

Part II:

Activities and Outcomes

A job coach from the Goodwill Program performed a job analysis and made recommendations regarding her workstation and assistive technology (AT) needs, in conjunction with her VR counselor and other team members. Vocational Rehabilitation paid for all initial AT and Wachovia agreed to provide upgrades and equipment maintenance. There was a two-month period between hire and acquisition of the equipment and actual return to work. Vivian's team recognized the need to begin planning for the progression of her visual loss. While Vivian says she was somewhat resistant to additional AT and training, she used this time to attend a one-week workshop on a screen reading software, JAWS. (See below) This later proved to be a critical step since her vision dramatically decreased after only several months on the job.

The *workstation was reconfigured and enlarged* to accommodate Vivian's service dog. To help blind individuals more easily move around the building the *key swipe doors were modified* so that the door handle does not need to be turned and the doors can be just pushed open, allowing disabled employees with canes and guide dogs easier access, but also benefiting all employees. To handle the filing and paperwork they created *directories of employee information and memos on disk*. When paper is needed, however, there is a *person available to assist* with reading and filling in forms. Vivian utilizes the local train and bus system to commute to work, so Wachovia also created a *direct pathway leading to the bus stop*. The employer paid for these accommodations.

The following recommendations were made for Vivian to carry out the essential functions of her position.

1. A ***Closed circuit television system (CCTV)*** was recommended for viewing written bank material. A CCTV system, sometimes referred to as an electronic magnifier, uses a video camera to project a magnified image onto a video monitor PC or TV screen. A feature of her CCTV was split screen technology, which allowed her to see the image from the CCTV on one side of the screen and the PC display on the other half. Vivian was able to use the CCTV on and off until her progressing visual loss made this impractical. A CCTV, such as the Clearview CCTV 700 is currently available for \$3,295.
2. ***Screen magnification software*** was also installed on her PC to magnify both the text and graphics on the computer screen. Software with magnification from two up to 32 times the normal size is available. As with the CCTV, the software was no longer sufficient as her vision worsened. Screen magnification software ranges between \$350 and \$600 depending on the level of magnification needed.

3. A **screen reading software, Job Access with Speech (JAWS)**, was selected to allow text to be converted into computer synthesized speech, once they realized magnification alone was not sufficient. The hardware that provides the actual “voice output” is a speech synthesizer. This can be an internal sound card or an external speech synthesizer device. The screen reading software “tells” the speech synthesizer what to say. JAWS is currently available for approximately \$1000.
4. A **dual channel headset** allows Vivian to listen to both the customer on the telephone and to JAWS speech output. After a period of adjustment she found she could effectively listen to both sources, again aided by her years of listening to her students. A dual headset called Virtuoso Amplifier is available by Hello Direct for approximately \$259.99. For more information, call 800-444-3556.

As Vivian gained more experience and employer confidence, her job responsibilities increased to allow greater independence. For example, it is a Wachovia policy for a CSR to write up recommendations for late fees to be waived, which Vivian initially had to delegate to a sighted CSR. After one year on the job Vivian was given authority to waive such fees without supervisory approval, a task she could then complete on her computer without any assistance.

Vivian gauged her success on the job by being competent enough to pave the way for other blind and visually impaired CSR’s. In 1991, a second visually impaired CSR was hired and today ten additional CSR’s with visual impairments work in the call center. 2001 marks Vivian’s 12th year of employment with Wachovia.



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