



The majority of return-to-work assignments will be developed within the context of the employee's usual job and department. When developing these assignments, there are a number of principles to try to follow.

**It is better to:**

- To keep the injured/ill employee with his/her supervisor.
- For the injured employee to remain with his/her usual work team.
- To keep the injured employee doing at least some part of his/her regular job.
- All stakeholders should have input into the development of a Return to Work Plan.
- There are, however, situations where conventional return-to-work assignments are not feasible.

**Step One: Focus on the individual**

Ask an injured worker what he/she can do. The injured employee's unique background or interests may give the team a hint of the best direction to proceed. If employees are involved in the brainstorming process, they can also be a rich resource for creative ideas.

**Step Two: Think beyond the department**

If the employee cannot return to their department, consider a temporary assignment elsewhere in the organization. Contact other supervisors who wish to have projects done or have needs that are compatible with the employee's abilities.

**"Thinking out of the box"**

is the practice of focusing on a goal by being flexible about the methods used to achieve it. Too often we lose sight of the goal because we are wrapped up in the process.



### Step Five: Think Mentoring

Consider the following questions.

- Could an injured employee be assigned to train others with less experience and skills?
- Could the employee be used to mentor and assist other employees?
- Could the injured employee help orientate new employees?

### Step Six: Think Special Projects

Employees can often be provided special projects within their own departments consisting of work that needs to be done but never seems to reach the top of the “to do” list.

### Step Three: Think “Value added”

“Value added” represents unexpected bonuses that customers derive from using the products or services that the organization provides.

### Step Four: Think Skill Enhancement

If an employee is injured and unable to perform typical Return to Work assignments, the organization should consider the possibility of using this employee to:

Develop new skills the employee will eventually need.  
Enhance and update old skills. Retrain the employee for the next step of skill development.

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