

# DISCOVERING PERSONAL GENIUS: Storytelling, not Fortune-Telling

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**CENTER ON COMMUNITY  
LIVING AND CAREERS**

INDIANA UNIVERSITY

Indiana Institute on Disability and Community



# Welcome!

“Be good at something. It makes you valuable. Have something to bring to the table, because that will make you more welcome.”

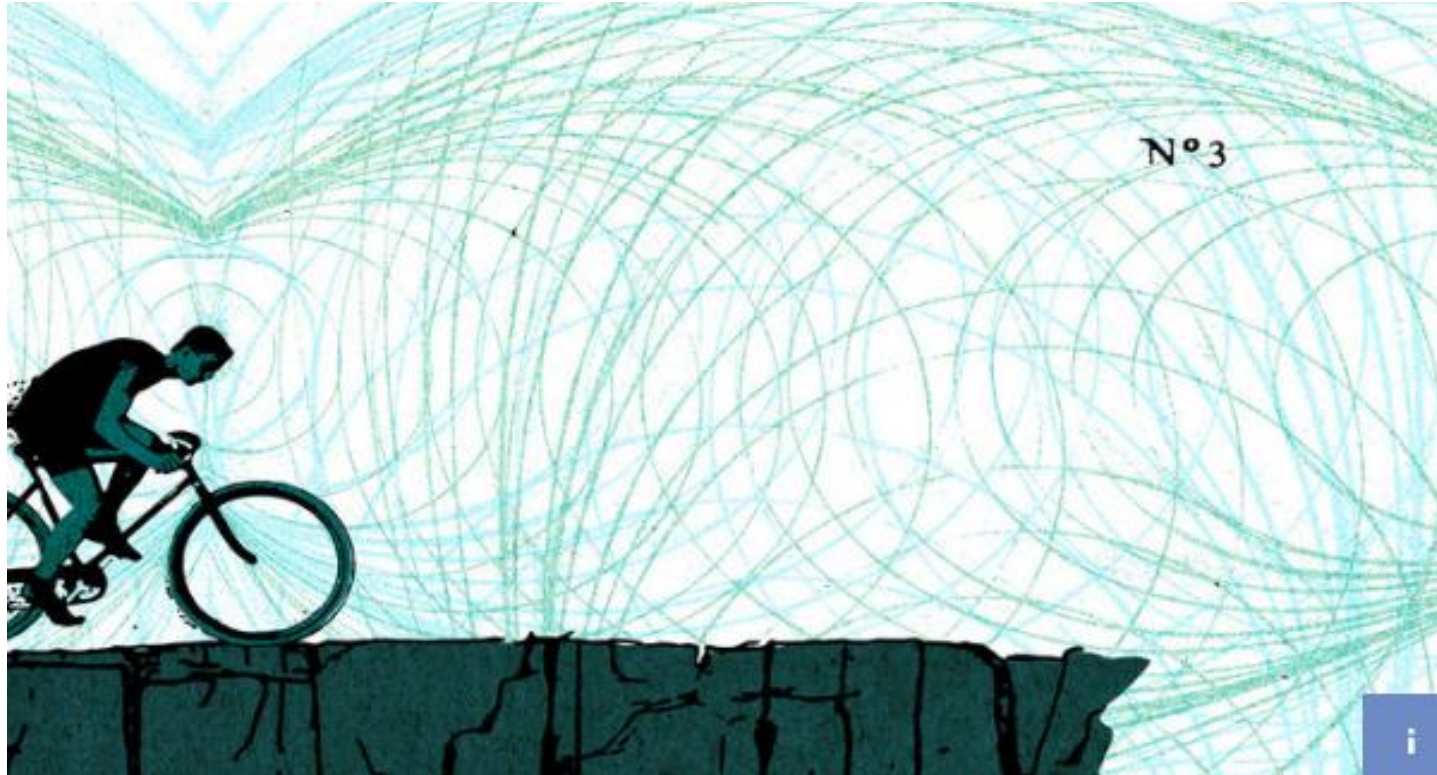
-Randy Pausch

“But I’ve got someplace to go. You know, having a job is really important...You gotta come home and have something to talk about at the dinner table.”

-Tim Flynn



# Our Thoughts Influence the World (Or: How to Become Batman)



# Rationale Activity

- You bump into a student 5 years after leaving school and they are living the “good life.”
- You bump into a student 5 years after leaving school and they are clearly struggling.

What happened (or didn't happen) in these student's lives to increase the probability of becoming a full citizen?




# You've Got to Know Where You Are Headed!

## SSR: Supporting Social Roles

A Second Bottom Line for Services to People with Developmental Disabilities

John O'Brien

Test Version 0.1

 INCLUSION



# MIND THE GAP!

- “If she needs a little money, she can go to the sheltered workshop.”
- No work history
- \$144,000/year Waiver budget.
- \$22,000/year Day program.
- “I don’t like day program, people yell at me there.”
- Wage and Biz-Within-A-Business opportunity.

# THE CHALLENGE (JUST A JOB, ANY JOB?)

- HS(custodial/grounds); Sheltered Work shop & Wal-Mart gig
- Nascar, Driving, Automobiles
- Technology/Machinery
- Sports
- Wants to be a Truck Driver



# FOLLOWING PERSONAL GENIUS TO PLACES THAT MAKE SENSE

- Five Employee Biz
- Job-Try-Out, primarily sand blasting
- \$9,000 equipment purchase (welder, welder stand, air compressor, tools)
- Restoration; Transportation Themes



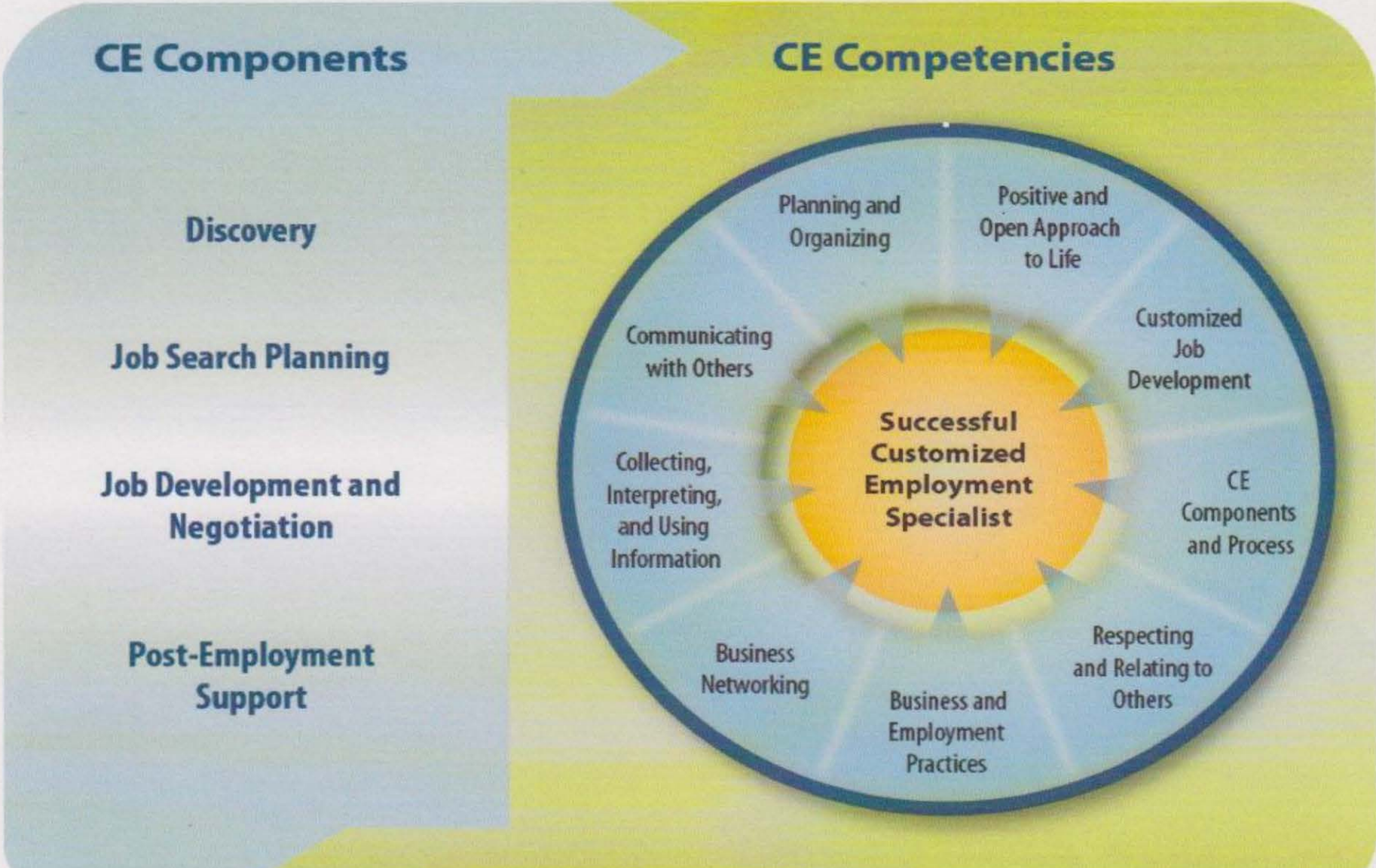


# Learning Objectives (Discovery)

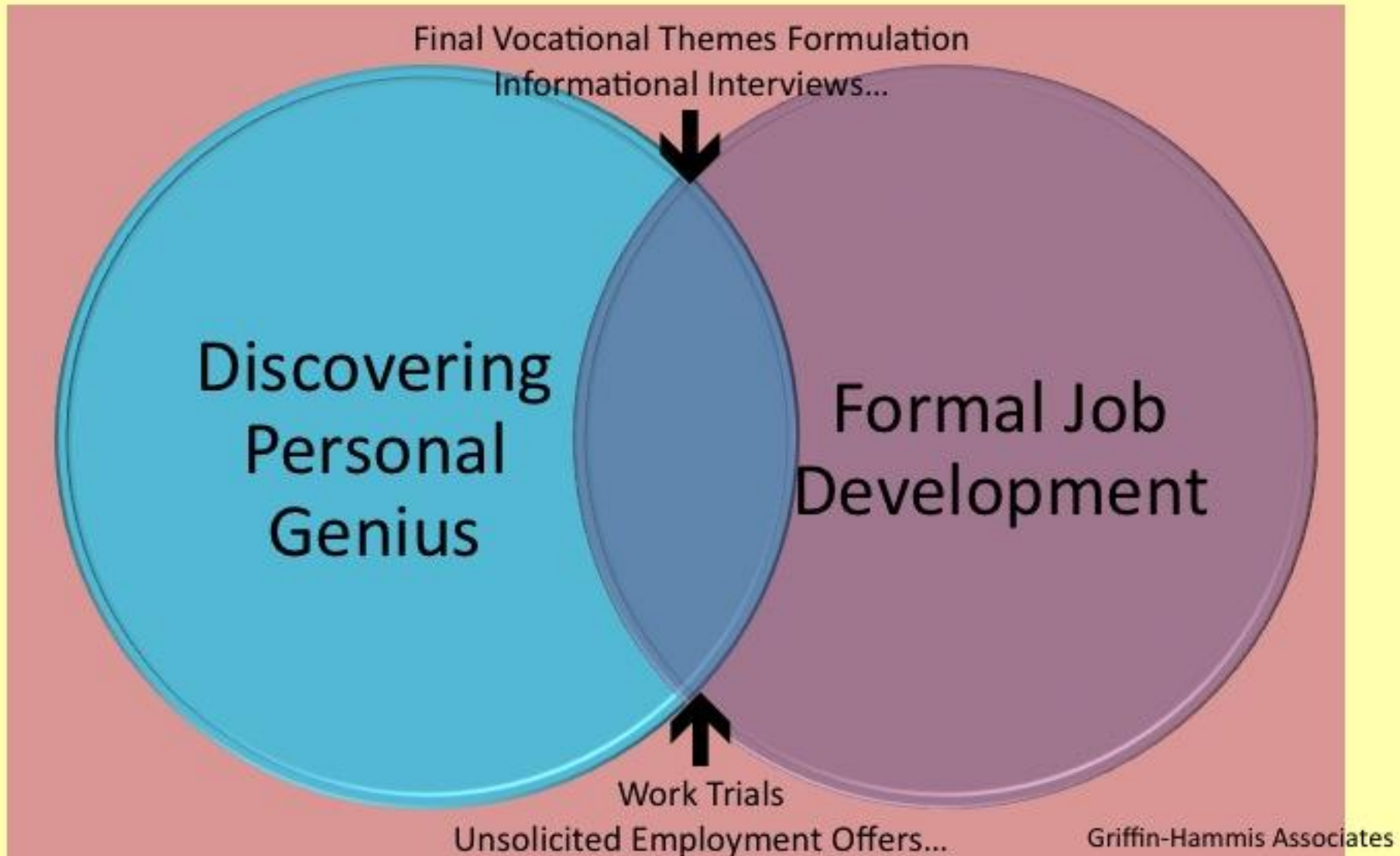
- Understand Why the Discovery Process is Used as an Alternative to Traditional Assessment
- Conduct Home Visits and Interviews with Individuals and Those that Know Them
- Organize Task-Based Home and Community Activities in Community Places that Make Sense for the Person
- Record Observational Discovery Information Effectively and Efficiently, Using Imagery, Video, and Short Narrative
- Prepare to Follow Discovery Information to New People and Places in the Community

Distilled from the input of numerous experts in the field, the diagram below illustrates the four CE components and the nine competencies needed by employment specialists and the CE support team to successfully provide CE services to job seekers.

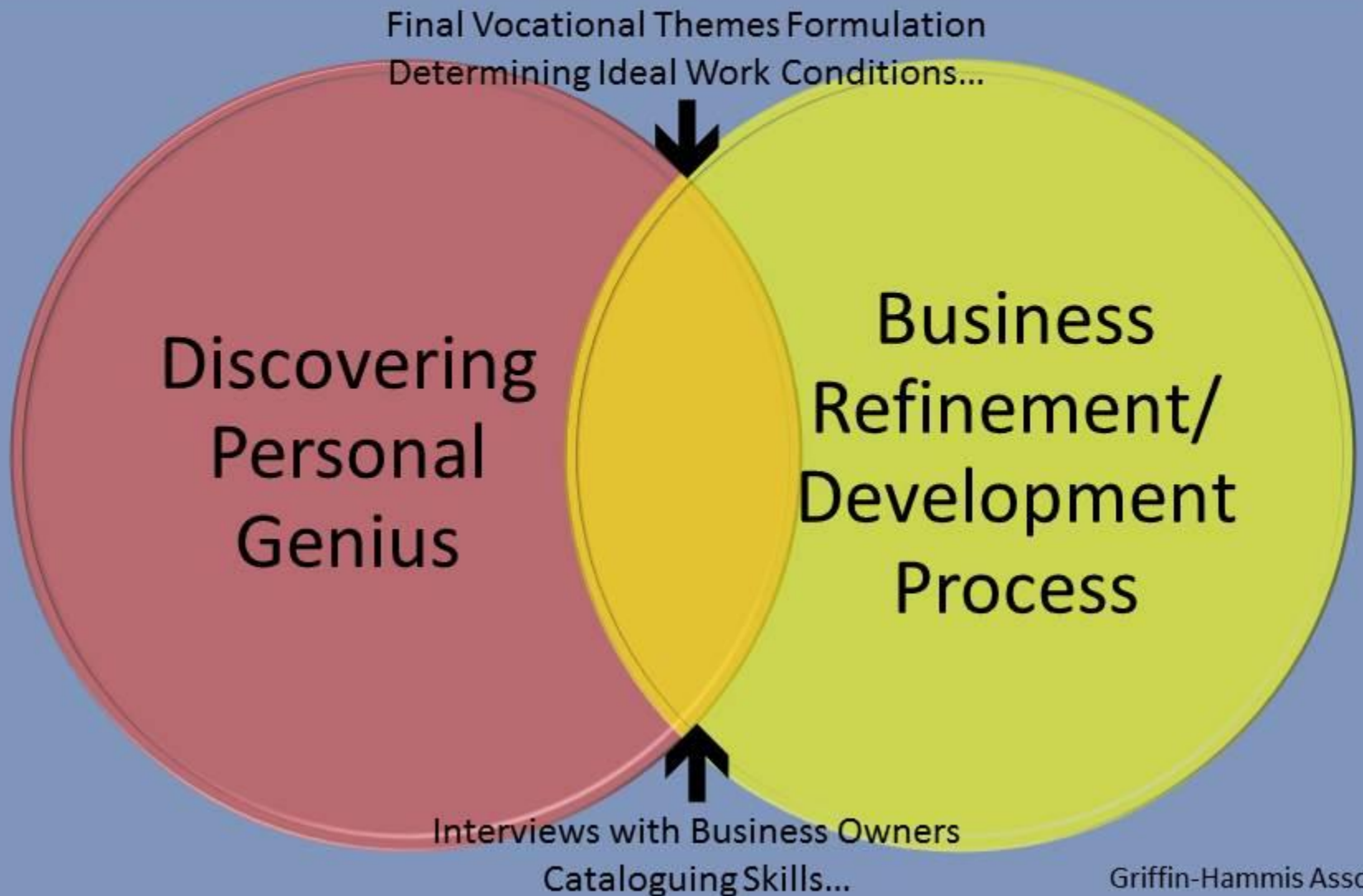
## Customized Employment Competency Model



# The transition from DPG to Job Development



# The transition from DPG to Self Employment



# WHAT IS DISCOVERING PERSONAL GENIUS?

- It's about Tasks!
- No Task is insignificant!
- A Bias Towards Action
- Detectives, Not Fortune-Tellers
- 2 Questions to Never Ask...
- What Are You Learning That is New?
- Where Does it Lead?



# ONE EXAMPLE: WORK

- What is the purpose of Traditional job development strategies (Assessments/Evaluations, Resume Development, Interview Practice, Job Openings, Applications, Interviews)?
- Why might this be a problem for employment seekers with complex lives?



# Activity: First 3 Jobs

- Pair-up
- Write Down First 3 Jobs
- How did you get them?
- How did you benefit the employer?
- How were you trained?
- What did you learn from employer, co-workers, and work experience in general?
- Would you hire your younger self today?



# TRADITIONAL LIFE PLANNING?



Griffin-Hammis Associates (thanks to Cobb County!)



# DISCOVERY

To gain insight or knowledge of something previously unseen or unknown; to notice or realize; to make known, reveal, disclose



# DISCOVERY

Everybody is a genius.  
But if you judge a fish  
by its ability to climb a tree,  
it will live its whole life  
believing that it is stupid.

Albert Einstein



# DISCOVERING PERSONAL GENIUS: *GOING TO PLACES THAT MAKES SENSE*

## Icebergs: People and The World



# DISCOVERING PERSONAL GENIUS IS NOT:

- Assessing
- Testing
- Comparing
- Evaluating
- Predicting
- Asking Someone What They Want to Do\*



# DISCOVERING PERSONAL GENIUS Is Not:

- Data taken in Segregated settings is false
- Checklists do not offer a diversity of choice
- Unpaid Vocational Evaluation is not functional
- Work Experiences are often Stereotypical
- Are you at your best when being tested, or rather when you are exploring familiar and/or new places, people & things?




# DISCOVERING PERSONAL GENIUS

## Is:

- Answering the question: “Who are you?”
- Finding out “where people are most who they are.”



# HOME VISITS

- Themes: Technology, Organization, Nostalgia
- Ideal conditions:
  - Flexible routine
  - Interesting Tasks
  - Supportive Co-workers
  - Contribution is clear
- Strategy: Negotiation using Resource Ownership: “Inventory/Online-store” 
- Camera/Computer/Software

# ACTIVITY:

- Align with someone in the room you do not know well.
- Find Out 3 skills each of you have that aren't obvious (skills are refined abilities that allow task accomplishment: cooking a soufflé, growing orchids, building cabinets; as opposed to interests such as watching football, dogs, coffee)
- Do this without asking each other any questions.

-Hint: have a conversation





# “SMOOTH LISTENING” ACTIVITY DEBRIEF

- It's hard to find out about someone without asking questions
- Think Conversation, not Interrogation—litany of questions, yes/no, restricts in-flow of information
- It's best to let the Environment guide our Discovery
- If we “live into the answers” the chances of getting an acquiescent response is lessened
- Skills/Tasks are Critical to Belonging



# DISCOVERING PERSONAL GENIUS

## *SMOOTH LISTENING (DON'T INTERRUPT)*

- Tell me about Yourself...
- Tell me about your Daughter...
- Tell me about chores around the house...
- Tell me about your daily/weekly routine/schedule...
- Tell me about special family activities or traditions...
- Tell me about things she asks to do...
- Tell me about things he does without being asked...
- Tell me about family vacations or holiday celebrations...
- Tell me about major life events...
- Tell me about events son/daughter looks forward to...
- Tell me about interests and hobbies...
- Tell me about influential (favorite) people...
- Tell me about experiences with work...



# SEEK INFORMATION THAT REVEALS:

- Best means of communicating and teaching;
- Environments to be cautious about;
- Skills that exist or can be developed;
- Interests to explore;
- Potential use of other resources/ work incentives;
- Like and dislikes;
- Necessary supports;
- Safety and medical concerns;
- Experiences desired by the individual and family.



# TALKING WALLS

- What can you learn beyond what someone tells you?
- Involves learning with multiple senses... eyes and ears
- Still smooth listening and conversation
  - So I see you have an office but your computer is on the couch...



# IDEAL CONDITIONS: ACTIVITIES TYPICALLY START CLOSE TO HOME



# BILL (Framing the Conversation and Possible Discovery Activities)

- Lives in a group home
- Staff know him well, but in the home and through the services they offer
- His interests include:

Professional Wrestling

Playing music on CD, radio

Gadgets, like flashlights, all-in-one tools, clip on mini-lamps, mini voice recorders

- Work in pairs or small groups.
- Brainstorm activities where you might observe Bill;
- Identify nine creative activities to explore those interests.
- Make sure you identify activities that Bill can *actively* participate in.
- Make sure to identify some activities “outside of the usual”



# KRISTEN

- Lives at home with mom and dad
- Currently receiving treatment for substance abuse; counseling and medication for clinical depression
- Graduated from high school one year ago, has never had a job. Unsuccessful job search on her own.

- Her interests include:

Interior Decorating

Gardening, particularly flowers

Sewing and designing clothes

- Work in pairs or small groups.
- Brainstorm activities where you might observe Kristen;
- Identify nine creative activities to explore those interests.
- Make sure you identify activities that Kristen can *actively* participate in.
- Make sure to identify some activities “outside of the usual”

# REFLECTION/Q&A/DISCUSSION

## Thank You! What's Next?

