

## **Towards important and proper work**

Original version: Lampinen, Pauliina (2016). Oikeaan ja tarpeelliseen työhön. *Tuettu työllistyminen käytännössä, 41-48.*

English translation and revision by Pyry Keränen, 21.6.2017, Helsinki

## Implementing diversity with RATKO work carving tools

A growing number of companies have started to discuss their role in the employment of persons with disabilities or partial working capabilities. Many companies genuinely wish to pursue diverse personnel policies. When defined narrowly, diversity refers to individual differences between employees due to their different ages, genders, ethnicities or disabilities. More broadly it refers also to the differences in characteristics and abilities, which may exist due to the employees' different languages, cultures, religious affiliations, education or working capacity. In management and organization development literature diversity is portrayed as a dimension of companies' social responsibilities, similar to equality and human rights.

Companies seek to take these aforementioned differences between individuals' abilities, thinking and ways of working better into account through promoting diversity. This also encourages innovation of novel operating models, services and products. Employees' well-being at work and the ability to keep working can be secured through diversity. Some employers, such as municipalities and cities may have the duty to further the employment status of persons with disabilities or partial working capabilities by law. Companies which promote diversity also offer new possibilities for job coaching services which are looking for suitable work for their customers.

The RATKO model was developed by Supporting Foundation for Children and Youth with Disabilities. It offers the employer a tool for supporting diversity in the organization and finding suitable work for persons with partial working capacity. The tool supports the employer and the workplace community when looking for suitable tasks for a person with disabilities or partial working capacity.

The perspective of the employer and the workplace community is the starting point in the RATKO model. It is a common problem in many organizations that some tasks get repeatedly neglected due to it being unclear whose responsibility the task is. It is rarely possible in the hectic environment of the business world to discuss how to manage the task or problem at hand or even whose responsibility it would be to reorganize, delegate

or request assistance. This extra workload weighs down on the workforce and creates a stressful and distracting atmosphere.

On the other hand, these kinds of situations create new possibilities for a job coach. Through utilizing the RATKO model the job coach will be able to get acquainted with organizations and seek and develop assignments and train the personnel, even before it is known who will be taking care of the set of tasks that the process yields. This kind of organization oriented process sows the seeds of success, and when a suitable worker is found, the organization is already prepared for the new employee.

Experiences with the RATKO model have been encouraging. The model has enabled organizations to commit into making the new person with partial working capacity to feel included, as well as made the newly employed feel like their new work is important and suitable for them. For three years the model has been demonstrated in numerous organizations and it has successfully been used to find diverse jobs with various time spans for dozens of persons with disabilities or partial work capabilities.

### **Originality of the RATKO model and the process itself**

The RATKO model is decisively unlike any more traditional job coaching processes. Traditionally in the job searching phase the priority has been placed on the needs of the job seeking person. The skills and capabilities of the client (job seeker) have been made as understandable as possible for the potential employer and the client has been encouraged to apply for multiple available jobs at the company. The majority of the time allocated for the coaching process has been used to work with the client, and coordination with the companies has been less systematic.

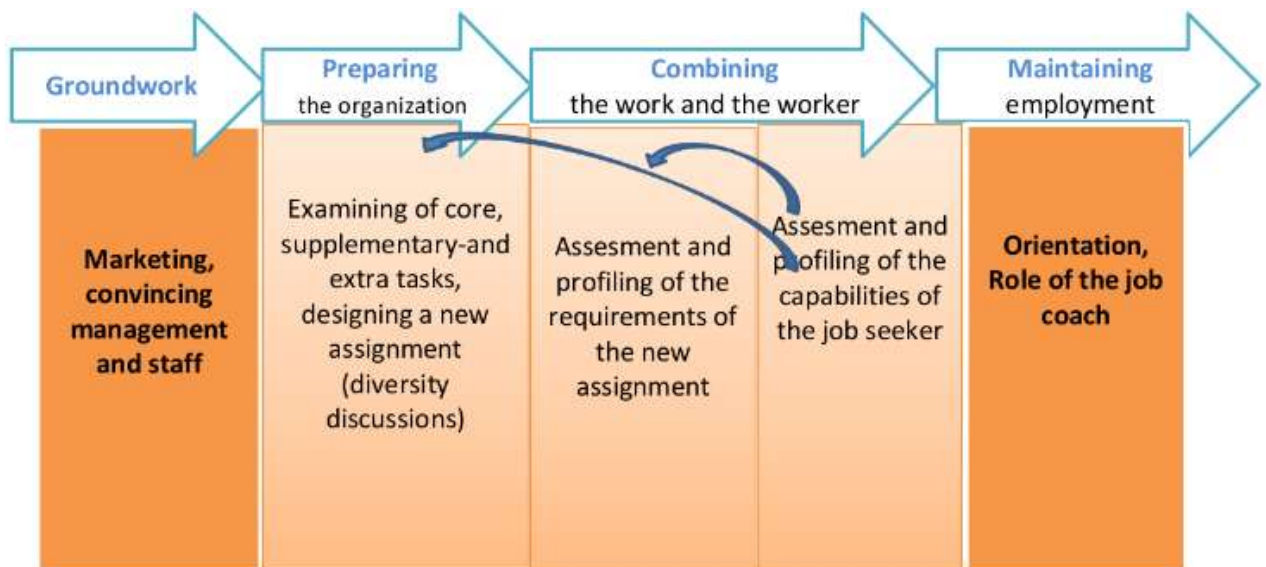
The RATKO model recognizes that the employer is the one with the need and motivation for hiring labour. During the process the job coach gets to know the working environment, the company, the available tasks, key figures, and briefing processes. During the workshop phase of the model the existing tasks and assignments are forged into new set of tasks, suitable for a person with partial working capacity. The organization gets informed about potential circumstances in which the capabilities or skills of a person

with partial working capacity may not be sufficient and whether or not the task or the setting would need adjustments. At this time it will not yet be necessary to know specifically who would be appointed to the task. Contacting the job seekers and arranging interviews and meetings is usually the responsibility of the job coach.

The duration of the entire process outlined in the RATKO model varies between different organizations. Workshops are usually limited to last from one to two hours at a time. Some organizations request longer durations or more sessions, some are more content with shorter sessions. The collection of the task descriptions, reviewing, and communication with the organizations will benefit of a job coach or another employment expert.

### RATKO -model in practise

The RATKO -model is divided into phases:



*Fig. 1. The blue arrows depict how assignments can be tailored and customized according to the skills and capabilities of the worker*

The first phase is to meet with the managers and convince them about the idea of the model. Designing new assignments and sets of tasks and reorganizing work is framed as something that the employer will find useful. Employers are often interested in new ways to deal with tasks that usually get neglected. Furthermore, employers will often

be intrigued by the idea that the most experienced and skilled experts could concentrate on what they deem to be most important components of their work and could delegate to someone else the tasks that are not priorities.

Management often finds investigating diversity in the organization to be enlightening: it reveals how tasks are delegated and how demanding the work actually is. This information will be generated as a part of the implementation of the RATKO model. New ways of increasing the efficiency of the workforce will be discovered. The process yields experience about managing diversity and how other organizations benefit from diversity.

If the management gets interested the next phase is to organize workshops of one to two hours. In the workshops the current employees are able to think about their work and to find sets of tasks that feel less important or are separate from the core of their assignment. It is important that it is the organization that chooses the participants of the workshops according to its needs.

Workshops have proven to be a satisfactory tool for spotlighting any existing diversity in organizations and the many possibilities for benefitting from dissimilar abilities and working habits. Simultaneously any hardships the employees might face in their work will be uncovered. This is crucial for any organization and opens eyes to see if there is a need to refine working practices. The end products from these workshops is one or more new sets of tasks for new employees which consist of the tasks the current employees deemed separate or unrelated to their work.

The main idea of the RATKO model is to assess and review all of the newly designed assignments as well as the skills and capabilities of the job seekers. This is done with the analytical IMBA and Melba tools which assess the capacity to work and the challenge rating of work. Originally developed in Germany, these tools evaluate both the assignment and the potential employee. IMBA is mainly concerned with evaluating the physical prerequisites of the assignment, such as the capacity to certain postures or types of physical movement. The same criteria will be used when evaluating the job

seeker: the capability to sit for long periods of time, climb stairs, lift items etc. Melba on the other hand is used to assess the psychosocial aspects of an assignment. It takes into account for instance the interactional, social and communicational elements of tasks. This provides insight into the cognitive prerequisites of the assignment. In a similar manner the Melba assessment of the job seeker will reveal any strengths or deficiencies the potential employee may possess. These assessment processes will yield a challenge rating profile for the assignment and an ability profile for the job seeker.

As these profiles were purposefully made to be compatible with each other, they will clearly highlight the abilities and strengths of the employee in a certain assignment and the tasks with which the employee might need support or training. The assessment tools also point out the central aspects of the assignment. Specifically tailored solutions can be found for any potential issues. The assessment will clearly define and label all the components of the assignment. The use of analytical, facts-based tools will objectively measure how challenging an assignment can be. The method will also objectively state the abilities, skills and capabilities the employee possesses. This helps to avoid the regrettable phenomenon where an assignment is estimated to be more challenging than it actually is and the employee's deficiencies and shortcomings are highlighted together with all the hindrances to working.

IMBA and Melba assessments can be carried out by persons who have received training in using the tools. There are already hundreds of people with the training in Finland and interest towards user training has been increasing in recent years.

According to a research which sought to assess the RATKO model (Suitable work for everyone, original: Kaikille sopiva työ ja työyhteisö, 2015) it was shown that careful evaluation of assignments and tasks makes it more widely understood in organizations how demanding the new assignment actually is. The process makes it understood in the organization that there is a need for a new assignment. Thus, a new employee in the new assignment is deemed necessary and valuable from the very beginning.

It stood out in the aforementioned research that a person that was in advance deemed fitting and suitable for the new assignment is more motivated and more determined to work and perform well. In addition, the employees will have more trust in their abilities and performance due to the clear statement and fair evaluation of their capabilities and the requirements of the assignment.

IMBA and Melba naturally help to broach the subject of partial working capacity and traits of the new employee. They highlight any need for support or behavior from the perspective of the assignment. Private, irrelevant subject matters will be avoided.

Hiring labour is always a thoroughly-discussed, deliberate process for the organization, as there are many risks involved. It is always an investment to hire new personnel and to introduce them to their work. The RATKO -method and the assessments associated with it give the organization and the employer more time to think about what is needed, what kind of person would suit their needs, and to customize and reorganize tasks into a new assignment. This helps to ensure successful recruitment and turns hiring a person with disabilities or partial working capacity into just a regular hiring process. There is an assignment that requires a worker: neither too skilled nor too unskilled, but a suitable one.