Assistive Technology:
The Missing Link to Success in the Workplace

Level Up Indiana Employment Summit
Dec 6, 2023 – 2:25pm-3:40pm

Today's Agenda

- Intros

- The accommodation process
    - why, what, who, when & how

- Hiccups and glitches

- "On the fly" Accommodations

- Resources

Your Presenter - Josh

- Manager of Clinical AT Team – the people who do job accommodations daily

- Former Job Coach

- Host of Assistive Technology Update

- Worked many jobs in the past, like seriously a LOT of jobs!

- Proud father/stepfather of 4 ranging in age from 22 years to 2 years.

- Love this topic and talking about it!!

What is an Accommodation?

Accommodation Definition

Any change in the work environment or in the way things are customarily done that enables an individual with a disability to enjoy equal employment opportunities*

... across the employee life-cycle.

'Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC). www.eeoc.gov/policy/docs/accommodation.html#general

Assistive Technology (AT)…

Generic term for tools, devices and apps that help people overcome or remove barriers created by disability.

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Nothing really new?

Most employers already offer accommodations, they just might not know it...

If anyone has ever done something differently to enable a person to stay in a job or to be more effective, they have provided an accommodation
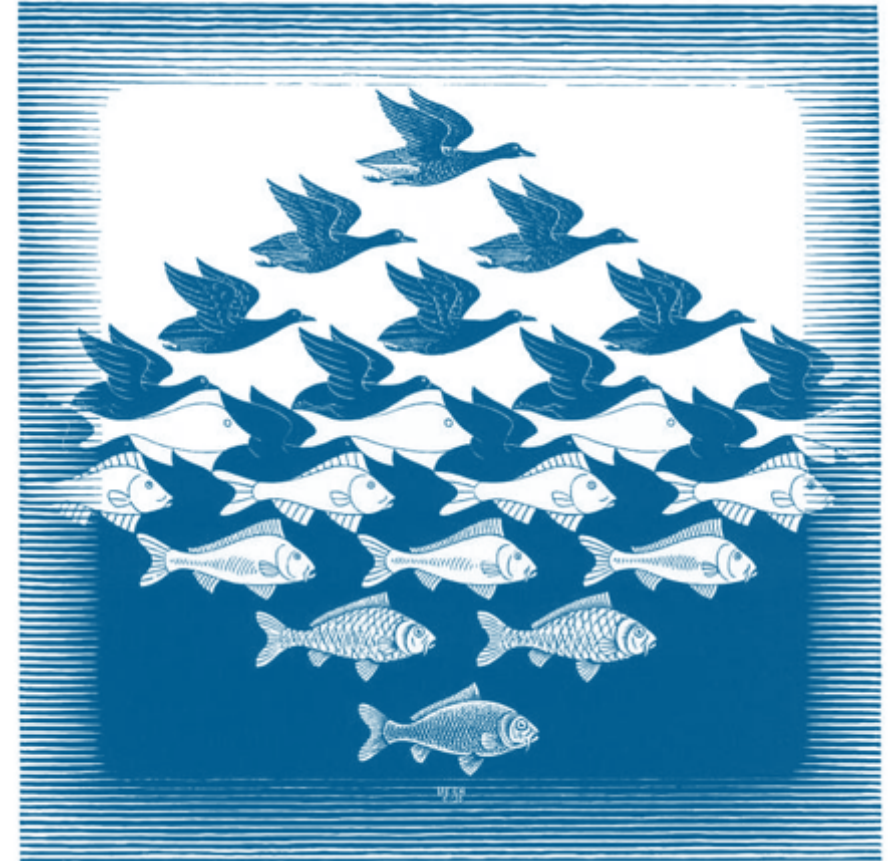
Simple vs. Complex

- Many accommodations are simple and straight forward
  - Raise a work surface
  - Color coded task list
  - offer an adaptive keyboard or mouse

- Some accommodations are more complex
  - Nature of disability
  - Situation being accommodated
  - Tool or solution being implemented
 - Other factors

Cadillac vs. Chevy

- There is no "Magic Bullet"
- Try different accommodations (local tech acts….INDATA)
- Free version? Trial version?
- Open source or built-ins?

- More expensive doesn't mean better
- Free not always bad
- Ensure all needs are accommodated
- Do <u>NOT</u> overwhelm
  - Minimum necessary to meet <u>ALL</u> needs

CHEVROLET

Cadillac

Simple - Block of Wood

Simple - Cup Koozie
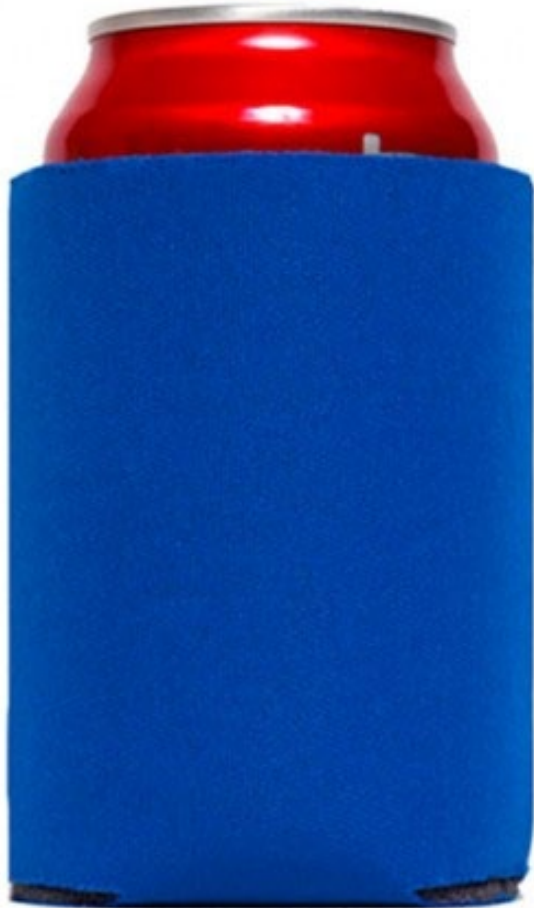
Complex – Hard of Hearing

- **Job:** Starbucks barista

- **Issue:** Difficulty hearing timers that alert staff when coffee is finished brewing, or the filters need changed. When people were in the drive through line.

- Lots of noise (machines and people).

Complex – Low Vision

- **Job:** Prep at Pizza Parlor

- **Issue:** Visually Impaired and short of stature made prepping food difficult. Examples: making and cutting pizzas, breadsticks and other foods

Always Remember - One Size Doesn't Fit All

Why Provide Accommodations?

Disability in the Workplace Statistics

- 1 in 5 Americans (20%) - approximately 54 million - have a disability

- 18.7% of people with a disability were employed in the US in 2017.

- Research shows persons with disabilities rate above average in performance, attendance and safety.

- Disability can happen to anyone at any moment

Moral / Ethical Obligation

In a surprising number of cases, employers provide accommodation and/or assistive technology simply because they feel it is **"the right thing to do."**

Often, this motivating factor supercedes any of the other rationales for providing accommodation.

It just makes sense…

- Increased <u>productivity</u> and <u>independence</u>

- Employers retain valuable employees

- Promotes communication and inclusion in the workplace

- Demonstrates good faith between employer and employee

- ADA/Section 503 compliance

Accommodation

Framework and Process

The Process in real life

- It's interactive — a collaborative effort to identify effective accommodation solutions.

- Gathering information on the situation:
  - The person, task and equipment

- Consider the impact:
  - Environment
  - Cost
  - Effectiveness
  - Personal considerations

The Accommodation Process (continued)

- Problem solve
  - Try equipment before purchase
  - Look at natural supports

- Implement solutions
  - Make sure the equipment works
  - Works well within the environment

- Training
  - Important that the person knows how to use the equipment properly

Getting started…

- Always start with familiar tools and strategies
  - what are they currently using
  - what might be readily available
  - does it work for them

- If it isn't working… can it be adjusted to better meet their needs?

- If not, then consider new tools or strategies.
  - Set reasonable expectations
  - Consider future supports

Communication is key

- Starts and ends with communication…

- Be clear and honest with everyone involved

- Talk with the person as you would anyone else

- Don't make assumptions
  - The person is the best judge of what they can or cannot do

Timing is Important

When is the Right Time?

- Depends

- Early: so that you have enough information to make good decisions.

- Not too early: assessments can be costly, and you don't want to do too many of them.

- Not too late: no time – must learn job and tools at same time

- When tech is one of the remaining issues and key to opening a door/path

Hiccups and Glitches

5 Common Hiccups and Glitches (1)

- Managing expectations
  - Employee, Employer, Job Coach, Funding Source, etc…

- The Waiting game
  - Hurry up or Slow down
  - Matching everyone's speed
  - The more people… the harder this is

- What changed?
  - Needs changed from evaluation to implementation
  - That job task wasn't talked about during the assessment
  - I'm not able to do that anymore

5 Common Hiccups and Glitches (2)

- Do I know you?
  - Who is who
  - Players change throughout the process
  - VRC, Employer rep, co-workers, etc.
  - Client is only constant

- If its not one thing it's another
  - Unrelated issues, but issues still the same
  - Transportation
  - Support tech stops working (ex. wheelchair)

On the Fly Accommodations

Interactive Brainstorming Session

Rules of Engagement

- 10 minutes to come up with solutions

- Must spend $100 or less

- May <u>ONLY</u> use items that are typically sold in that particular location

- Large group discussion of potential accommodations

Deli

- Location: Grocery

- Job: Deli Worker

- Disability: Dwarfism and Limited hand strength

- Problem: Slicer, meat cooler/freezer, potato salad dipping from big container

Convenience Store

- Location: Convenience store

- Job: Stocking Shelves and security tags

- Disability: Autism and other cognitive issues

- Problem: which items to tag based on cost (over $10) which items go where on which shelves

Hobby Superstore

- Location: Hobby Superstore

- Job: Framer

- Disability: Color blind and Deaf

- Problem Can't match matte colors, interpersonal communication is difficult, can't hear overhead pages

Garden Center

- Location: Hardware Store Garden Center

- Job: Garden center worker

- Disability: Age-related low vision and lifting restriction

- Problem: Can't read plant labels and product tags, difficulty moving trees/shrubs

Pharmacy

- Location: Drug store

- Job: Pharmacy Tech

- Disability: Upper amputee

- Problem: Caps, bottles, cash register, etc.

Office Superstore

- Location: Office Superstore

- Job: Copy center worker

- Disability: TBI

- Problem: Remembering orders and some machine operations

Countless Needs – Countless Accommodations

- Many tasks and activities may or may not require accommodation.

- Many accommodations available to choose between.

- Job Accommodation evaluations help identify the best accommodations and solutions
  - Sometimes assistive technology
  - Sometimes consumer goods used as an accommodation
  - Sometimes it is something familiar and available
  - When done correctly, it is always a good thing!!
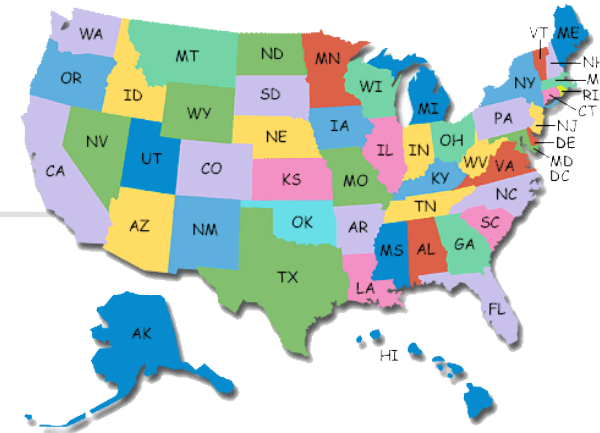
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Show and Tell
Free Apps and Tools

Resources

Easterseals Crossroads AT Services

INDiana Assistive Technology Act (INDATA)

The Assistive Technology Act

of 1988 as amended in 1994

- ECHNOLOGY-RELATED ASSISTANCE FOR INDIVIDUALS WITH DISABILITIES ACT OF 1988 AS AMENDED IN 1994, US Public Laws 100-407 and 103-218.

There are 56 of these projects in the United States and US territories

Purpose of the INDATA Program

2 Overall Goals

Spread the word about assistive technology

Get people's hands on assistive technology

Outreach and Information

Information and Assistance

888-466-1214

Tech@eastersealscrossroads.org

AT Hours

One hour (or so) talks with hands-on AT experience

Full Day Training

4 times /year with streaming

Guest Lectures

Lecture at several of Indiana's Colleges and Universities

Podcasts

ATUpdate

Accessibility Minute

ATFAQ

Social Media

Blog, YouTube, Facebook, Twitter, Others

Demo and Loan Program

To your door demonstrations of various assistive devices

Demos
- 20-30 minute "test drives"
- No recommendations

Lending Library
- 2500+ items
- 30-day Loans
- Indiana only

Library Purpose:
- Assist in decision making
- Serve as a loaner during device repair or while waiting on AT funding
- Provide a short-term accommodation

Devices for persons with visual, cognitive, hearing, mobility, learning or other needs

The INDATA Depot
Computer and Assistive Technology Reuse Program

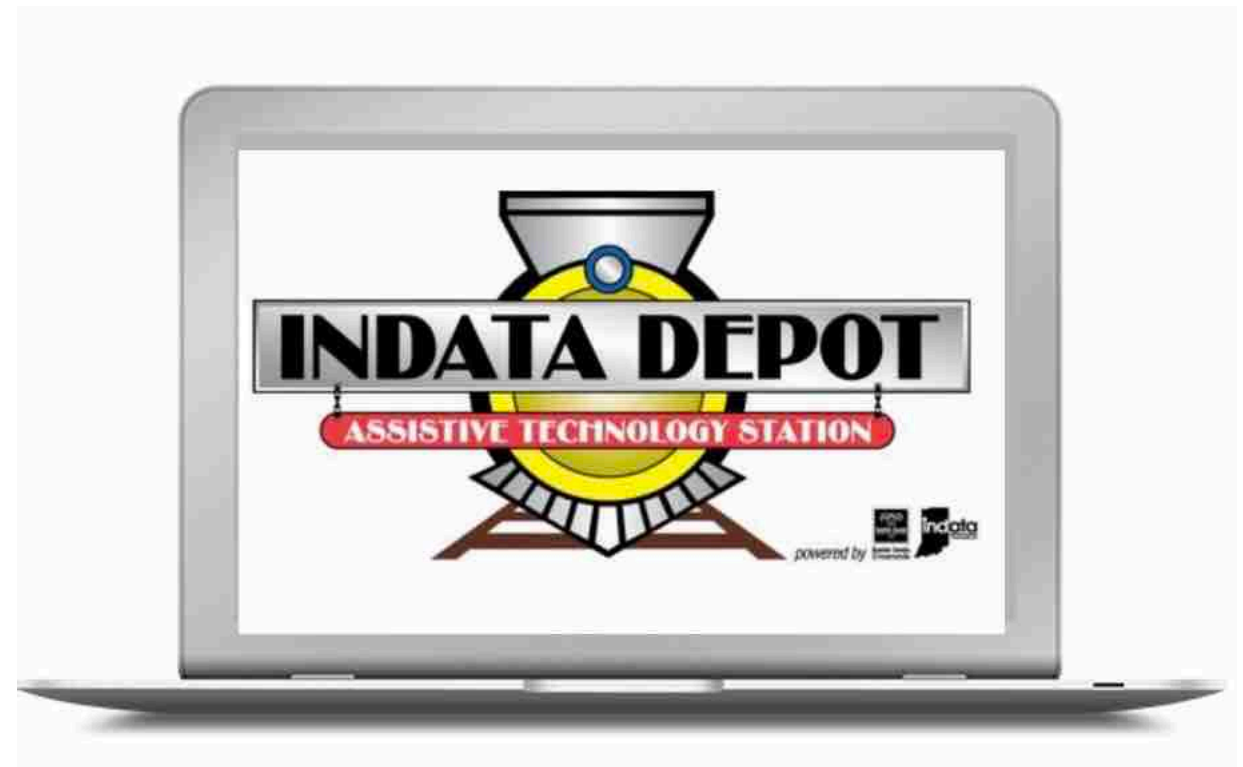**Assistive Technology Recycling**
- Video magnifiers and other AT devices
- Equipment is sanitized and repaired
- Available to Indiana residents

Computer Recycling
- Accept donated computers
- Wiped of all previous data and refurbished
- Install Win 10 and MS Office

Who qualifies?
- Resident of Indiana
- Document of Disability

Alternative Financing Program

Available through a partnership between Easterseals Crossroads and STAR Financial

What can it be used for?

- Adaptive vehicles
- Vehicle Modifications
- Aug. comm. devices
- Braille equipment
- Computers
- Hearing aids
- Home modifications
- And much, much more!

Who Qualifies?

- Indiana residents
- Documented disability

How do I get started?
Easy as 1, 2, 3!

1. Call us at 888-466-1314 with documentation of a disability.
2. Complete an AFP loan application.
3. If approved, complete a loan agreement with Star Financial and arrange payments.

Clinical Assistive Technology (1)

- ## Evaluation
  - A qualified professional meets with individual one-on-one.
  - Results in a detailed report including recommendations
  - Typically takes 4-6hrs

- ## Consultation
  - Like an evaluation, but typically shorter and less comprehensive
  - allows for brief interventions by a qualified professional

- ## Training
  - Essential part of the accommodation process
  - Individualized to the user
  - In-person or on-line

- ## Support
  - 24-hour technical support line

Clinical Assistive Technology (2)

- **Disabilities Served**
  - All inclusive (Physical, Cognitive, Sensory, Intellectual)

- **Ages Served**
  - All Ages
  - Children and Adults

- **Statewide Services**
  - All 92 counties in Indiana

- **Qualifications**
  - RESNA Certified
  - CATIS Certified
  - CARF Accredited
  - Multi-Disciplinary Service Offering

Job Accommodation Network (JAN)

One-on-one guidance on workplace accommodations through the Office of Disability Employment Policy (ODEP)

App Resources

Like the rest of the world, the assistive technology industry has been revolutionized by smart devices and apps.

Wrapping it all up…

In conclusion

- Accommodations can make a workplace more inclusive
  - allows employers to attract and retain a diverse workforce.

- Effective job accommodations can identify supports
  - to achieve job goals and company performance standards.

- Barriers to success presented are more important than the disability itself.
  -

- Communication is key to avoiding setbacks and prolonging the accommodation process.

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Summary

Have questions, we have answers!
And if we don't, we probably know someone who does :)
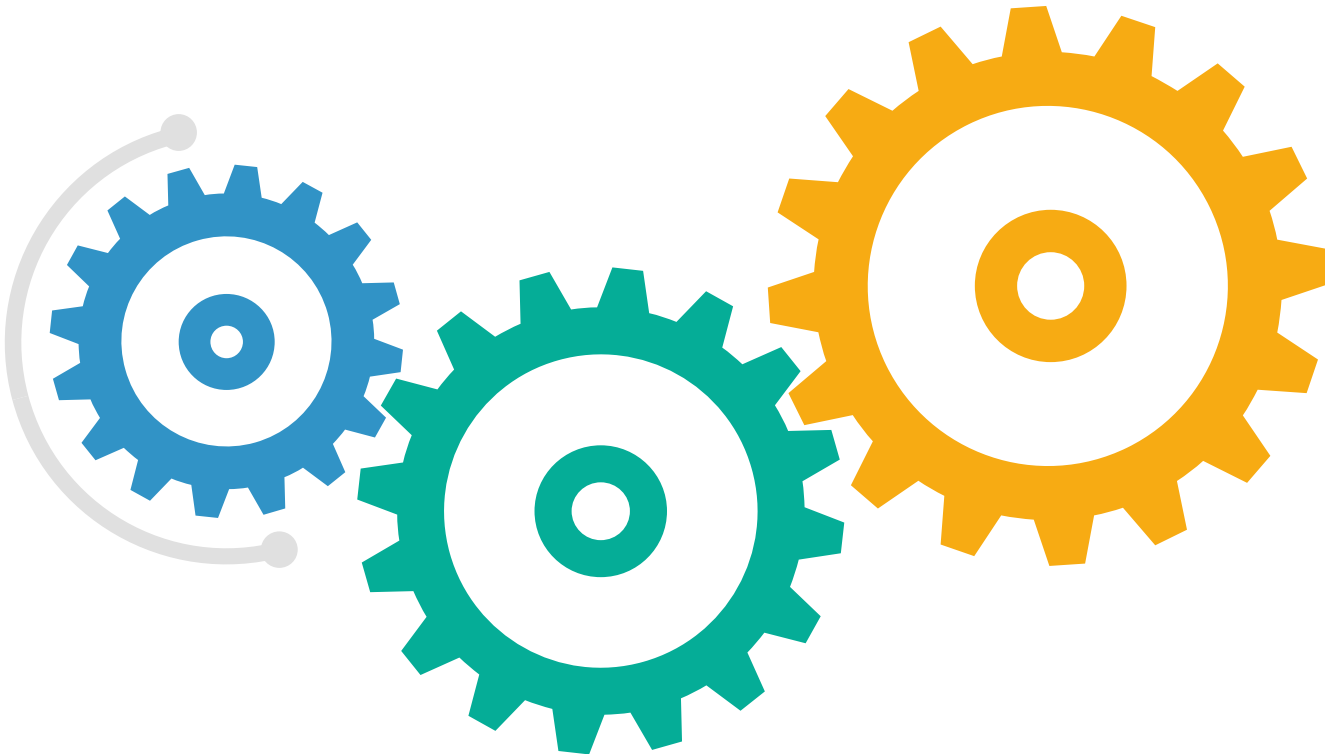
- **888-466-1314**

- Easterseals Crossroads
- 4740 Kingsway Drive
- Indianapolis, IN 46205

- tech@eastersealscrossroads.org
- www.EasterSealsTech.com

Questions??

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Thank You!!

Joshua Anderson, ATP

Manager of Clinical Assistive Technology

janderson@eastersealscrossroads.org

317-466-2001 x2524

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