



retained at follow-up for attitudes and knowledge (with the exception noted above), but increases in intent to hire were not maintained. There were no differences between the groups on interest in follow-up with a local VR professional, and almost half of the hiring managers requested follow-up. Despite an expressed interest in follow-up, only a few hiring managers (6 of 29, or 20.7%) reported having contact with a local VR professional four months after the meeting.

## Recommendations for VR Professionals

- ♦ **Get out and meet with employers as much as possible because it works!** Our study found that attitudes, knowledge, and intent to hire can be improved based on a one-hour meeting with a VR professional. Intent to hire and better attitudes and knowledge are associated with hiring people who are B/VI, so a short meeting may help pave the way for a consumer to be considered for employment.
- ♦ **For these meetings, use the approach that is more natural for you, or a hybrid approach.** Strictly using one approach or the other is not required. For our study we made them unique, but in practice a combination of approaches is possible. You may need to approach each employer differently, based on how the conversation goes and the questions they ask. The personality of the employer plays into the best approach, as does your personality. You should be able to "read" employers and appropriately respond and follow their leads. Flexibility is important when meeting with employers, and ideally, in practice, you will have the skills to utilize either approach as needed. Remember that understanding employer needs is important, and the dual customer approach provides a good foundation to do this.
- ♦ **Follow-up with employers is needed.** Although attitude and knowledge improvement was generally retained, intent to hire returned to its original level four months after the meeting. This indicates that one meeting with an employer may not be enough to encourage them to hire an applicant who is B/VI in the future. You should always try to plan your next follow-up with the employer during the first meeting.
- ♦ **Follow-up about the services that were planned or the information that was requested by the business within the time frame you indicated in the meeting.** If you indicated that you would provide the service or the information within one week, be sure to meet that deadline. If a follow-up was not planned at the first meeting, contact the employer soon after to maintain that connection. It is important to strike while the iron is hot! Employers are more likely to be enthusiastic about what you discussed if you can continue the conversation soon. Any enthusiasm that was generated in the first meeting could quickly fade.
- ♦ **Focus your efforts on developing ongoing relationships with employers.** Plan to go beyond simply following-up with employers to developing a relationship with them. Your first meeting and its follow-ups are the start of the relationship. You can create a good foundation for a relationship by being aware of employers' needs and identifying ways you can help address those needs. Focus on the services you can provide to the employer to build that relationship. Once a relationship is established, a natural result of that will be providing qualified applicants for available positions.

## More Information

For more information about the study, see the following journal article\*:

McDonnall, M. C., & Antonelli, K. (2020). The impact of a brief meeting on employer's attitudes, knowledge, and intent to hire. *Rehabilitation Counseling Bulletin*. Advance online publication. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0034355219889409>

For more information about working effectively with employers utilizing the dual customer approach, see the NRTC's online course [\*Improving Business Development Skills: A Training for Rehabilitation Professionals\*](#).

\*This article and other NRTC publications are available for download on our website: [www.blind.msstate.edu/research/publications](http://www.blind.msstate.edu/research/publications)



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