

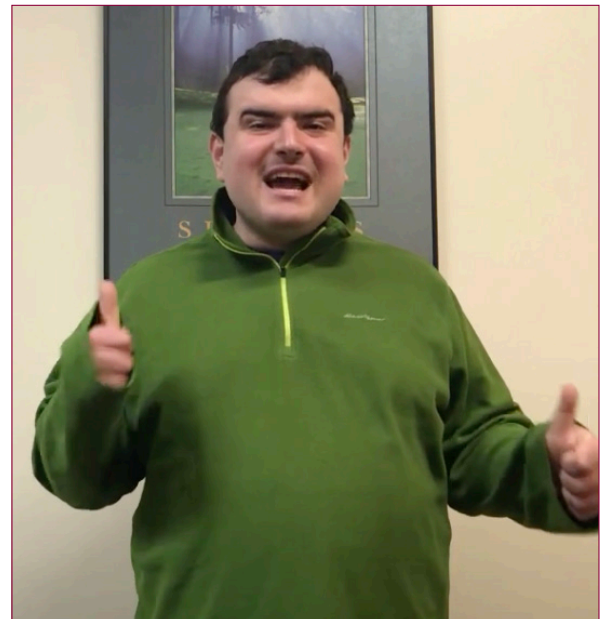
Oscar: How Focused, Individualized Exploration Led to a Good Job Match at Shake Shack

Background

Oscar Segal is 26 years old and lives in his own apartment in the Bronx, New York. For the last seven years, he has worked for the Shake Shack restaurant chain, mainly as a greeter but also doing a variety of other tasks such as filling to-go orders. Through a comprehensive individualized exploration and planning process, sometimes referred to as “Discovery”, Oscar was able to find a reliable job match where his responsibilities and work environment match his interests and preferences.

What Discovery looked like for Oscar

Oscar is outgoing and has a large personal network that includes people from the Autism community and beyond. In 2015, after high school, Oscar enrolled in Job Path, an employment support provider based in New York City. Job developers used a Discovery process, which lasted for a few months, to learn about Oscar and who he is as an individual. They spent time with him in different environments and asked the people he and his family knew for information about him and what works and does not work for him in a job setting. “From that Discovery we learned about Oscar...his personality, his skills, what environment he would thrive in, what time of day he is at his best etc.,” says Karen Waltuck, the director of the Consortium for Customized



What is Discovery?


Discovery is a process where an employment support provider will get to know a job seeker even before planning for the job search. It’s a process of spending time with the person to find out who they are, what their interests and passions are, and their unique contributions. Discovery is enhanced when the person is observed in settings where they are most comfortable, and when family and friends are invited into the process. It typically results in a profile of the individual that can be used as a guide when looking for employment possibilities.

Employment based at Job Path. We “did that by spending time with him in the community, at his home, and by speaking to people that know him well, teachers, community members, supervisors, family.”

The job developer then translated Oscar’s skills into job tasks. She drew both on his network, as well as her own personal and professional network to find an interested employer with a need that matched his skills. Karen Waltuck had previously worked in the restaurant business in New York City and had a large professional network. This connection made it easier for her to introduce Oscar to a job at Shake Shack. She understood the restaurant’s culture, the pace of work, other conditions in the work environment, the standard employer hiring expectations, and the frequent unmet needs within the restaurant chain. Working together, Oscar, his family, the job developer, and the Shake Shack manager were able to place Oscar into a position that fit well with everything they knew about him.

What Happened

Oscar has worked at Shake Shack since 2015. He works sixteen hours a week, four hours per day. Except for cashier and cooking tasks, he does every other task a Shake Shack employee does. He is especially good at greeting people and handing them menus as they come into the restaurant. However, he also does other tasks as needed such as running errands, unloading supplies, and putting together to-go orders for delivery drivers. Oscar has several people who support him with various aspects of his life. He is anxious about doing his job well so at his request, Marta, a community worker who travels with him to work, spends some time with him at work each day checking on how he’s doing and encouraging him. His job coach, Robert Sheridan, visits him at work once a month to check in with him and his supervisor to see how things are going and whether any adjustments need to be made to his hours, tasks, or other working conditions. As a result of Oscar’s employment, Shake Shack a smoother, friendlier place to be.



“I’m excited and I like being happy at work and busy. I like making money and being productive. I love my coworkers and my bosses. I’m always looking for more work and more projects.”

Lessons Learned

- » Recognize the importance of taking the time for individualized exploration and Discovery prior to planning for the job search.
- » Oscar’s team leveraged his large personal network and the professional network of the job developer to make the connection at Shake Shack.
- » Through an understanding of “Who Oscar Is” as an individual, his job developer was able to understand his strengths, his preferred work environment, and how he might fill a certain need at Shake Shack.
- » Oscar benefits from the shared responsibility of providing ongoing supports to be successful on the job. This includes support from someone who drives him to work, a job coach, and the employer themselves.

