

ENGAGING EMPLOYERS: FROM STRATEGY TO ACTION

Innovations in Employment Supports



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Purpose

Better conversations create opportunity.

Stronger job development starts before the opening exists.

1 Shift focus Openings → business needs	2 Lower pressure Curiosity before pitch	3 Build trust Useful employer conversations	4 Improve fit Strengths + workflow needs
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→ **Create opportunity — don't just wait for openings.**

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Rethinking Employers, From Hiring to Partnership

Part 1



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How can we approach job development?

When the Focus Is the Job Opening, it looks like:

Reactive

- Responding to posted jobs
- Employer already hiring
- Matching resumes to roles

Transactional

- Short-term, task-focused contact
- Limited time or urgency-driven outreach

When the Focus Is the Business Relationship, it looks like:

Proactive

- Exploring needs before jobs exist
- Learning how work actually flows
- Discovering solutions

Relational

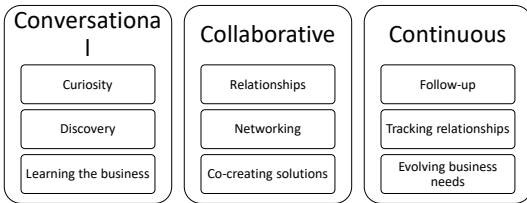
- Ongoing contact over time
- Built on curiosity and trust

Today we will focus on strengthening conversations when the goal is learning, partnership, and long-term fit.

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The Relationship Lifecycle Strategic Job Development in Action

Learn -> Build -> Sustain



Strong partnerships are built through curiosity, collaboration, and consistency over time.

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Building Rapport Personable. Professional. Purposeful.

Rapport is built when people feel remembered, not sold to.

The goal is not forced small talk. The goal is genuine connection that opens better business conversations.

<p>1 Start human</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use their name • Greet naturally • Match their pace 	<p>2 Remember people</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Notice what they share • Follow up next time • Keep simple notes 	<p>3 Ask their story</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Family or interests • How they got started • What they are proud of
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Track the Relationship

Remembering details + follow-through build trust

The relationship should not live only in one person's head.

<p>1 Contact map</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Primary contact • Secondary contact • Best way/time to reach 	<p>2 People details</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Names and roles • Interests or family notes • How they started 	<p>3 Business context</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pressure points • Workflow needs • What was promised 	<p>4 Coverage plan</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Who steps in? • What do they know? • Next touchpoint
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**From “We have a candidate” to
“We help businesses reduce pressure points”**

Employers often deal with things like:

- Turnover and retraining
- Staffing gaps and call-offs
- Tasks falling through the cracks
- Supervisors stretched too thin
- Busy periods and workflow bottlenecks
- Inconsistent onboarding
- Reliability and follow-through concerns

For these challenges, how could a we realistically support them?

- Stabilizing staffing and retention
- Redesigning or redistributing tasks
- Supporting onboarding and training
- Reducing pressure on supervisors
- Improving consistency and follow-through
- Identifying workflow support opportunities

**We are not starting with a person.
We are starting with the business.**

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Creating Lower-Pressure Employer Conversation

High Pressure Version

“I work with people with disabilities and I’m wondering if you’re hiring.”

Why does this can feel high-pressure?

- Feels transactional
- Creates pressure to respond immediately
- Focuses on our goal before understanding theirs
- Sounds like a placement request, not a conversation

Use openers like these:

- “I spend time learning how local businesses operate and support their workforce...”
- “We work with businesses to help reduce workflow and staffing pressure points...”
- “I’m learning more about how organizations like yours handle staffing and retention...”

**Curiosity lowers pressure.
Pressure closes conversations.**

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Low-Pressure Outreach Framework

Lower Pressure

- No job request
- No resumés
- No pitching a person
- Create space to learn first

Learn First

- "What parts of the job take the most time?"
- "How do you handle busy times?"
- "Where does work tend to pile up?"
- "Tell me about your workflow."

Speak Business

- Use employer-centered language
- Talk about workflow, turnover, bottlenecks, retention, efficiency
- Focus on operational support before disability-specific language

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DISCOVER

Understanding workflow and pressure points.

BUILD

Business-centered conversation and trust.

POSITION

Exploring where support may fit naturally.

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Breakout: Rewrite the Outreach

Starting Point

"Hi, I'm a job coach and I have a candidate who might be a good fit for your business..."

Your Task: Rewrite this opening using the Low-Pressure Outreach Framework.

Your version should:

- Lead with a business challenge
- Reference support, not a person
- Invite conversation, not commitment

Optional Opening Ideas

- "We work with employers who are dealing with..."
- "Many businesses like yours tell us the hardest part is..."
- "We support teams who are managing challenges like..."

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Building a Productive Employer Conversation

Part 2

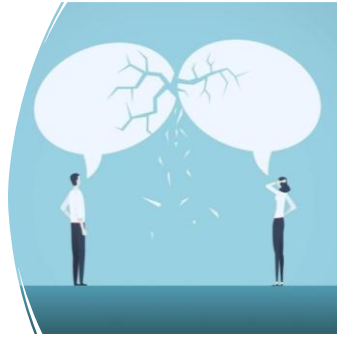


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Imagine the **worst possible** first conversation with a business.

What is said or done?



Horizontal lines for writing notes.

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Upgrade #1: The Opening

Start with confidence + employer-centered value.

Open → Purpose → Value → Permission

Open: Who you are - (brief and confident)

Purpose: Why you're reaching out - (1 sentence)

Value: What you do for employers - (not the people we support)

Permission: Ask to continue - (low pressure)

- Hi, I support local employers with hiring and retention.
- I'm reaching out to learn more about your team and workflow.
- I help businesses strengthen staffing, improve retention, and reduce day-to-day workload.
- Would you be open to a quick 10-minute conversation sometime this week?

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Horizontal lines for writing notes.

Breakout: Craft Better Openings

Write an improved opening:

- 1 for an employer who *is* hiring
- 1 for an employer who says they are *not* hiring

Keep both:

- Employer-centered
- Low-pressure
- Conversational
- Realistic



Open
Who you are



Purpose
Why you are reaching out



Value
How you support businesses



Permission
Ask to continue the conversation

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Horizontal lines for writing notes.

Upgrade #2: Learning Questions
Move from pitch → discovery.

The CARE Questions

- C – Challenges**
What pressures or problems are competing for attention?
- A – Areas of Strain**
Where do small issues turn into bigger headaches?
- R – Roles & Tasks**
What work is getting done and by whom?
- E – Existing Fixes**
What has already been tried?

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Is it CARE or Not?

Type in the chat what kind of question you think it is.

- C – Challenge
- A – Areas of Strain
- R – Roles and Tasks
- E – Existing Fixes
- N – Not a CARE Question

- What’s hardest for your supervisors to stay on top of right now?**
- How many people are you hoping to hire this quarter?**
- What kind of accommodations would someone need to work here?**
- What have you already tried to resolve with attendance issues?**
- Where does work tend to slow down when things get busy?**

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Upgrade #3: Navigating Concerns

Acknowledge

- “Totally fair...”
- “I hear you...”
- “That makes sense...”

Reframe

- “What we often do for employers is...”
- “One thing that tends to help teams is...”

Light Next Step

- “Would a quick, check-in next week work?”
- “Could I email you 3 quick questions to make this easy?”

Most concerns are “No.”
They’re “I don’t understand yet” or “I’m busy.”

Stay calm, curious, and business-centered

Common Employer Concerns

- “We’re not hiring.”
- “We don’t have time.”
- “We’ve tried this before.”
- “We need someone fully independent.”

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Handling Employer Concerns: Practice the Structure

- 1 **Acknowledge**
Show you heard them. Normalize the concern.
 - No correcting. No defending.
- 2 **Reframe with Employer Value**
Briefly restate how you support businesses, not people.
 - Focus on workload, workflow, stability, or efficiency.
- 3 **Offer a Light Next Step**
Invite a small, optional next step.
 - No hiring ask. No commitment.

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What to Produce
In your group, write one short response that includes all three parts.

Group 1: "We're not hiring."
Group 2: "We cannot risk the liability."
Group 3: "We've tried this before."
Group 4: "We can't provide extra training."

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Upgrade #4: Low-Pressure Next Steps

- | | | |
|--|---|---|
| <p>Reflect the Need
Paraphrase their concern or goal to show you understand.</p> <p>"It sounds like keeping things running smoothly during busy periods is a big priority for you."</p> | <p>Suggest a Low-Lift Step
Offer one simple, low-effort next step.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Brief walkthrough • Short follow-up • Identify 1 task area • Share a simple resource | <p>Ask Permission
Make the next step optional and keep them in control.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Would that be useful? • Would that help? • Would you open to that? |
|--|---|---|

Employers May Not Say Yes to Jobs. They Say Yes to Next Steps.

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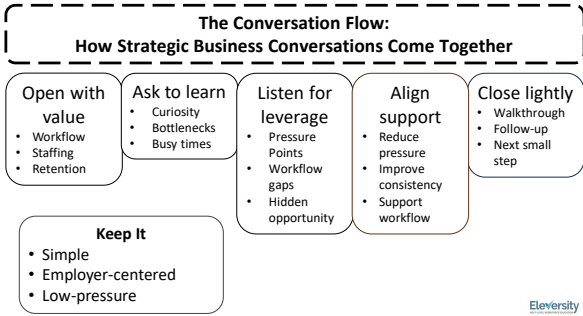
Spot the Pressure

Is this high-pressure?
What words may make it seem that way?

- | | |
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| <p>"If we don't act soon, this issue is probably going to get worse. Can we set up a meeting?"</p> | <p>One thing that could really help here is having us come in and support those tasks</p> |
| <p>"Based on what you shared about mornings getting hectic, a next step could be a quick walk-through of that. Would that be helpful?"</p> | <p>"Based on what you shared, we can place someone to support that area and get things started right away. Would that work for you?"</p> |

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Building on What We've Learned

Basics of Business Engagement

- Start the employer relationship
- Build trust and credibility
- Present ourselves as solutions

Connecting Talent to Business Needs

- Match strengths to real needs
- Translate skills into business value
- Create stronger job matches

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