

# EmployAble

## World Without Barriers

Overview  
**BRIEF**

Kessler Foundation Grant

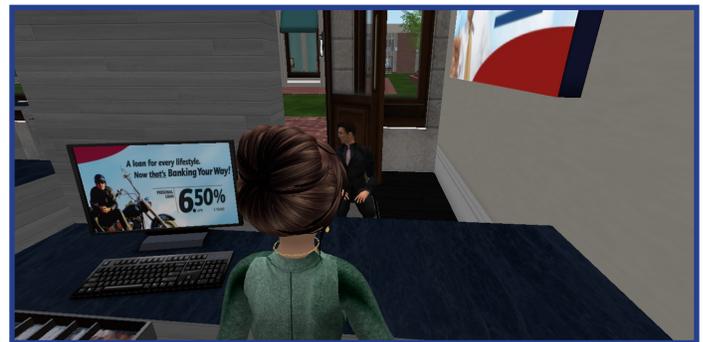
[www.cds.hawaii.edu/employable](http://www.cds.hawaii.edu/employable)

A Brief Prepared by the EmployAble: World Without Barriers Project (March, 2014)

### Overview of EmployAble Project

EmployAble is a model Virtual Employment Orientation and Support Center funded by the Kessler Foundation and developed by the Center on Disability Studies at the University of Hawai'i in partnership with Virtual Ability and Abilicorp.

EmployAble is guided by a belief that a practical and sustainable employment tool can be created through a combination of technological innovation and collaboration with employers, representatives of the disability community, and people with disabilities. Using interactive online tools including the virtual environment Second Life as a platform, EmployAble facilitates employment skills training, networking, mentoring, and employment resources for persons with disabilities.



In the Summer and Fall of 2013, a pilot study was conducted to assess the use of the EmployAble model by 51 adults with disabilities from across the United States. Results indicate that the Employable model holds promise for improving the employment status of people with disabilities.

## Description of the EmployAble Pilot Study

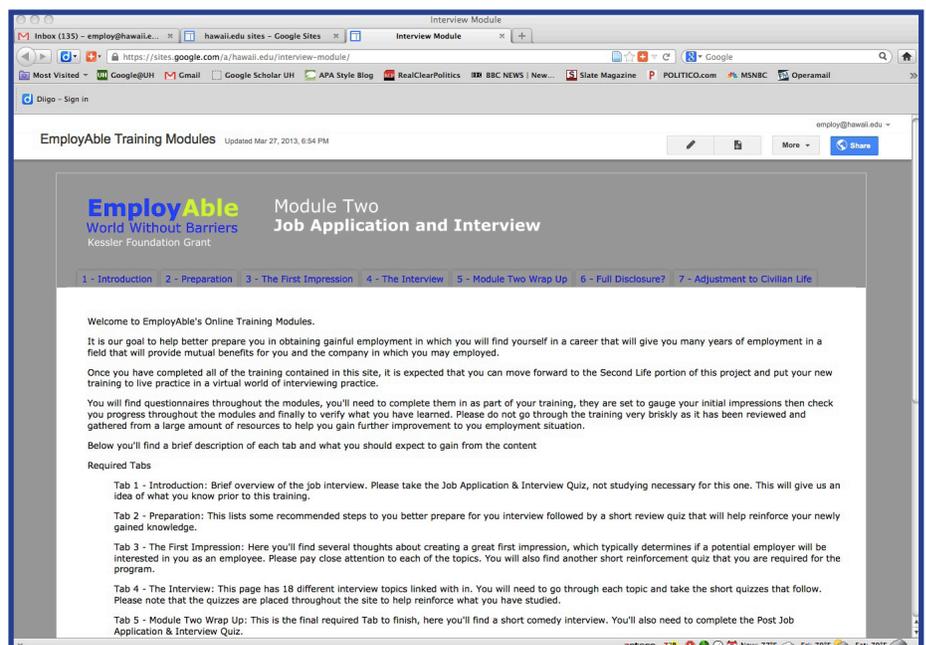
Pilot study participants represented a diverse range of disabilities, age groups, levels of education and geographic locations. Despite these variations, participants indicated a significant need across the board for skill development, access to resources, networking, and enhancement of technology skills. Pilot study participants provided feedback in three surveys: a pre-survey, a mid-point survey and a post-survey. Project staff also collected data from observations, mock interview recordings, participant resume drafts, and mentor progress sheets.

## Procedures

Participants were recruited from throughout the United States via disability-related listservs and project contacts. Fifty-one participants were accepted into the pilot program. The project also recruited 10 mentors with significant professional experience and/or disabilities.

Participants completed several activities, both individually and as a group, including:

1. Participation in an online orientation session and a training session in Second Life.
2. Meeting online at least twice a month with a group of 2-4 peers and a mentor via Skype, Google Hangouts, or Second Life.
3. Completing an online module on preparing for a job interview.
4. Reviewing online interactive resources such as searching for a job, disclosing a disability, building a resume.
5. Utilizing online productivity and social media tools, such as LinkedIn, Facebook, Second Life, Skype and Google tools, to conduct job searches, make connections with employers, build a resume, and conduct an interview.
6. Developing a resume, soliciting feedback, revising and disseminating the resume.
7. Practicing for a job interview via Skype or Second Life, and reviewing a recording of the interview.



## Outcomes

Thirty percent of the original participants completed the final survey, and of these respondents, 84% percent indicated that EmployAble helped prepare them to find or retain a job. During the course of the project, 23.1% of participants received job offers, 38.5% had a job interview, 53% said they learned important employment skills, 77% indicated that EmployAble improved their technology skills, and 85% stated EmployAble improved their ability to network with others.

## Implications for Practice

The EmployAble Pilot Study holds a number of implications for practice in the area of employment preparation for individuals with disabilities. Specifically:

1. Online technology, when used in interactive, accessible and creative ways, can improve skill development and preparation for employment for individuals with disabilities.
2. Mentors are a valuable resource for job seekers with disabilities.
3. People with disabilities need access to online employment resources that are interactive, comprehensive, and useful.

## Further Resources and Contact Information

Email: [employ@hawaii.edu](mailto:employ@hawaii.edu)

EmployAble Website: [www.cds.hawaii.edu/employable](http://www.cds.hawaii.edu/employable)

Employable Interview Module: <https://sites.google.com/a/hawaii.edu/interview-module/>

EmployAble Second Life Site: (must be accessed via Second Life browser) <http://maps.secondlife.com/secondlife/Independence/129/82/25>



Please feel free to distribute with the following acknowledgement:  
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