



### Customising a job for a person with disability

## 1. Overview

This guide provides information on:

- the concept of job customisation
- elements and features of job customisation
- steps involved in customising a job
- benefits of job customisation.

## 2. What is job customisation?

Job customisation is a process of individualising or tailoring a certain role to suit the skills of an employee, while meeting the needs of the employer.

It typically involves a process of negotiation before the prospective employee begins their role and can include reallocation of tasks, or exchanging duties with another colleague. The aim of these negotiations is to arrive at a mutually beneficial employment relationship where an employee's experience and capabilities are matched to an appropriate job.

The benefits of job customisation are multifaceted. It allows supervisors and colleagues to work collaboratively and inclusively as a team, as well as better utilise each other's strengths. This applies to both people with disability and people without disability.

## 3. What are the elements of a customised job?

A customised job is one that is designed from the outset to fit the skills of a particular person. In that sense, it can be contrasted to the model where a person is recruited to match the skills of an available role.

Various elements of a role may be customised. For example:

- hours of work
- location of work
- duties and responsibilities
- work expectations
- key performance indicators.

Ultimately, any element of a prospective employee's terms and conditions of employment can be customised to match their particular skills and circumstances. For job customisation to be successful, there needs to be openness, trust and strong communication between the employer and the employee.



## 4. The steps involved in job customisation

This section outlines the steps involved in customising a job or role and has been adapted from the guide by Ready, Willing & Able – *Work Customization: Creating Employment Opportunities For People with a Disability in Today's Workforce*: <http://readywillingable.ca/blog/resource-tools/work-customization-creating-employment-opportunities-for-people-with-a-disability-in-todays-workforce/>.

### Step One

#### Job analysis



Before engaging in job customisation, an employer will need to undertake a comprehensive job analysis.

Disability Employment Australia<sup>1</sup> recommends analysing the following in relation to a job or role:

- the inherent requirements (that is, the absolute core activities which are essential to a specific position and cannot be allocated elsewhere)
- details of any physical requirements
- the expected hours, including potential out-of-hours or overtime work
- any face-to-face or customer service requirements
- the level of interpersonal skills required
- the level of communication skills required
- the level of computer skills required
- the level of literacy skills required
- the level of numeracy skills required.

### Step Two

#### Organisation work assessment



After the employer has conducted a job analysis, they should begin gathering information from across the organisation more broadly to identify other work opportunities.

For example, Canadian organisation, Ready, Willing & Able,<sup>2</sup> recommends considering whether the following exist in an organisation:

- tasks that are repeatedly left undone or unfinished
- tasks which should be done more frequently than present
- regular duties which pull employees away from their core work
- areas of work which require additional assistance or project support
- peak busy periods
- employees who regularly work overtime
- other tasks that could be reallocated to improve efficiency.

## Step Three

### Employee work assessment



Once an employer better understands the core requirements, expectations and skill levels necessary in a certain job, as well as other opportunities present across the organisation, the process of customising a job can begin. This will involve getting to know a potential employee and their interests, goals, previous experiences, present and potential skills, and any other valued characteristics.<sup>3</sup>

## Step Five

### Communication, feedback and evaluation



The final stage of job customisation involves ongoing communication, feedback and evaluation of how the employee is performing in their role. As the nature of the customised role is likely to be new to both the employee and the employer, it is important that the employer remains open to discussing any further changes needed to the role, assisting with any workplace adjustments, and providing additional training or support if required.

## Step Four

### Customising the job or role



After learning about the individual employee's skills, the next step is working with the individual to design a customised job or role based on the needs of an employer and the skills of the employee.

Employers should:

- be open to discussing and re-negotiating any proposals until both parties are happy and comfortable with the customised role
- anticipate questions from the employee
- outline how the individual will be supported or trained so that they feel confident.



### Case study

## Reallocating tasks

A large commercial law firm has recently advertised for a senior property lawyer to assist with its growing property practice.

Ali is a senior lawyer with many years of experience practising in the area of property law. He has recently been named as a 'rising star' by a prominent legal publication. Ali is blind and uses screen-reading software to access documents.

Senior lawyers at the firm are provided with corporate credit cards. Each lawyer is responsible for reconciling all expenses in the firm's financial management system. The firm's financial management system is not compatible with screen reading software.

The firm hires Ali. The task of reconciling expenses in the financial management system is carved out of his role. A legal assistant takes over this task.

Hiring Ali resolved the firm's resourcing problem and allowed the firm to attract more clients based on Ali's reputation as an experienced lawyer. Ali was able to contribute his skills and experience in a way that was customised to his particular circumstances.

## 5. Benefits of job customisation

Job customisation should be viewed as a 'win/win' arrangement.

Employers benefit from job customisation in numerous ways:

- Customising jobs can result in greater productivity and improved service delivery to clients.
- It also allows employers to utilise their workforce, and the broader labour market, more efficiently. For instance, it allows employers to utilise the skills of all employees in the most effective way by re-assigning tasks to match different employees' skill levels.
- It promotes a more inclusive and diverse workforce.
- It better reflects the diversity, needs and interests of the community.
- The more an employer engages in job customisation, the better they will become at it.

For employees in customised jobs, the benefits are profound:

- The unique strengths and interests of people as valued individuals and employees are recognised.
- Individuals are enabled to feel included in a workplace, participate in the labour market and grow a career.
- The benefits of workplace flexibility are championed, allowing an individual's particular circumstances to be taken into account while maximising their ability to contribute. This can have broader benefits for other employers across an organisation.
- Employees are provided with a source of income, security, and all of the many life benefits that come with having a job.



### Case study

## Matching skills and interests

A local department store was having difficulty with its shoe department. Shoes were not being stocked on shelves quickly enough and the section was constantly disorganised. Shoe sales were poor. The store manager realised it was an area that needed improvement, but other employees were too busy for the tasks associated with the shoe section.

A local employment agency introduced the store manager to Sasha, a local 24-year-old with an intellectual disability who wanted to work in a retail store in that area. While Sasha did not have the skills to work as a shoe fitting assistant she was very capable at stocking the shelves and keeping them organised. It was a job Sasha was attracted to as it involved working in a team and meeting new people. The store manager agreed to hire Sasha to do this customised part-time job that matched her skills and interests. Shortly after Sasha was hired, shoe sales increased.<sup>4</sup>

## 6. Resources

For more information on job customisation see:

- University of Melbourne, *Customised Employment short courses*: <https://www.unimelb.edu.au/professional-development/courses/short-courses/customised-employment-part-1> and <https://www.unimelb.edu.au/professional-development/courses/short-courses/customised-employment-part-2>
- National Disability Services: <https://www.nds.org.au/resources/discovering-customised-employment>
- Disability Employment Australia: [http://guide.disabilityemployment.org.au/proposing/job\\_customisation](http://guide.disabilityemployment.org.au/proposing/job_customisation)
- Centre for Disability Employment Research and Practice, *Customised Employment: Work First Customised Employment Program Outline* (2018): <https://www.cderp.com.au/ewExternalFiles/CE%20Program%20Outline.pdf>
- Ready, Willing & Able, *Work Customization: Creating Employment Opportunities For People with a Disability in Today's Workforce* (2013): <http://readywillingable.ca/blog/resource-tools/work-customization-creating-employment-opportunities-for-people-with-a-disability-in-todays-workforce/>
- British Association for Supported Employment: <https://www.base-uk.org/employers-recruitment-jobcarving>
- Employer Support Services (Canada), *Employer's Guide in hiring persons with a disability* (2015): [https://employersupport.nb.ca/wp-content/uploads/2017/05/Employers-Guide\\_fev-2017.pdf](https://employersupport.nb.ca/wp-content/uploads/2017/05/Employers-Guide_fev-2017.pdf)
- Cary Griffin, David Hammis and Tammarra Geary, *The Job Developer's Handbook: Practical Tactics for Customized Employment* (2007, Brookes Publishing)
- US National Disability Institute: <https://www.nationaldisabilityinstitute.org/employment/discovery-and-customized-employment/>.

## Endnotes

- 1 Disability Employment Australia, Job Analysis (2012) <[http://guide.disabilityemployment.org.au/proposing/job\\_analysis](http://guide.disabilityemployment.org.au/proposing/job_analysis)>.
- 2 Ready, Willing & Able, *Work Customization: Creating Employment Opportunities For People with a Disability in Today's Workforce* (2013), 9-10 <<http://readywillingable.ca/wp-content/uploads/2013/03/NBACL-Work-Customization-Resource-Formatted1.pdf>>.
- 3 Ready, Willing & Able, *Work Customization: Creating Employment Opportunities For People with a Disability in Today's Workforce* (2013), 7 <<http://readywillingable.ca/wp-content/uploads/2013/03/NBACL-Work-Customization-Resource-Formatted1.pdf>>.
- 4 This example, and other aspects of this factsheet, are based on a guide by Ready, Willing & Able, *Work Customization: Creating Employment Opportunities For People with a Disability in Today's Workforce* (2013) <<http://readywillingable.ca/blog/resource-tools/work-customization-creating-employment-opportunities-for-people-with-a-disability-in-todays-workforce/>>.

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#### **Guide—Customising a job for a person with disability**

ISBN 978-1-925917-39-0

This publication can be found in electronic format on the Australian Human Rights Commission's IncludeAbility website at <https://www.includeability.gov.au>.

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This guide is part of a suite of resources developed by the Australian Human Rights Commission as part of IncludeAbility to assist:

- employers provide meaningful job opportunities to people with disability
- people with disability navigate barriers to employment.

Further resources are available at [www.IncludeAbility.gov.au](http://www.IncludeAbility.gov.au).