact information
  - 16 out of 19 BVIs have the services that they provide listed on their website
  - 15 out of 19 BVIs provide links to other state employment websites on their website
Marketing, Outreach, and Business Contacts

• Managing business contacts
  – 26 out of 64 SVRAs use an electronic contact management system
  – 33 out of 63 SVRAs collect “other” data from businesses, for example:
    • Federal contractor status
    • Basic business profile
    • Detailed job descriptions
    • Placement data, number of hires etc…
Marketing, Outreach, and Business Contacts (BVIs)

- Managing business contacts
  - 7 out of 19 BVIs use an electronic contact management system
  - 10 out of 19 BVIs collect “other” data from businesses, for example:
    - Job descriptions, and benefit packages
    - Business needs, and job site analysis
    - Job descriptions, hiring process, and job postings.
Labor market data in BVIs

• 89% of BVIs (N=17 out of 19) reported they use LMI

• 3 of 16 (19%) agencies reported that they use real-time LMI
  – The 3 agencies also reported using traditional LMI
You are not just building BR capacity...

• You are altering how people interact.
• You are changing the types of services you deliver.
• How do you enable people to move rapidly to act on timely actionable intelligence from BR staff?
• How do BR staff know the talent pool that is your client base?
Acknowledgements

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  – John Evans
  – Peggy Anderson
  – Hugh Bradshaw
  – Ryan Stamm
Thank you!
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