

7-1969

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Recommended Citation

Nelson, R. (1969). 3M Company's CBSA Program. *JADARA*, 3(1). Retrieved from <https://repository.wcsu.edu/jadara/vol3/iss1/13>

3M COMPANY'S CBSA PROGRAM

RICHARD NELSON

About five years ago we came up with an idea that if implemented, would benefit society, the local business community, 3M Company, and most importantly, the individual.

The program, which is called Community Business Services Associates, combines expertise from several agencies. Namely, the State and Federal Vocational Rehabilitation Agencies, 3M Company's business experience and again, the most important ingredient, the individual.

The plan was to establish physical handicapped individuals, who could not otherwise find employment in the competitive job market, into a small business of their own. The CBSA business, which the handicapped individual owns and operates, offers the following services: photo copying services, mailing list services, laminating service, rental of overhead projectors for meetings, rental of advertising point of display boxes, special occasion letters, statement making, and a variety of other allied services.

We have found many of the above services are needed by small and medium size businessmen who cannot justify the expense of business equipment to provide the above services. They will use and can justify the expense of buying these services—if they are available in their local community.

The Vocational Rehabilitation Agency refers the qualified handicapped the prospects and present the CBSA Program. If it is agreed that the CBSA Program is the right vocational plan for the individual, the rehabilitation counselor authorizes the prospect to enter into the program.

He then is put through a comprehensive two week training program to learn how to operate the equipment, sales training, and how to merchandise his services.

Upon completion of the two week training program, the CBSA owner-operator returns to his community and begins his business. 3M publishes a monthly magazine called, "THE FORUM," that goes out to all CBSA operators offering marketing tips.

During the last five years over 650 people have been established in a CBSA business. Over 80% have been successful and are still operating their business.

To date, no totally deaf person has been established as a CBSA operator. It is felt that a qualified, capable individual, irregardless of disability, could become successful as a CBSA operator. Personal initiative and maturity is a basic ingredient to this success.

Having a "back-up" person who can aid the deaf person with the telephone and making sales calls is imperative. This person may be a family member, close relative, neighbor, or etc. Someone that is available during the day to do these things that a deaf person cannot do. If you have a deaf person that you would like to refer, that meets the personal qualities mentioned in this article, and also has a capable back up person, please send their name and address with a brief resume' to:

CBSA Services
3M Center
Building 220-10E
St. Paul, Minnesota 55101

We will send information on the CBSA Program and if the referral continues to be interested after reading the literature, we will arrange for a personal interview with one of our representatives.