

Dear friends and supporters

Welcome to this newsletter, which will be produced on an occasional basis to keep you updated on developments at Careers Springboard West Berkshire. Our mission is to help out-of-work professionals and managers get back into work. We rely entirely on volunteers and grants, but most of all friends and supporters like you.

We hope you enjoy this newsletter and if you have any contributions that would be of interest to our readers (see 'Who Are You?') we would like to receive them.

We thank you for your ongoing interest and support.

George Athorn, David Skyrme
Co-chairmen.

Who are you?

- Current Job Seekers, those who are currently still looking for work. Some attend our meetings, others who want to keep in touch there are 20 of you at present.
- Alumni, people who are no longer attending either because they are working or have decided that they no longer need to attend meetings but have expressed a desire to keep in touch. There are currently 35 of you on our list.
- Volunteers, speakers past and present, those who chair and host meetings, people who work with individual Job seekers, and those who walk the streets with our brochures. Counting all of those people who have had some involvement in the past 18 months adds up to 20 people. A big thank you to you all.
- Funding bodies: Currently the main source of income is The Branshaw Foundation, our move to self funding has been helped with grants from the Greenham Common Trust and Newbury Town Council.

- Supporters, from those individuals and organisations who provide advice and resources; examples are nextstep Berkshire who provide information, Jobcentre Plus who send us referrals, and the staff at Newbury Town Hall who help us every week.
- The Careers Springboard Network, in the Thames Valley with whom we exchange information and good practice.

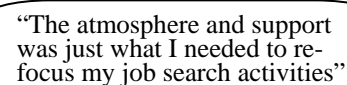
What have we achieved?

We officially took over the running of Newbury Executive Job Club in September 2006, having worked closely with Peter Pearson to effect a smooth change over. We are very thankful to Peter for his support. This means that we are now well into our fifth programme of workshops, thanks to all the people that have made that possible.


- We helped over 50 people at various times during 2007
- We know of at least 20 people who we helped back into work in 2007; at a conservative estimate, this means we have brought at least £0.5 million back into the local economy.
- We recorded an overall satisfaction rate of 90% with our regular meetings
- Positive feedback from those who have found jobs with our support



"The group discussions and networking opportunities are especially useful. A fine service and many thanks to the volunteers"



"The atmosphere and support was just what I needed to re-focus my job search activities"



"I gained effective advice on CVs, application and interview techniques and the chance to meet others in the same boat and to share experiences."

So the format seems to be working, and feedback has been that Job Seekers prefer afternoons, as it gets them out of the house plus does not interfere with any evening domestic needs. The programme itself is providing a sound basis of knowledge, although we do allow Job Seekers to join at any stage, using one to one sessions or telephone coaching to bring them up to speed.

A significant offering has been intensive coaching from Hugh, this has really helped some Job Seekers gain some extra motivation and impetus to their search. Thanks to Hugh for his efforts.

Currently numbers are trending upwards again after a drop in the summer, we think that this is a combination of more marketing and improved processes with Job Centre Plus. Numbers continue to be our main concern.

Job Seeker Profile: Rob Emslie

North Newbury resident Rob Emslie found himself made redundant from his engineering management job with Sony Ericsson in March 2006. He says:

“It was not a shock, because there had been several rounds of redundancy prior to that. In fact I had already made plans in case I was made redundant and I decided to use it as an opportunity to try a different career. I started to study and take exams to become qualified in Financial Planning. I found a local job as a Financial Planner, which I did for 18 months until July 2007. I found this type of work too stressful and it was starting to affect my health and following a 2 weeks period when I was signed off I was given notice by my employer.”

Rob saw our advert in the *Newbury Weekly News* and started with us in October last year. He says of his time with us:

“I found the sessions and the support from the volunteers very helpful and enabled me to regain my confidence and update my CV. Being able to attend the meetings on a regular basis and meet other people was a positive step.”

He decided to return to Engineering Management after all and following a telephone call from a former boss is now working for an electronics company in High Wycombe. He is enjoying working with engineers again and the technical/management challenges involved.

Asked what his advice would be to others in a similar situation, he said:

“My advice is to keep in contact with former work colleagues because success in finding a new job is most likely to come via networking.”

This accords with our own experience. Although jobs may come from adverts and through agencies, networking is a very effective route to a new job for older and more experienced workers. Networking is a core topic in our workshop programme.

New volunteers

We are pleased to welcome the following new volunteers:

- **Heather Luff** - is an HR professional who specializes in competency-based interviewing. She presents our first workshop 'Getting Started' and is taking over the role of employer liaison.
- **Michelle Lucas** - is a life coach with over 20 years HR experience in 'blue chip' companies. She presents the workshop 'What Employers Look For'.
- **David Skinner** - spent many years in the RAF, first as a trainer and then helping with resettlement. He presents two workshops - an existing one on CVs and a new one on business writing that he has introduced to us.

All of them also run 1-to-1 support sessions with our job seekers. Their full profiles, as well as details of our volunteering opportunities, are on the volunteer page of our website.

Each week we send an email out to our active job seekers. It contains handouts of the week's workshop, points from discussion, helpful hints and related news. Now at no. 65 and counting...

New Programme



Our new programme for May - July 2008 is now out. It follows closely our proven format with one new session added.

This is 'The Written Word', run by newly joined volunteer David

Skinner. David covers the topic of how to write effective covering letters, filling in the blank spaces on application forms and getting your message across when writing speculative letters to employers. You can download the programme (PDF file) from:

www.careerswestberks.org.uk/info/prog08b.pdf

Volunteer Profile: George Athorn

George has been a key part of Careers Springboard West Berkshire since before its inception. He worked with Isabella Kerr from the Branshaw Foundation to chart the course from an executive job club run by a paid professional from 2003 to one run entirely by volunteers from September 2006. Now as co-chairman (with David Skyrme) he attends most Tuesday sessions, variously acting as speaker, advisor and/or chairperson. Behind the scenes he enrolls volunteers, organises the programme and carries out a wide range of support activities.



George enjoyed a career that started in manufacturing, including line management roles at Colthrop Mills in Thatcham and Raychem in Swindon. He then moved into management training with The Industrial Society (now The Work Foundation), following which he set up his own successful training consultancy. His particular expertise is in leadership, team building, problem solving, and time management and to date he has delivered courses to more than 5000 people in many blue chip companies spread over 12 countries.

Forced into early retirement due to a spinal problem in 2002, he is now a wheel chair user, and devotes much of his working time to charities. As well as Careers Springboard, he also works as a volunteer for the West Berkshire Disability Alliance and Pathways to Employment, whom he helped to design disability awareness training and Workready courses. His partner works in the voluntary sector, so George has become Chief Executive (Domestic).

Workshop Feature: Preparing Your CV

In each newsletter we hope to give you a flavour of some of the topics we cover during our workshops. In this edition we focus on some aspects of CVs.

Good news and bad news

First, there is good news and bad news. The bad newsthe perfect CV does not exist. What you consider to be the perfect CV will not be what they see as ideal. Furthermore, experts and recruiters will disagree anyway.

The good news You are therefore free to devise a CV that 'sells' you into the job(s) you want to do, that you personally like, and that gives the reader the information they need.

The functional CV

As well as the traditional 'reverse chronological' CV, another format can be very effective. This is the 'functional' CV which emphasises skills and accomplishments, relegating career history to a second page. Therefore the typical sections are:

- Name and contact details
- Short profile (20-25 words) - who you are (profession), skills, aims
- Skills and accomplishments - typically in tabular form
- Career history - most recent first
- Other details - e.g. interests, languages

Those who are changing career or have 'gaps' in their career history that they don't want to highlight find this a useful format. One of our job seekers, after

several months with little success with a conventional CV, tried this format and soon had three interviews lined up!

Action words

Too often we see too many neutral words in a CV - "co-ordinated", "liaised", "responsible for" "involved with" etc. We have a handout '101 action words', (developed by Careers Springboard, Gerrards Cross) which gives words to use in preference, such as "created", "established", "saved", "achieved"

What recruiters want

As noted above preferences vary, but a 2007 survey in *Recruiter* magazine reported that:

- Many CVs are read "in less time than it takes to clean your teeth"!
- 55% of recruiters prefer a reverse chronological CV (which means 45% do not!)
- 66% prefer a 2-page CV (but 1-pagers can be equally effective to open doors)
- 25% prefer a CV tailored to the role.

The three main reasons for rejecting a CV are:

- Irrelevance to role (27%)
- Inappropriate qualifications (22%)
- Poor presentation (12%)

The 20-second test

An exercise we run during our workshops is the 20-second test. Each person reads another's CV for 20 seconds and then recalls what points stood out.

After all, first impressions count, and this may be how long a recruiter takes to decide whether your CV is worthy of further consideration.

And finally ...

Do check and check again (perhaps get your spouse or colleague to do it), since these are examples taken from real CVs as reported in an article in *Fortune*:

- "Received a plague for salesperson of the Year."
- Marital status: "Single. Unmarried. Unengaged. Uninvolved. No commitments."

- Personal interests: "Donating blood. 14 gallons so far."
- "Instrumental in ruining entire operation for a Midwest chain store."
- Reason for leaving last job: "My boss thought I could do better elsewhere"
- "Here are my qualifications for you to overlook".

Thanks To...

In each edition we will say thanks to one of our many supporters. Since this is our first newsletter, it is our pleasure to thank one group that week in week out helps to keep our show on the road. This is the staff at the venue of our meetings, the Town Hall - Sue, Margaret, Karen Joyce and Michael.



When we arrive each week the room is laid out, a projector is made available and our every request is dealt with promptly and efficiently.

Thank you!

How can you help us

Continue to support our efforts, we would love to see some of you visit occasionally.

Secondly you can promote awareness of our activities in your own networks. We know that established Careers Springboards get some new Job Seekers by referral from past members and other supporters.

Thirdly, we want to make more of our network. Perhaps you are aware of current vacancies, in your or other organisations that we can pass on to our job seekers.

Finally, if you become aware of any funding or support opportunities that would help us continue our work we would appreciate it if you can let us know about them.

We welcome feedback, comments, contributions. Please send them to:

david@careerswestberks.org.uk

Thank you for your support.