

## Ask Me Anything Webinar with Len Statham, December 6, 2018

<http://bu.adobeconnect.com/ptrtz91k0dn2/>

**David Blair:** Well, good afternoon everyone and welcome to Ask Me Anything about Employment with Len Statham. My name is David Blair, and I will be your moderator today. This webinar is not a presentation but an interactive question and answer period. For the next hour, Len will take any questions you have related to **Employment Activation: Let's get started!**

The unemployment rate is not our biggest problem, it's the lack of participation in the workforce! Today we will have an honest conversation about what we need to do as a community to change this unsettling dynamic. This "Ask Me Anything" topic is a call to arms to empower both providers and individuals with lived experience to begin the conversation we need to have: In particular, why are we settling only for public benefits and how can we activate individuals toward employment?

Len Statham is the Director of Employment and Economic Self-sufficiency Initiatives with the New York Association of Psychiatric Rehabilitation Services (NYAPRS). He has worked with people with mental health and substance use issues for more than 20 years, promoting recovery-focused services and service provision. Combining his clinical and vocational background, Mr. Statham provides training and technical assistance about employment services and the capabilities of people with behavioral health issues to providers and people in recovery, across New York State and nationally. He has helped facilitate the adoption of the Individual Placement and Support (IPS) model of supported employment statewide in Utah, New Jersey, Wisconsin, and Colorado. Mr. Statham also works at a national level on SAMHSA's Bringing Recovery Supports to Scale Technical Assistance Center Strategy (BRSS-TACS) initiatives as well as with Boston University's Center for Psychiatric Rehabilitation. Additionally, Len has previously provided training for the National Development & Research Institutes Addiction Technology Transfer Center (ATTC) for projects in New York and New Jersey.

Today's event is jointly funded by the National Institute on Disability, Independent Living, and Rehabilitation Research (NIDILRR) and the Center for Mental Health Services within the Substance Abuse, and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA). The content of this webinar does not represent the views or policies of the funding agencies, and you should not assume endorsement by the federal government.

During registration for the event, you were given the opportunity to submit questions in advance. Over the course of the webinar, we will alternate between questions submitted in advance and the ones you have today. So hopefully, we can have a lively conversation. You may ask questions now by typing them into the chat box or by letting me know you would like to ask

it by phone and then you can have a conversation with Len. So, welcome to the webinar, and I hope you enjoy the next hour.

Len, we're going to start with some of the questions in the announcement that went out for this event because I think they're a great starting place. And let's start with the top of the line one, which is, "Why are we settling for public benefits, and how can we activate individuals toward employment?"

**Len Statham:** Thank you, David. Good afternoon everybody, and good morning to you on the West coast. That question is a question I get asked quite a bit. I encourage people to join in with me in the chat box, as perhaps I might say some things that get your interest. I think the biggest problem we're having is we're not targeting a lot of our approaches to people that have said "No" to employment. In other words, we have IPS, which is Individual Placement and Support, and that is an evidence-based practice that is a very good practice, and it's been researched to death really! It's been across disabilities, and many, many different countries. It's the model by which people with disabilities can obtain employment. The problem is that is for the population that has already raised their hand. And so, there's a great number of folks that are not raising their hand and saying, "Yes, I want employment."

And David, I'm wondering if you might just bring up our only [graphic](#) because that would really give some data to support what I'm saying. So these were the latest participation rates, according to the Office of Disability Employment, which is a Federal agency that takes a look at labor policy. And you can see that in the red that the unemployment rate for people with disabilities is actually 8.5%, twice as much as the general population, which isn't good. And we spend a lot of time on that 8.5% population. However, if you look at the labor force population, that is those folks who are not raising their hand looking for work actively. The general population is usually around that 69%. We've had it as low as 65% at times, but it's between 65-70%. But people with disabilities is an abysmal 22%. And so that leaves us with about 80% of people with disabilities that are not in the work force, and that's what we really need to start paying attention to and helping people to start changing their minds about employment. Now for the longest time, I have made the mistake of going about engaging people around employment this way. I would tell them about how great employment is and how wonderful it is and how it gives them self-esteem and how it gives them a sense of purpose, and on and on and on. But I soon realized that that technique was actually counterproductive. Meaning that, what I was saying to folks about employment, had no place inside of the folks that I was talking to, to really resonate because their experience was much different. Their experience was maybe discrimination in the work force, maybe not being able to get along with supervisors or co-workers, maybe being fired three or four times. So what I was selling wasn't penetrating their own experience. And people will pay more attention to their personal experience than what I was trying to sell. So, we really need to come up with a different way to speak with folks who have had some challenging experiences in the employment sector.

**David:** You know, I think that introduction there leads right into the very next question that was proposed, which is, "What are the strategies we can use to help people move past the fear of losing their benefits when returning to work?"

**Len:** Well, I think the first thing we need to do is we need to sort of dispel some of the myths about going back to work, and I think there's a question in the chat box with Michael Wahl, who sort of dovetails this, "Do you think that these numbers can be as low as people are afraid to disclose that they have a disability?" I think that there's a couple of things. 1) Again, the work. Explaining the work incentives in a way that resonates with people. And one way to do that is to put a lot of effort into talking about work incentives. However, I have been to a huge number of work incentives trainings. I'm a certified benefits counselor, so I'm very in that area. But what I find is that people get way too much information, and that information is actually counterproductive. It's way too much for people to absorb. They just need a decent amount of information to know and feel safe that they're not going to lose their benefits. 2) And I think talking about areas that affect their lives is probably the second method that I would use. And as I mentioned, when I was sort of the cheerleader for employment, I was talking about my own experience and how great work was. Instead of asking about, What are the things happening in your life that are because you're unemployed? And really, honestly, having difficult and honest conversations with people that make people a little bit uncomfortable. And not to say that we really want to get down on people that are not working, but there needs to be a sense of uncomfortableness, a sense of dissatisfaction because anybody familiar with psych rehab knows that people move and make change when their level of dissatisfaction is high. And so talking about things, like unemployment and how it affects their lives and poverty and how it impacts their lives is really the gateway to talking about employment as a possibility to making people feel a little bit more comfortable.

**David:** Go ahead to Michael's question.

**Len:** To Michael's question, I do think there are folks that are timid and have been timid about disclosing their disability. And I think that can be true in many cases. However, we are in right now an employee market. People are desperate to hire. And so, people's disabilities are less and less a factor.

**David:** Alright. When you mentioned a second ago, you mentioned that you were probing into things that make people uncomfortable as a way to bring about that change. Are you helping them identify things that they are themselves already aware of and bringing that out, or are you pointing out new things to them that they should be aware of?

**Len:** Well, actually one of the tools that I use is actually the Eight Domains of Wellness. And I'm sure that many people are aware of that SAMHSA product, which really talks about the eight domains that are part of people's lives, including financial, spiritual, social, educational, ..

**David:** It's emotional, environmental, financial, intellectual, occupational, physical, social, and spiritual. And I linked that in the room, the SAMHSA doc (<https://www.samhsa.gov/wellness-initiative/eight-dimensions-wellness>).

**Len:** Thank you. So that's actually a perfect tool to use as a conversational piece. So I used that once with an individual, and they were actually, they had a goal. It was a social goal, it was to find a girlfriend, and so we talked about how that might happen, and he couldn't figure out a way to make that happen. He was 35 and has not dated, and he began to ask me questions about how I was able to meet my wife, court my wife. And I started talking to him simply about taking her out for dinner, going out for coffee, all the things you do for courtship. And he said, "I can't afford a girlfriend." And I said, "You know, I'm in the employment business, and I think that the way that we're going to have to help you to meet that goal and get a girlfriend is to go to work because you're much more likely to meet someone in the workforce than you are in this day treatment center. And of course, he ended up getting a girlfriend. His need for the girlfriend at that point became greater than his fear of losing his benefits.

**David:** So, delving into one of the verticals of finding work, AJ asks, "Do you have any specific strategies for helping get your foot in the door with employers?"

**Len:** Sorry, David, could you repeat that again? I didn't quite hear you.

**David:** "Do you have any specific strategies for helping get your foot in the door with employers?"

**Len:** Well, there's a number of strategies that I use, mostly all centered around the concept of social capital. And so, I have a great number of contacts, I know a lot of people being in this business a long time. However, all of my contacts are not good enough, so I encourage teams of people. I happen to work in a day treatment program, actually a personalized recovery-oriented services program, and it's a little step up from day treatment, actually it's a big step up from day treatment. And there were people on my team, nurses and front-line staff and record-keeping and other clinicians. And I simply asked them, you know I can't do it all, and I know that you all have contacts that I don't have contacts, so what I'd like to do is this. When somebody comes to me and says they have a job or want a job and reach out, I'm gonna send you out an email, and I'm gonna say, "Hey, look, do you know, or John Smith is looking for a job in retail, does anyone know a person that, in your church or in your synagogue, your neighbor or relative or family member that is a manager, a valued employee? Is there an assistant manager, who works in human services, anyone who works in retail? If you do, contact me." So as a result of

that message, I was able to secure other people and secure their contacts. First time I did that, I had a nurse tell me that her son was actually the human resource officer for Target. I said, "Wow! I don't have a contact at Target." And she said, "Well, I'll talk to my son." And she was able to talk to her son, and that was my in. I got connected with her son, and as a result, the gentleman interviewed for a position and got a job at Target. It wasn't my contact, it wasn't my connection with an employer, it was the team rallying around the idea of a concept of employment, and then moving forward with that contact to me so that would be a much easier handoff than me going cold calling. There are many more contacts that everyone has. And that woman, by the way, she became a big cheerleader on the employment team. She had no experience with employment prior to that. But for those of you that on the call who are employment specialists, you know that when you get someone a job, it's like a big day, or it's like scoring a touchdown and spiked the football, it's like a big celebration. And she got to experience that so she was forever on the employment team after that. I'd go home at night and find three texts from her saying, "Oh, I was at the 7/11 on the way home and I saw that there was a Help Wanted sign." So yeah, I think using social capital is the way to go.

If you are looking at more specific ways that you have to do that cold calling, that's a whole other question, and I could go into that, if people like.

**David:** Yeah. You know, as I've done these conversations with different people, it seems like this process of building relationships and using those relationships, it comes up every time. And that it's a process that takes time, it's not overnight, but as you progress in the role, those relationships become stronger. That you have to continue to build them the whole time.

Jason, in the room, asks a different question about online applications, and Jason asks, "Do you have strategies for navigating the online application process, without getting lost in the shuffle?"

**Len:** That is a great question, and that is actually dovetailed with the idea of social capital because some of those, well actually, those questionnaires are really designed to weed people out. And so, I was having some difficulty with a particular Walmart. And I said, "You know what, anyone I'm sending through this portal is not finding work. They're not getting callbacks, so I need to do something different." And I actually began a relationship with a manager at the nearest Walmart, and I took him out for lunch and talked a little bit about what I did. I always saw ads for Walmart, and I said, "We've got a good candidates, who just can't get through your screening process." As I began to know him and establish this relationship with him, at some point he said to me, "You know what, if you really think you have a strong candidate and they're not getting through, just send them directly to me." So that's the value of social capital that you can actually, because you know somebody, you can circumvent those types of online. Because let's face it, a lot of the people that we work with don't have a chance when comes to those online applications. Because again, they all targeted to weed people out. So whenever

you're having some difficulty with those particular online entities, I would strongly suggest you make a personal plea and appointment with the manager of the store and talk about ways that you might be able to circumvent that. Or at least, just start with a simple introducing yourself, learning as much as you about that individual, and forming a relationship. Because in the end, the idea of social capital is that most of the general population finds their work through social capital. Many, many jobs are not even online anymore, especially in today's economy, they just want people right away. And so, it's really important to get out there and to get to know people because that "hidden job market," there's many, many jobs that get taken that way. And if you aren't in the social capital business, you just don't know those jobs. I'll give you an example, my last three jobs have not come about as a result of me looking online, they've come about as people telling me, "Hey, there's a job that they're looking for this." It gave me a greater shot at the job. It certainly doesn't guarantee you the job, but they won't even promoting the jobs. And so I never would have even known that those jobs existed.

**David:** You know it seems like you're talking about leveraging all the opportunities that you have available to you and not ignoring things that may not even look like an opportunity that someone else you know may know something that you don't know. And to that end, Austin asks, "How do you establish a collaborative relationship as an IPS agency with vocational rehabilitation, who provides the traditional supported employment?"

**Len:** That's a great question. There have been some states that have done that better than others. And I think it's those VR agencies that are open to some of the IPS principles, which, let's just talk about one of them, which is rapid employment. And we know that the VR agencies tend to be a little bit slower. But some of the ones that have said, "Yes, we're going to adopt that as a principle of our own, it's much easier to form a relationship because you have that in common. I do know from personal experience working with OVR, not myself working in OVR, but working with them as an organization that many times they're open to working with organizations if you can accomplish something they can't in a more timely fashion. You'll still have to wait for them to get through their assessment process and their waiting list, and things like that. But if you can supply a need of theirs and get it done quickly, they're more apt to form relationships with you. And again, even with somebody with OVR, by developing relationships with the individual counselors so they'll be thinking about you. Wine and dine people.

**David:** Alright, thank you. So there's a question, I'm gonna jump around a little bit. And I think Pauline, who's in the room today, might have submitted one in advance, too. So I'm going to read both of them. Pauline just writes right now, "Our clients may need a supportive coach at the workplace from time-to-time to help with issues, but they do not want that support. How can we encourage them to agree to support that, to some support from time-to-time?" And the second point, so it's agreeing to support. And the second question is, "What should be included in a brochure you give to employers as you're trying to recruit them to work with you as a provider?" So two different things.

**Len:** Let's look at the latter question, and I get this question quite a bit, in terms of what do you put on brochures and any kind of marketing material? So, when I was doing some direct service, it certainly wasn't to our, it wasn't to the person's advantage to have my main number on that card or on that brochure because it was Evelyn Brandon Mental Health Center. And so, I was breaking their confidentiality just by having the employer call me back. So we decided to have a very generic-looking business card with my cell phone, and then our brochures tended to be a bit vague, but they were very detailed about how we could actually help the businesses find high-quality people. So, they would be interested for us to at least sit down and for me to explain the services. It really wasn't about hiding anything, it was more about putting something on the, things on the brochure or the flyer that would really get people's attention so that we could at least have a phone call. Because when you have a phone call or you actually have a meeting, you really have the opportunity to change people's minds and to be more persuasive. When you have everything on your brochure, it can easily just be thrown in the garbage. And so, I lead with less.

**David:** So before you move onto the other part, would you say the purpose of the brochure just to help mold people what they're creating for is to get them to have a conversation with you? Is to get them to make the call, is that the best purpose?

**Len:** Well, that's one of the purposes. But the other purpose is to draw a parallel between what they need and what we can offer.

**David:** Alright. And then if you're done with that, then on to the second part, which was, **For people that Pauline knows needs help, but they don't want to accept help, how can you get them to work with you?**

**Len:** Well, you know, here's the thing. On many occasions, because I've seen this a number of times as well, you have a particular person who feels like they even maybe have had job coaching in the past, and they feel like this is a new job and I don't really need it. Or, I've had a job coach for a while, and now I don't need it. So there's a different perception. They have a different perception of themselves than what your perception is. And while we all want to be person-centered, we're both wanting success. We both have that as a goal. We want people to be successful in the workforce. So, many times I could talk with them about the benefits of having that person there, but often times I've had to let them sort of experience sort of what would naturally occur, if someone wasn't there. And sometimes that would mean that they lost their job. And then we'd have an opportunity to talk about it. I think in our field, we often try to make things, we're very risk averse. We don't take chances, and I think that's because we're caretakers. We want to make sure that people are taken care of. But sometimes people want to go it alone. And we could sit back and say, "You know, I know this person is going to do well without a job coach." Sometimes people need to experience that failure in order to be able to

reach out and move forward. I know that's a tough answer. I wish I could give you a better answer than that, but that's what my experience tells me.

**David:** Do you have a phrase you say to someone who you know, you're kind of letting them go knowing that they want to take that risk on their own, so they know it's safe to come back to you, when they decide they do need help?

**Len:** Yeah, of course, there's always,.. "I having to do with respecting what your wishes are. I wish you the best. I want you to know that I'm there for you, no matter what happens and no matter what, I'm wishing you the best. And if you need me later on, please don't hesitate to reach out. I'd love to call you in a week or two to see how you're doing."

**David:** Yeah, setting up a conversation point in the future, leaving it open.

**Len:** Yeah.

**David:** Michael asks a really interesting question. He says, "Have there been any attempts to adapt motivational strategies used in other domains? For example, losing weight, quitting smoking, etc., to motivate people to consider pursuit of work? Are there any lessons here for us?"

**Len:** You know, I haven't seen a lot of that. But I give a lot of keynotes, and in a number of my keynotes, I talk to people about what psychologists call the Law of Reversibility, which is this concept that you act in a certain way and your feelings will follow. And a lot of times we're under the influence of our feelings and then we act in a certain way. So if we feel scared about an interview, if we feel afraid or anxious, we're liable to act anxious. And the Law of Reversibility says, hey, if you act confident, eventually your feelings will follow your actions, and you'll start acting confidently. These are things that major consultants, major motivational speakers; these simple theories that people talk about in terms of losing weight, in terms of getting ahead in the workforce. I've heard many major motivational speakers talk with people about this, and get people to see themselves a little bit differently, and yet we don't do that in our field. And Hollywood stars, they're paying a ton of money to these people for their personal coaches. And these are, I think strategies that are good enough for football stars and are good enough for athletes to improve their performance, then they're certainly good enough for us to be talking more about with people that we serve.

**David:** Alright. Changing gears a little bit from the motivation, Alison asks, "What is your suggestion for clients that consistently quit jobs after only 2-4 weeks of employment?"

**Len:** Let me tell you, first of all David, these are great questions! You guys are great. So that is a good question as well, and occasionally, I've had a number of people that I've gotten jobs for



and just didn't work out, for whatever reason. Again, I sort of fall back, and this is something I've done over the course of my time being in the field, is I begin to have conversations with people, "You know, this seems to be a pattern every 2-4 weeks, you'll quit the job." So the conversation becomes about anxiety in the workforce. And that within 2-4 weeks, when you first start a job, especially if it's a job that maybe you haven't had in a while and you start a job, the first 4 weeks are very difficult because you're not used to it. It's not a part of your routine. You're starting to feel out the workforce, you're starting to feel what, you don't know anything about the job, you don't know anything about the people. There's this extra anxiety that increases. And a lot of times for people with mental illness, it actually exacerbates people's symptoms. And so it's a very uncomfortable experience. And I prepare people with this information beforehand to let them know, "You're going to feel a little increased anxiety when you start. However, after 4-5 weeks, this is going to become routine just like today is routine for you. That in 5-6 weeks, this is going to be routine for you. So what is it, what can we do to help you get through those first 2-4 weeks, when you're going to feel your most anxious? Because you're capable of doing this job. I know you can do it, I can see you doing it. But those first 4 weeks are going to be more difficult than weeks 5, 6, 7, and 8, and after that. So what are some strategies that we can work on together to get you through those particular feelings that you're gonna have?" So it's really about preparing people ahead of time for those feelings.

**David:** That makes a lot of sense. So going down to the next question. You've had so many great answers, I want to get to as many of these as we can. Glen asks, "Are you aware of any funding available for temporary wages during an apprenticeship? Employment assistance and supported employment funding do not provide for this aspect of job training." And I can broaden it to just training in general, too, I think.

**Len:** Yeah, I'm not aware of any specific training or any specific pots of money available. I do know that different states, for example, New York has a (especially in the city), they tend to work with a lot of unions, and they're able to have a pot of money that can actually help people in clubhouses, who actually are working with IPS and to take part of training and actually get paid while they're doing it. But it really varies state-to-state, and I wouldn't want to answer that because the answer would actually be so varied because it's different between state-to-state. And I don't know of any Federal funding.

**David:** Yeah, and I was going to say that for Glen, if you e-mail [psyrehab@bu.edu](mailto:psyrehab@bu.edu), we can try to connect you with whoever in your state might be able to answer that for you.

**David:** I'm going to switch to one of the questions submitted in advance. Joshua asks, "How do you get companies in small areas to assist with creation of jobs?" Creation of the rural workforce.

**Len:** You know, that's another good question, and it's a question that I've heard often. That the needs of the workforce in rural America are much different than where you're in a city and you have a greater number of companies. And also the factor of people knowing everybody in town, so of the people you're working with already might be known and have a reputation. And so, again, it goes back to relationships. And it's much easier to, in smaller communities, to be a part of the community. So if you are an employment specialist, you should really be involved with the local chamber of commerce, with the local business association. There's a small town where I live, while I'm from Rochester, NY, in Monroe County, there's some smaller towns, and I always made it a point to find out what the local business association was. For Hemlock, NY, there was like a Main Street business association, and I made sure that they knew who I was, and I was able to get to know the employers in that very small town. I'd go to the holiday parties, and things like that, and get to know them in a less formal way, and that they could look at me as a resource. And then also being involved with local governments, like the county government because they know the jobs that are coming. A lot of times, they're trying to recruit businesses to their area, and so being on different committees helping to attract businesses would give you a leg up as well.

**David:** Alright. The next question comes from Richard, and he just wants to hear your thoughts on how to handle cold calling. I'm guessing this is around recruiting employers.

**Len:** Yeah. Honestly, I try to avoid cold calling as much as possible. It doesn't really lead, for me, it's never really led to much. I just haven't done it. Now there might be a time when cold calling, I might go to (I don't know) a place where I do business with and might start a conversation, but it's always targeted that way. In other words, I would just say that my cold calling is always limited to people I'm doing business with. So, if I'm in a CVS and I shop at CVS, I have prescriptions at CVS, I would just have a general conversation with people on the floor or people behind the counter. And if I'm picking up a product that I special ordered for somebody from someplace, or I'm at a FedEx office picking up a package because they missed me at home, I can have conversations like that. So they know I'm a customer. I'm something more than a cold caller, I'm a customer as well.

**David:** Alright. That kind of leads me to the question of, in your experience in terms of efforts of building that network of employers, are there any sort of activities that have been disproportionately successful in building that network? Did you understand what I'm getting at? In terms of the time you invest, what the best way to invest your time in building that network?

**Len:** Coffee, bring in coffee to people. Honestly, I worked in a hospital, I used to take the doughnuts and the coffee that the doctors brought and take it out in the community with me. I know the people that I worked for didn't like it. You know, if the doctor brought in a dozen doughnuts and a box of coffee, I'd take it. I'd be running with it to the Dollar Tree or wherever, and say, "Hey, I'd love to bring these for you guys, I've been here many times myself shopping,

and this is what I do, and those kinds of things. And then learning as much as you can about the business. Many times I'd sit and have conversations with people, especially businesses that tend to be small businesses. Really talking to people about why they, how they got into that business. What was it? Because people love to talk about themselves, and I give them the opportunity to do that, especially people in small business because they have a lot of pride and they put a lot of work into their business, and I'm always interested in, just out of natural curiosity, about how they got into the business. What is it that they look for in an employee? Is it, do they just need a body, or is it a special type of person that they need, and if so, I could, I'd be more attuned to that. People give you lots of information when you're showing interest in what they're doing. And actually, even in their office, you can see what's on their walls and what's important to them. So up here in Rochester, a lot of times I would go to a business person's office, and I'd find out they're a Buffalo Bills fan. I know you folks probably feel sorry for us, but it's a conversation starter and we'd have conversations about the Buffalo Bills. And sometimes in the course of our relationship, I'd text them and say, "Hey, did you hear that (I don't know) that Jim Kelly is going to retire?" Whatever, just some little news, just to keep the relationship going.

**David:** Do you find yourself more successful working with small businesses? Or is the structure of big retail employers and the larger employers easier to work with?

**Len:** Actually I always found it a little easier with small businesses because they're more likely to take a chance on people, and they don't have to answer to corporate protocol or anything like that. So it was usually much easier to work with a small business. And when I'm talking small business, I'm talking a business of 25-50 people or less.

**David:** Sure. Let me turn to one of the questions from before, and then we're going to go back to the room. This is one of the off the top ones, "How can we empower families to take a greater role in helping their loved ones move towards employment?"

**Len:** That's a great question. Families play a very important part in a person's desire to go back to work. Many times families are just as afraid for that individual, in terms of them losing their Social Security check and/or just not being able to make it. So, there's a real sincere desire to protect people. And so it's about talking with families about the dignity of risk and to let the family know here are the work incentives, this is how it's going to impact your son or daughter or loved one. And letting families, when the person who is open to it, you don't want to talk to the family until you get that permission. And then one of the best ways to help families realize the potential of their own loved one is to involve peers because peers can come in and tell the story and share with the family how they were able to do it and how they were able to overcome odds and are now gainfully employed. Their story is a powerful motivator in having families look at things little bit differently. I have a mantra that I use that actually was a friend of mine's mantra. I asked him one day because he was so good at sales, and I said, "How do you

do what you do?" And he told me, he said, "Facts tell and stories sell." I said, "Wow, that's your mantra?" And he said, "Yeah." I said, "Text that to me 'cause I'll forget it." The more I began to think about it, the more it really had a place in our business because I could talk about the great work incentives to families all day long, but it's the stories of individuals that have been able to actually make it that are the final selling point that people get and really resonate with people.

**David:** Interesting. You know, you brought up this idea of peers, and in the room, Linda asks this question. She writes, "I've been a peer intern for three months now, and they intended to hire me and I've already filled out the HR application. I want to be a vocational peer specialist part-time, but all the jobs I see are full-time. And I've had other interviews, but nothing right now. I've had other job interviews, and nothing came out as an official job offer. She finds it very hard. She asks, What can I do? And do you know about the certificate in vocational peer support that the Center for Psych Rehab had?" So that last part, I'll set aside for now, I guess.

**Len:** In fact, I'll let you take that one, David. But I will say this, depending upon many, many states are starting to have peer specialist imbedded in the IPS team or supported employment team, depending upon the state and depends upon how far this has gone. But I know that there have been national discussions about the importance of having a peer on team. Now the question of full- or part-time is an interesting one because for the longest time we saw many jobs for peers tended to be part-time as a way to help people keep both their Social Security, in a lot of cases, and also to be able to return to work. But over the course of the last, probably four to five years, I've really seen a strong move towards what you're unfortunately seeing, or fortunately for people that want to work full-time, is full-time jobs for people that actually pay a significant, a living wage. So, I would encourage you to think about and talk with a benefits counselor about the risk of working full-time. If you think you can do it, then the only question for you is am I going to lose my benefits? And if so, how long, if I lose the job after 6, 9, 12 months, 15 months, can I get right back on my benefits? So those are questions you're gonna want to ask the benefits counselor. If it is a matter of that you think you just can't work right now full-time, then that's a totally different question. But if you do think you can, but you're just a little timid because you want to stay on benefits, then I'd encourage you to talk to a benefits counselor who can actually talk very specifically about your situation and how in many cases you would be able to, if you lost the job, you're safe. But without the details, I would encourage to talk specifically to a benefits counselor in your area.

**David:** You know, you bring up this point that has been an underlying thing that's carried on amongst the other conversations we've had is people who are stuck in part-time work because they don't want to lose benefits. They don't want to bring up the conversation to move beyond that because there's this new safe place, which is permanent part-time. And they really could return to work, but they're choosing not to. **How do you start that conversation with someone who doesn't really seem ready to have that conversation?**

**Len:** Well, first I want to let everybody in the audience know that Social Security actually just finished a research project, the Bond project, where they did a study of people, as many people on the phone call and webinar know, that with the SSD work incentives during the extended period of eligibility section, people faced a cliff basically, and this is why many people work part-time because at the SGA level, which is Substantial Gainful Activity level, during the EPE period, the amount is \$1190 to pay attention to. So if you make \$1,190 for a month, you don't get your check anymore. If you make \$1,189.99, you actually get your SSD check. So people face this cliff. And so this Bond project was all about taking a look at people and comparing two groups. One group was kept in that same box of you earn \$1,190 and you just don't keep your benefits. And the other group was taking a look at a different approach. So at that \$1,190 level, anything after that, for every \$2 they earned, \$1 would be taken away. So it was a lot like the SSI formula. So people could gradually wean themselves off rather than face this cliff. And next Wednesday on the 12<sup>th</sup>, there's actually a webinar that they're going to be talking about what this study means, what happened. I think it could mean some really good things because I think we're gonna see is that with this extra work incentive will allow people to gracefully exit Social Security without that cliff. I think that data is going to show us that a lot of people left Social Security that were able to really take, to be a part of this Bond project in that particular group.

**David:** Do you know who's hosting that webinar specifically? Like how would anyone who's listening today go to listen to that next week?

**Len:** Actually, I probably could just bring it up. Is my screen on?

**David:** Yeah, no, it's not sharing your screen. You can paste the link in the chat window though.

**Len:** Sorry about this, guys.

Thank you for registering for Testing New Earnings Rules for Social Security Disability Insurance: Findings from the Benefit Offset National Demonstration. LIVE WEBCAST DATE: December 12, 2018 LIVE WEBCAST TIME: 12:00 PM EST Use the link below to enter the webcast up to 15 minutes before the start. WEBCAST

LINK: <https://event.on24.com/wcc/r/1881023/DCA898538FA3CE1E81438315F9D0481B?mode=login&email=lens@nyaprs.org>

**David:** There we go.

**Len:** You're welcome.

**David:** Thank you, Len. Let's go onto the next question here. This one is about peers. "How can we use peers to effectively support individuals who are on the fence about work?"

**Len:** Yeah, so it's that mantra again, "Facts tell and stories sell." Because here's our folks, and by the way, I'm a peer as well, I don't know if I put that in my bio or not. Talking with people that have similar experiences and that have gone through similar things, really help people to trust that person at a deeper level. And so, this is one thing that we've seen on supported employment teams that are brought in here that even people that have said, "Yes" to employment that might have a tendency to drop out, peers are able to sort of bring that back in and say, "You know what, I experienced that same thing. I gave up, and I actually came back because I found that the fight for employment was actually worth it. And that, you know what, I experienced a lot of rejection when I was looking for work. And after, at the time, it was uncomfortable, I didn't like it, but I gotta tell you, it was all worth it because here I am now and this is my position. This is where work actually, I've discovered what work can actually be, but I had to go through it, I had to go through some of the tough times, and I've made it to the other side." That's a powerful testimony to people. That's the #1 way that I have utilized peers, and I am utilized myself.

**David:** Rafael asks, "What is the best way to implement the IPS model in conjunction with the clubhouse model?"

**Len:** Well, the clubhouse model is obviously much different because everything is done, with the clubhouse model, everything is decided upon by all of its members. So the first thing you'd have to do is talk with the members to make sure that there's buy in for this IPS supported employment. If there isn't, then you're sort of going against the, what the members want. So the first step is talking with members about what IPS is and explaining it and talking about the fact that it's a great way for people to actually find employment. In fact, it's the best way. It's been researched and we know that it's the #1 way that people find employment and can actually make employment easier as a way to find employment. And then talking with, continuing that dialogue with clubhouse members. I don't think that they are ideologically different than one another. In clubhouses, you also have places that already exist. You have the sort of the 6-month temporary sites, those types of things. But I don't think; the ideology is the same. I don't think there would be much difficulty in getting both to work in concert with one another.

**David:** Sure. You know, our time is running short. So I apologize to people who asked questions in advance. I won't be able to get to everyone. But what I'm gonna do is, there are some questions that have a lot of overlap, and so I'm gonna try to create a combined question where you, a giant question. It's really a question about motivation, and it's people who lack the motivation who may need help getting started and how to engage them, whether it's high school students, young adults, people later in their careers; how do you motivate people to begin the job search, and does it vary by the age group? And if so, how do you approach it differently? It's a big question here.

**Len:** The first thing is to recognize that I don't think it's a matter of lack of motivation. I think that it's a matter of not being activated in the right way. So to give you an idea about how this plays out in my own life. So, seven years ago I was 40-50 pounds heavier than I am today, and I was extremely motivated to lose weight. I desperately wanted to lose weight for a number of years. And yet I would act in ways that were counterproductive to me losing weight. It didn't mean that I was not motivated, I definitely was motivated. You ask any person that's overweight, they want to lose the weight, they just haven't been able to activate it or found the way for them. And so, one of the things that worked for me, and prior to this having wanting to lose weight for a long time. I would join gyms as a New Year's resolution, and three weeks later I'm on the couch, forget the gym membership, and eat a bag of Cheetos. However, I had joined many gyms in the past and they weren't successful. Until I joined a gym that really took an extra effort with me to support me. So, it's not like I signed up for the gym, and they gave up on me, because many places will, but they took the extra time with me. They found out what interested me, and actually it wasn't exercise. They found out that I actually liked the sauna that they had, and they had a whirlpool. And they said, "Why don't we, we know that you don't like to exercise because you've made that clear to us, why don't we sort of bring these things together. So you exercise for 20 minutes and we'll make sure that there's time for you to spend time in the whirlpool or in the sauna. And then we'll buy you a smoothie afterwards and get you used to some healthy foods and you can get your vegetables that way, even though you don't like vegetables." And if I missed a couple of times, they'd actually call me and say, "Hey do you need a ride? How can we get you here?" So it's that extra support and really not labeling me as, "Well, you're just not motivated. It must be, you must not care." I think that's the first step. And everybody has some different ways, so what worked for me might not work for someone else. So pay close attention and getting to know that person in a real personal way so you'll know what will work for them. It's much more complicated than saying, "Well, this is the way to motivate, this is the way to get people motivated. It's really about how do you get people activated.

**David:** So if someone wanted to get ahold of you because they had something to talk about, how would someone get ahold of you, Len?

**Len:** I'll type my contact information into the box, [lens@nyaprs.org](mailto:lens@nyaprs.org). Here's my phone number as well, 585-490-3979.

**David:** That's very generous of you. Well, it's 3:00.

**Len:** If people have further questions, they can call me or e-mail me, and I'd be happy to answer any questions. And I want to thank you, David, very much for giving me the opportunity.

**David:** Yeah, thank you, Len. It's 3:00, and I want to thank you, too, for answering all these questions. I feel bad that we couldn't get to everyone. And thank you everyone today for

attending this Ask Me Anything session. The next Ask Me Anything webinar is with our very own, Debbie Nicolellis, in January. I believe it's January 16<sup>th</sup>. An announcement will go out about a week before the event. For anyone who's participating today, in the next few days, you should receive a survey about your experience, and we would love to get your feedback about this event.

Thank you, and we look forward to having you join us again. And have a great day, Len, and thank you for your time.

**Len:** Thanks, bye.