

## Entrepreneurial Job Development: A case study with a person with schizophrenia

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### **ABSTRACT**

People who experience schizophrenia face significant disadvantage in the labour market leading to high levels of unemployment. In response to this situation more employer-focused approaches to job placement have been proposed, including entrepreneurial job development. The purpose of this paper is to report a case study that examined the entrepreneurial job development approach in establishing an employment relationship between a person with schizophrenia and an employer. Data were collected from the employer and the employee using semi-structured audiotaped interviews logbooks and member checks over a nine-month period. Five meta-themes were identified that included: (1) strong 'employer focus' during the job development process; (2) 'employee assets' that were brought to the employment relationship; (3) 'workplace relationships' and their impact on the success of the placement; (4) focus on the 'career development' needs of the employee; and (5) 'satisfaction' of both participants with the job development process and employment relationship. The entrepreneurial job development approach was found to be effective in assisting the jobseeker to develop a potentially long-term, employment relationship with the employer through the creation of a new position that met a 'business need'.

Keywords: entrepreneurial job development, vocational rehabilitation, schizophrenia

## **1. Introduction**

People with schizophrenia have encountered some of the highest unemployment rates for all vocationally disadvantaged groups [21,22,34]. Unemployment is a problem for this population because it decreases their quality of life [12], perpetuates stigma about them [9], inhibits their recovery from illness [1], subjects them to poverty [22], and negates their choice to work [26].

A number of intrinsic and extrinsic factors create employment barriers for people with schizophrenia. Intrinsic factors include altered reality, poor concentration, social withdrawal, communication difficulties, and lack of insight [2,12]. Extrinsic factors include negative attitudes towards people with schizophrenia resulting in social stigma [27], employer hiring practices which screen out applicants with poor employment histories [25], and reductions in the types of specialized and integrated services necessary to support a person with mental illness into employment [35].

Although the vocational rehabilitation system has attempted to address these barriers by devising new employment strategies [3,7,20], these approaches have resulted in minimal success for people with mental illness, particularly in the areas of long-term job maintenance and job status [19]. For example, traditional vocational rehabilitation approaches involving limited post-placement support ignore the long-term support needs of people who experience the cyclical episodes of severe mental illness [8,18,23,31].

Supported employment (SE) using place-train models with ongoing post-placement support were viewed as a solution to the issues associated with traditional vocational rehabilitation approaches [13]. Although they have been found to increase employment rates for people with schizophrenia, they have had limited success in ensuring the maintenance of competitive employment beyond six months, despite the post-placement support [19]. Problems with job retention beyond six months may then result in poor career development

for this population. Furthermore, group approaches such as enclaves and work crews have resulted in limited integration with workers without disability and the number of supported workers who have progressed to competitive employment is low [13].

Transitional employment (TE), which grew out of the Clubhouse Model, focuses on a work hardening process of time-limited (and usually part-time) placements, where individuals can regain their confidence in a competitive employment setting [9,13,23]. On-the-job training and support is provided by the support organization and positions are owned by the organization [23,35]. Supported workers can take time out from their jobs if necessary and return to the position when able [13], thus addressing the cyclical nature of mental illness. However, limitations of TE include the short-term nature of job placements [usually no more than six months], lack of ownership of the job by the supported worker and the fact that many of these positions are low-skilled, entry-level jobs that do not lead to careers.

Recently there has been a call for more employer focused approaches to job placement to improve employment opportunities for people with disabilities by addressing employers' fears and concerns [6,11]. These concerns include: a perceived need for more training and experience to work successfully with people with disability [11]; excessive job accommodation costs [36]; additional hiring costs, supervision time and productivity loss; getting stuck with an inadequate employee; and hiring a liability [29]. Peck and Kirkbride [29] suggested that strategies to overcome these fears include employer education, understanding the individual business, viewing employers as customers and marketing. In effect, agencies that address the concerns of employers may find a decrease in the resistance of employers to hiring agency clients.

Over the past decade several employer-focused models of job development have been put forward, but to date little research has been conducted to support these ideas [6,14,16,32]. These models are premised on the view that a greater understanding of employers' perspectives will enhance the success of employment agencies in securing and maintaining

employment opportunities for their clients [16,29]. For instance, partnership models, derived from contemporary business practices, with a focus on developing long-term relationships with employers built on competency, trust, customer satisfaction and mutual benefits [6,11], are one way of creating demand for workers with disability. Gilbride and his colleagues characterised these types of models as ‘demand side’ approaches because rather than “pushing individuals with disabilities into jobs, [they are] more concerned with creating a demand among employers, or pulling people with disabilities into the workforce” [14] to meet employers’ labour needs.

Entrepreneurial job development [5] is an employer-focused approach that has the potential to address the limitations of current job placement models for people with schizophrenia. This approach focuses on meeting the needs of an employer by creating a new position that will advantage the employer’s business and matching this position to the skills of a disadvantaged jobseeker. Bissonnette argued that changes in the world of work, economic pressures, the competitive nature of employment and the barriers clients with disability face, necessitate a paradigm shift from traditional job placement to entrepreneurial job development. This entrepreneurial approach sees organizations as dynamic, rather than static, and describes a position by the needs met, rather than as a set of minimum qualifications. The focus is on the hidden job market, proposing the *creation of new employment*, rather than simply responding to advertisements for existing positions [5].

Entrepreneurial job development uses employment proposals in the place of traditional written job applications, such as resumes and cover letters. Employment proposals are a business-like feature of entrepreneurial job development, which suggest an area in which the employer can improve the business followed by a description of how the jobseeker is uniquely qualified to address this need. The approach can be from the client’s or the employer’s perspective first, but ultimately the focus is on the needs of an employer being met by the skills of a jobseeker to create a win-win situation. In this way the job development

professional promotes the prosperity of the business by helping the employer to make sound business decisions [5].

Despite the intuitive appeal of entrepreneurial job development, there is little mention of it in the available literature and a complete absence of research into the efficacy of this approach. This paper attempts to redress this situation by reporting the results of a study into the entrepreneurial job development approach. Specifically, the research aims of this study were

1. To examine the efficacy of the entrepreneurial job development approach to assist a jobseeker with schizophrenia, to develop a successful employment relationship with an employer.
2. To determine the benefits and limitations of entrepreneurial job development to both the employer and the employee.
3. To determine the necessary supports for the employer and the employee to make the entrepreneurial job development approach successful.
4. To determine the potential of entrepreneurial job development to lead to a long-term successful employment relationship.

## **2. Method**

Case studies are well established as a technique, particularly in qualitative field research [4,10,15]. A case study design was used because it allowed for a multi-method approach that incorporated several specific data collection techniques including semi-structured interviews, logbooks and member checks. Furthermore the case study approach is viewed as an excellent method to examine one phenomenon intensively over an extended period of time [4], in this case following a job seeker placed with an employer using the entrepreneurial job development approach. The multi-method design also allowed for triangulation of data sources, improving the integrity of the research. Whilst the case study design created some limitations for the transferability of the results, it provided a detailed exploration of issues as

a basis for further research and offered some new independent insights into employer-focused job development.

### *2.1. Participants*

The two primary participants in this case study were a jobseeker with schizophrenia and an employer from a local community renewal area. Participants were selected using a purposive sampling approach [4] based on participant inclusion criteria, as well as on the need to create the good job match essential to this job development approach.

#### *2.1.1. Selection of the employer participant*

Employers interested in participating in this case study were sought at a local employment expo and followed up with emails and phone calls. Four criteria were used in the selection of the employer participant. The employer was required to have:

1. at least 30 employees. This ensured a sufficient number and range of positions to enable the potential creation of a new job within the business, a key aspect of the entrepreneurial job development approach.
2. a business location, in a local area, characterised by high unemployment. This allowed a more rigorous testing of the entrepreneurial job development approach by using a location where employers can afford to hire selectively due to an abundance of potential applicants.
3. workers' compensation accreditation, ensuring workplace rehabilitation systems that could accommodate any special needs of the employee.
4. the means and willingness to provide ongoing work for the participating jobseeker, in line with an aim of this research, which is to examine the sustainability of employment outcomes.

The case study employer selected owned two restaurants, which operated seven days per week, and employed approximately 100 casuals and 20 permanent workers in the kitchen, customer service, cleaning, and management areas.

### *2.1.2. Selection of the job seeker participant*

The jobseeker was selected from an agency that provides specialised employment services to people with schizophrenia. Criteria for selection included that the participant was:

1. diagnosed with schizophrenia.
2. between 18 and 50 years of age. This ensured the jobseeker in the age range of most supported jobseekers with schizophrenia.
3. unemployed for a period of between one to ten years. Long-term unemployment is typical of this jobseeker group.
4. receiving support from a specific specialized employment support agency, as well as from a psychiatrist for the duration of the study.
5. able to maintain competitive employment.

Information gained from the meetings with the employer and observations of the workplace was used to identify potentially suitable and interested candidates with the participating employment support agency. The researcher then worked with candidates to develop employment proposals to be presented to the employer. Each employment proposal reflected an understanding of the employer's needs, a proposal of how the jobseeker intended to meet these needs and skills identified as relevant to the job. Figure 1 provides an example of an employment proposal. These proposals were sent to the employer in place of the cover letter and resume used in traditional job placement methods.

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Insert Figure 1 here

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After receiving the employment proposals, the employer interviewed both candidates and one candidate was selected who became the participant in the case study. The jobseeker selected was a 35 year-old male who had been unemployed for five years. The employment consultant's record check and the signed agreement from the psychiatrist indicated no

medical or behavioural concerns about the jobseeker's participation in the project. The jobseeker agreed to continue receiving support from a consultant in the employment support agency and from the psychiatrist for the duration of the project.

## *2.2. Procedure*

A key aspect of the entrepreneurial job development approach is the job creation process identification of a position through a job creation process. This is described below followed by the data collection processes.

### *2.2.1. Identifying the job*

A meeting was held with the employer, after an initial indication of interest, to explain the purpose and method of the project and to explain the notion of entrepreneurial job development using examples relevant to the employer's business. These discussions led to the identification and creation of a new position which could be filled by a job seeker and which contributed significantly to productivity in the workplace by allowing employees in this and other roles to focus on the core duties of their positions. This was followed by a guided tour of the restaurant and demonstrations of the tasks that would form the basis of the job for the case study employee.

### *2.2.2. Data collection*

Semi-structured interviews and logbooks were used as the data collection methods. Semi-structured interviews were used as the primary source of data collection and were conducted immediately post-placement, and at two weeks, one-month, two months and three months post-placement with each participant to discuss their experiences of the job development process. The prepared questions were asked with prompts to clarify answers and to gain additional information, with the flexibility to allow the participants to comment on issues beyond the specific questions.

Logbooks, also known as diaries, journals and field notes depending on their purpose, are used to record experiences and thoughts on a regular basis [10]. This method of data



collection was chosen due to the researcher's past experience of working with employees with schizophrenia, some of whom find it more difficult to communicate face to face than in writing, due to social inhibitions [12]. It was therefore considered that the logbook might give more comprehensive information about the thoughts of the employee than with interviews alone. The researcher used a logbook like a journal to track the sequence of events, observations and informal conversations during the study. An important component of the logbook was tracking the process of the researcher's familiarization with the employer's world, including business talk, workplace culture and human resource management issues.

### *2.3. Data analysis*

All interviews were audio taped and transcribed verbatim to ensure an accurate account of the conversations. The constant comparative method [4] was used to analyse the data. This method consists of a process of identifying themes from the data by reading and rereading the material. In this study, the ten transcripts were read and substantive 'segments' (phrases, sentences or paragraphs) were marked. At this early stage, substantive statements included anything that may be relevant to the aims of the research. The transcripts were reread and the theme of each segment was noted in the margin. As concepts began to emerge, the transcripts were reread to find evidence of the same concept. Emerging relationships among concepts were noted and the list of themes was re-organised several times as these themes and their relationships took shape from the words of the participants. On further rereading some concepts became irrelevant or merged with others to form more meta-inclusive themes. The logbooks of the employee and the researcher provided for additional information on the opinions of the employee and the process and to identify similarities and discrepancies between the different sources of information.

#### *2.3.1. Inter-rater reliability*

Two raters independently analysed the same data to provide a reliability check [17]. Miles and Huberman [24] stated that the rate of agreement should be above 90%. The percentage of agreement between the two raters in this study was 92.1% indicating a high level of inter-rater reliability.

### 2.3.2. Member checks

Formal member checks were conducted nine months post-placement individually with each of the primary participants. Such checks are used to test for accuracy of the data analysis [28]. The process of arriving at the themes and meta-themes was described to each participant and then the themes were looked at in detail, showing each participant the statements from their transcripts that fit into each theme. Both participants agreed with how the themes were coded, as well as with how they were grouped into meta-themes. The employer also suggested ways of making the meta-theme titles and theme titles more concise.

## 3. Results

A number of meta-themes and themes were identified in the data (interviews, logbooks and member checks) that characterised the partnership that resulted from the entrepreneurial job development approach. Fourteen themes were identified from the employer data and 12 from the employee. Ten themes were found to be common to both participants. Table 1 summarises these themes. The five meta-themes were:

1. A strong *focus on the employer* throughout the job placement process.
2. *Assets* that the employee brought to the employment relationship.
3. *Workplace relationships* and their impact on the success of the placement.
4. Focus on the *career development* needs of the employee.
5. *Satisfaction* of the participants with the job placement process.

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Insert Table 1 here

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### 3.1. *Employer focus*

The meta-theme *employer focus* refers to the emphasis of the job placement process on the needs of the employer. It includes the high level of communication between the job developer and employer and focus on the employer's business needs. Themes included *preparation, individualisation, quality of the relationship* and *ongoing support*.

*Preparation* refers to the degree to which information was provided in a timely manner and the quality of the job development process. For the employer this included the method of introduction of the job developer to the employer; the marketing of the job development process to the employer; how the job development procedure was conducted; and the quality of the employment proposal in comparison with other written job applications. For example, the initial *preparation* process involved positive initial discussions with the employer, and three interview and observation visits at the workplace which were used to develop rapport with the employer and a good understanding of the employer's needs. The job developer spent significant time in the workplace before commencing the screening of potential applicants and developing employment proposals with jobseekers. This preparation paid off with the employer noting:

I had some reservations initially but she could understand the role that we were looking for and then try and narrow out individuals with that but she asked a lot of good questions and we had good discussions and I think that's where the key was. She was able to sort of walk through the restaurant and really understand not just the job description but the personality and the interaction and pace and what our culture is here and that meant that when she met people, I think she was able to say they will fit in or they won't fit in.

The employee had less to say about this theme, but similarly saw the initial *preparation* process of job development as including good communication and understanding between the employer and the agency, the use of an employment proposal, and the clear description of the tasks to be completed in the newly developed job. For example, he stated that:

it [process] matched me to the job. They are looking for a general maintenance person, and it matched to me. So that's why it [employment proposal] hits exactly to the objective.

*Individualisation*, the second theme that emerged from the employer data, can be described as the job developer understanding and responding to the individual employer's needs. Entrepreneurial job development exemplifies an individualised process and the employer spoke frequently about its importance in this regard:

But as I said up front, I won't go into a process with someone that is not going to represent my business and be someone who is going to move my business forward. I don't look at this as a charity situation. I look at it as an opportunity to diversify and get different staff.

*Quality of the relationship*, the third theme, refers to the development of a long-term relationship based on trust. This provided the employer with the security of knowing that support would be available from the agency if required:

...my understanding is that [employment consultant] would be a follow up if we have any issues and I think as long as we had a contact and someone to talk to, I'd be disappointed that if in six months time, I rang up [employment consultant] and they went 'who?' and then spoke to someone else and they went, 'where is he?'. 'Oh no, we only look after them for three months' and then we had no one.

An additional theme from the employee data under the meta-theme 'employer focus' was ongoing support. This refers to the agency's focus on the employer from the time of the job placement. In terms of the provision of necessary supports to ensure the success of the placement, ongoing support for the employer led to an increase in satisfaction with the job maintenance process for the employee. The employee mentioned ongoing support for the employer once or twice during each interview, indicating that he was satisfied with the level of support the employer was receiving.

### 3.2. *Employee assets*

The second meta-theme 'Employee assets' refers to individual attributes that the employee contributes to the employment relationship including *work ethic*, *support* (in particular support from the employment agency), and *confidence*. *Work ethic* describes the employee's

attitude and approach to work, including loyalty to the employer. Both the employer and the employee emphasised the importance of *work ethic* in their respective pre-placement interviews and viewed it as a key point for the job matching process. For example, the employer said:

If I found someone who could do the job better, he might not have had [employee's] work ethic. What has been really good is his work ethic. It's a job that to him whether it was cleaning the inside of a Mercedes Benz or a Jumbo Jet or the outside cleaning of [business], it's the cleaning that he's doing right, it's not where he's doing it or how he's doing it.

*Confidence*, from both participants' perspectives, describes the growth and development of the employee in the job to date, including increasing displays of self-assured behaviour fostered by the job placement experience. From the employee's perspective, *confidence* also included self-perceived competency in the job. For example, he reported:

I found that job is where I regain my confidence again because I look at that job as where I know how to make a decision making again because for a long, long time in my life, I found it very hard to make a decision. That job, I look at it that, it looks like another exciting part of my life. A very exciting part of my life. I learn how to make a decision.

*Support* for the employee from outside the workplace referred to support from the employment agency, as well as informal supports such as relatives and friends. The employee worked alone much of the time due to the nature of his work task and rosters. In this context, the employer noted the value of having the employment consultant supporting the employee outside the workplace.

Understanding what [employment consultant] does and the amount of time he's picked [employee] up, I think that's excellent, I was very impressed. I didn't realise that he picks [employee] up sometimes and they drive home or he's met him and it's a consistent thing, it's not just a one off type thing. So that was impressive and I think that gave me a lot of confidence knowing that I've got someone who I employ, who basically you've solved 80% of my problems.

*Support* was not mentioned at all by the employer in the last two interviews, possibly indicating an increased sense of integration of the employee into the workplace, whereby natural supports began to replace external supports. The employee mentioned the topic of

support from outside the workplace only once or twice during most interviews, indicating that he was satisfied with the level of support. For example, at the two-week interview:

They helped me a lot. Particularly to put me in the job. Particularly they're the ones who helped me write the application to the employer and helped me to handle my time and helping me along the way.

The employee, informed the agency after three months that he no longer needed their support to maintain employment.

### 3.3. *Workplace relationships*

The meta-theme 'workplace relationships' includes the range of relationships within the workplace including employer/employee, employee/co-worker, and workplace culture and the person-environment fit or quality of the job match. Developing positive workplace relationships was viewed by the employer as strongly related to the success of the job placement process. For example, the employer described the same relationship between the employee and two co-workers with the following observation:

there's two crew here that work with him on one day. You see them having laughs and chatting. We all know now that he's into music. A bit of a philosopher of studying and has his views and I think that's good because the crew actually hear that he's talking. So he's melted in.

From the employee's perspective, *co-worker/employee relationships* were more focused on the communication of shared understanding within these relationships. These relationships were presented as more equal relationships by the employee from the beginning and showed little change over time apart from getting to know more of his co-workers.

*Workplace culture* describes the atmosphere, pace and overall presentation of the workplace including aspects such as style of communication, nature of interactions, presentation of the employees, values of the employer and the employees (as a group) within and beyond work, and the general approaches and attitudes towards work. From the employer and employee's perspective *workplace culture* was significant in terms of person-environment fit and job match. For example, the employee stated that:

They are good people. They are very sensitive kind of people and they are very friendly. It's not only they observe me, but I observe them too. They are looking for the right person for the right job. That's what they are looking for.

*Concerns*, as a theme, emerged from the employer interviews, and related primarily to stigma and discrimination by co-workers based on the employee's disability, particularly if the employee developed symptoms of schizophrenia while at work such as inappropriate behaviour. For example, the employer commented:

It was my fear that if it didn't work, they'd blame the fact that he had schizophrenia and that's why it wasn't working, versus, it could have nothing to do with that and that's why we didn't want to tell many people. People want to find an easy solution.

He also was worried about the disability in terms of the future capacity of the employment relationship to meet his business needs:

I might be reading more into it, but in the back of my mind, I can't get rid of it, to know that he does have a condition that has to be monitored in his own way. I want to set up a business plan for maintenance of the store and I just need to know how he's going and what he's doing.

#### 3.4. Career development

The meta-theme 'career development' refers to the ongoing development of the employee's career in the current job and future work, and from the outset this was a focus of both participants. Neither participant saw the job as the ultimate goal for the jobseeker, although both expressed satisfaction with the employment relationship. The employee's *future in the job* was also linked to the employer's business plans:

If he was willing to do more work, now that I know his abilities, we may cut back [contractor], I've only a pool of money to be shared between [employee] and the contractor. At the moment, [employee] gets 15% of it and the contractor gets the remainder. So there's the potential to shift more over. So it's really now, I'm making business decisions to trust [employee] to get him to add more value to the business because he's an employee versus an outside person.

While the employee was concerned about his future in the job he also focused on his *future beyond the job*. He viewed the job as being a stepping-stone to future career aspirations, which included a desire to study. For example, the employee reported:

I do lot's of writing of my life. That's why I'd like to go to uni and probably for only two or three years. That's what I think. Nothing wrong with too much closeness, nothing wrong with that, but I'm looking for the future.

### 3.5 Satisfaction

The meta-theme 'satisfaction' covers expressions of satisfaction with the job development process and the employment relationship. The common theme between the employer and employee within this theme is *satisfaction with the process*. Both participants highly rated the job placement process. For example, the employer stated:

I've approached this on the basis that it's a bit of a test case, but I wanted a win-win and it's worked, so far I'm very happy. I think overall it's worked well and I just think it needs, as I said, it needs to be documented.

The employee contrasted this process with more traditional other methods of obtaining jobs, saying that:

From my understanding in the way of the world, sometimes the advertisement doesn't really tell exactly what they are looking for. From my understanding in job advertisement, they are screening hundreds and hundreds of people but they are not going to fill exactly what they are looking for because they don't like being used by people. That is the nature of our society right now.

The employer also stressed the *importance of having a process* underpinning work practices and decisions, including job placement. For example, he stated:

You can't do without a process. So I'd say it's the foundation piece because as an employer, you never always can assume the right person with every person you hire. You need to have a process that will give you confidence that if you're hiring the same way and you're getting a 60% success rate, or 80% success rate, you can then fine tune your questions or interview techniques because your process is giving you the consistency.

The theme *satisfaction with the job* emerged from the employee data, and included general satisfaction, satisfaction of other needs and the job impacting on non-vocational life areas.

The employee indicated that he liked the people and workplace culture, but was not particularly satisfied with the work as such, as he had greater ambitions beyond this work. It was his view that the job satisfies other needs, and in this sense, it was compatible with his goals beyond the job:



With regards to my mind, it doesn't really help my mind but with regards to my pocket, it puts a little bit of money in my pocket.

Nine months post-placement, the employee had been working full-time for almost four months, had bought a car and had deferred his entrance to tertiary education for an additional six months with a view of aiming higher and maintaining both work with his current employer and study.

#### **4. Discussion**

Five meta-themes were identified in the data that represent the characteristics of the employment partnership that resulted from the entrepreneurial job development approach. These were employer focus, employee assets, workplace relationships, career development and satisfaction. These meta-themes emerged from a total of fourteen themes, ten of which were consistent between the employer and employee, suggesting that the participants had similar views about the employment relationship and entrepreneurial job development process. Both participants also consistently expressed satisfaction with the resulting employment relationship. The progression of this employment relationship from part-time to full-time and the continuation of the employment relationship to nine months post-placement, which was the last point of data collection, indicated the success of the entrepreneurial job development, placement and maintenance process in this case.

##### *4.1 Aims of the study*

Each aim of the study is addressed below.

##### *4.1.1. Efficacy of the approach*

The first aim of this study was to examine the efficacy of the entrepreneurial job development approach in assisting a jobseeker with schizophrenia to develop a successful employment relationship with an employer. The results indicate that this occurred. Both participants compared the entrepreneurial job development approach favourably to other job

placement experiences, with the employer identifying its *employer focus* as a significant advantage over other approaches.

The employer strongly emphasised the importance of the individualised nature of the process, identifying this as a major reason why he supported the placement. In particular he appreciated the time spent by the job developer in understanding his business. For him, this was a reason to take the potential risk of employing someone with a disability. As the relationship developed the employee's assets, particularly his work ethic, were demonstrated and reinforced the notion of a successful job match. Entrepreneurial job development appears to enhance this job matching process because it requires job developers to spend time prior to placement understanding both the job tasks and employers preferences for the type of employee they want to hire. The employee's successful integration into the workplace culture, despite his disability, is also an indication of the good job match. Over time the employer also became less important as the employee developed relationships with others in the workplace. Development of natural supports is one of the aims of this job development approach and is indicative of a positive, and potentially long-term employment relationship.

#### *4.1.2. Benefits and limitations of approach*

There appeared to be tangible benefits of the entrepreneurial job development approach for both the employer and the employee, and few limitations. A key part of the approach is to not only support the existing employment process, but also create additional business benefit by creating a new position. The job developer worked with the employer to improve the employer's business by developing and filling a new position to solve an ongoing staffing issue, which involved relieving current employees of extraneous duties that were preventing them from focusing on their core tasks. By creating the new position, employees were able to spend a greater percentage of their work time on tasks they were most qualified for, thus increasing the productivity of these employees.

The preparation phase of the job development process focused on developing a good relationship with the employer and an understanding of the employer's needs and the workplace culture for the purpose of developing a new position and creating a good job match. The employer saw this preparation process positively, as it increased his confidence and trust in the job developer and the candidates that were put forward for the position. This allowed the employer to leave the job matching process in the hands of the job developer, knowing that his needs would be addressed, and minimised the requirement to advertise and process applications, saving him time and money.

The support of the job developer assisted the employer during the organisational change process that resulted from the creation of the new job and recruitment of the job seeker. The employer wanted to be kept informed about the applicant screening and job matching process, having relinquished his control over the usual hiring procedures. He also wanted information about required accommodations, reassurance of ongoing support, and confirmation that the employee could perform the job. Through the job developer addressing these concerns, the employer was willing to implement organisational change.

The entrepreneurial job developer invested considerable time into understanding the employer's needs, resulting in a clear idea about the attributes required of a potential employee. These attributes included a strong work ethic and being able to add value to the business by taking ownership of the job. The employee attributes benefited the employer, who clearly indicated the link between them and benefits to his business that included a hard working, capable worker and increased diversity among his staff.

By focusing on the strengths of an individual jobseeker, not weaknesses [1,30], entrepreneurial job development works creatively with an employer to develop a position that makes effective use of these strengths. Apart from producing an effective job match, there was a distinct absence of comments about limitations. Employee comments about his 'growth' during the three months post-placement indicate benefits he derived from increasing

confidence. Lack of confidence is a major employment barrier for people with schizophrenia [13]. Through a good job match, sound preparation and provision of support, the entrepreneurial job development approach appears to promote the positive experiences necessary to increase confidence and a sense of self-efficacy. The development of the employment proposal was an important component of this process and viewed as beneficial by both participants. Unlike resumes, which highlight employment gaps of job seekers with schizophrenia, employment proposals focus on abilities.

A limitation of the entrepreneurial job development approach is that it depends on the employee disclosing the disability, at least partially to the employer, as well as on the direct involvement of an agency for support to both the employee and the employer. A consequence of this limitation is that it reduces the choice a jobseeker has about disclosure, which is an important aspect to consider in psychiatric vocational rehabilitation [23,33].

#### *4.1.3. Supports required for success of the approach*

The third aim of this study was to determine the necessary supports for the employer and the employee to ensure the success of the entrepreneurial job development approach. The employee required ongoing support from the agency and treating psychiatrist, to establish and maintain the employment relationship, preserve his mental health, and allow for debriefing if problems arose. The employer identified the need for information to be provided about both the process and how to work with employees who experience schizophrenia; assurance that business needs would be addressed; ongoing support for himself and his employee; and assurance of non-judgmental solution-focused support if the employment relationship deteriorated.

Both participants viewed support for the employee from outside the workplace as critical and the entrepreneurial job development approach appeared to provide that support. The employee required and received support from the employment consultant, initially to ensure that he attended the workplace on time and also to regularly debrief his workplace

experiences and to monitor his mental health. He repeatedly indicated a high level of satisfaction with the support provided. The employer also noted the value of this support when natural support within the workplace was unavailable.

#### *4.1.4. Long-term successful employment relationships*

The final aim of this study was to determine the potential of entrepreneurial job development to lead to a long-term successful employment relationship. Although data was only collected for nine months, the employer indicated his satisfaction with the employee and long-term plans for the employment relationship. Both participants also linked the job with the employee's career development. The employer's willingness to assist the employee with his next career move meant that there were potential employment opportunities beyond the current job. In this context establishing an employment relationship that results in a good experience for all parties may be conducive to longer-term career development, as well as to a long-term successful employment relationship.

#### *4.2. Implications for practice*

Entrepreneurial job development appears to be an effective approach to job placement. Vocational rehabilitation agencies should consider including job creation as a strategy in the placement of jobseekers who have had limited success with conventional approaches, such as people with schizophrenia. Through a job creation approach, positions can be tailored to the needs of employers and jobseekers as well as reducing the competition for existing jobs.

The entrepreneurial job development approach suggests that the job matching process should place equal emphasis on the needs of the employer and the jobseeker. This requires a shift in traditional vocational rehabilitation approaches that have tended to focus primarily on the needs of jobseekers. Employment proposals appear to be one effective strategy in addressing the hiring needs of employers. It is also evident that the provision of ongoing support is crucial to successful placement. Entrepreneurial job development develops strong

relationships between employees and employers/co-workers, enhancing the development of natural supports within the workplace in a minimally intrusive manner.

#### *4.3. Limitations and further research*

This research has several limitations. Data was only collected from one employer and one employee. While the employee was typical of other clients with the same diagnosis at the same agency, it cannot be assumed that the employee is representative of all jobseekers with schizophrenia. Similarly, the employer can only be compared to small employers in the hospitality industry within the local area of the study. This creates some limitations for the transferability of the findings of this study.

Data was collected over a period of three months post-placement with a final follow-up nine months post-placement. The duration of the study allowed for some speculation about the long-term success of the employment relationship, but was limited in its ability to directly observe the effect of entrepreneurial job development on long-term job retention, which is known to be challenging beyond six months for employees who experience schizophrenia [21]. A longitudinal study would be valuable to examine whether the approach leads to sustained employment and career progression beyond the current job.

#### *4.4. Conclusion*

Entrepreneurial job development has the potential to enhance job placement outcomes for people with schizophrenia and other disabilities. Through its capacity to take advantage of untapped labour market opportunities and its focus on both the strengths of the jobseeker and needs of the employer entrepreneurial job development is an ideal ‘demand-side’ approach to job placement. As such it should be given more attention by vocational rehabilitation providers and job support agencies.

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## Figure 1

## Employment Proposal For A General Maintenance Person

[jobseeker name]  
 .....Crescent  
 .....Qld 4...  
 Ph (07) .....

**Benefit**

Based on my conversation with Christine Randall, I believe you require a person who is reliable and committed to taking responsibility for your general maintenance, detailed cleaning and outdoor cleaning duties. I understand that currently you have kitchen staff filling this role and that these people would be more efficiently employed in their normal duties.

Having a regular general maintenance person to maintain the car park, gardens, building, machinery and facilities, would mean that you would have to take on less supervisory responsibility over time. In me, you would have someone who would take responsibility for the job and would add value to your business by demonstrating initiative.

**Skills & Qualifications**

My qualifications include a 'C' Class manual driver's license and forklift operator's license. Recently I completed a Certificate II in Transport & Distribution (Warehousing), AIMM Industrial Training, involving despatch, receipt of goods, picking and processing orders and packaging goods. In addition, I am trained in the use of manual handling equipment, OH&S procedures and the safe shifting of materials.

I am a hard working, honest and reliable individual with a diverse employment history. I spent 5 years in the Defence Force; 1 year as a delivery driver; 3 years as a commercial/industrial cleaner; 1 year as a recycling worker; operating recycling machinery; 1 year as a fruit picker; and 1 year as a cotton chipper. I believe the skills and attributes I have gained whilst in the workforce have provided me with the ability to operate machinery in a safe manner, manage my time effectively and problem solve. I believe the combination of my qualification, skills, initiative and interest in this job demonstrates my suitability.

If you would like to discuss my credentials further, please don't hesitate to call my Employment Consultant, ....., on.....

Alternatively, please call me directly on.....

Yours sincerely,  
 [jobseeker name]

Table 1

Themes representing the characteristics of the employment partnership that resulted from the entrepreneurial job development approach

<b>Employer themes</b>	<b>Employee themes</b>
<p><b>Employer focus</b> Preparation for the placement Individualisation of the placement. Quality of relationship between participants</p> <p><b>Employee assets</b> Support for employee from outside workplace Work ethic of employee Development of employee's confidence</p> <p><b>Workplace relationships</b> Quality of employer/employee relationship Nature/quality of co-worker/employee relationships Workplace culture Concerns about relationships</p> <p><b>Career development</b> Future of employee in job Future beyond.</p> <p><b>Satisfaction</b> Satisfaction with process Importance of having a process</p>	<p><b>Employer focus</b> Preparation for the placement Ongoing support</p> <p><b>Employee assets</b> Support for employee from outside workplace Work ethic of employee Development of employee's confidence</p> <p><b>Workplace relationships</b> Quality of employer/employee relationship Nature/quality of co-worker/employee relationships Workplace culture</p> <p><b>Career development</b> Future of employee in job Future beyond job</p> <p><b>Satisfaction</b> Satisfaction with the process Satisfaction with the job</p>