

Welcome to this newsletter, whose aim is to keep supporters, alumni and friends of Careers Springboard West Berkshire updated with our activities and ongoing developments. Our mission is to support out-of-work professionals and managers, and in these recessionary times, this has meant that we have been busier than ever.

Chairman's Update

In 2009 we completed our third year as a volunteer-run organisation. Thanks to a committed and highly knowledgeable group of volunteers, since our inception we have now helped over 250 people in their search for jobs.



Since September there have been signs of some improvement in the job market. A look at the statistics (see page 2) shows that our number of new entrants – highly qualified managers and professions who have been made redundant – peaked just after Easter. And the number who reported securing jobs has grown since a meagre total of only four in the first quarter.

Our ability to provide help and support to our job seekers relies heavily on our volunteers and supporters. On the volunteering side, a welcome addition was the provision of more one-on-one sessions provided by Janet Rutherford and Michelle Lucas. Additionally, former and existing job seekers are now playing a larger part in keeping our group running smoothly.

To keep going beyond 2010 we have needed to step up our fund-raising. In this regard we have been ably supported by our Branshaw Foundation project manager Isabella Kerr and our treasurer Michael Pritchard. Two recent welcome injections of financial support have come from the West Berkshire Council's 'Beat the Recession' grant and the Learning and Skills Council Community Grant. More details of our various supporters are given later.

Finally, once again I would like to thank all of you for your ongoing support, in whatever way you can help our job seekers to "beat the recession" and restart their career.

George Athorn

Spring Programme

Our Spring programme is now underway, albeit with one cancellation due to bad weather.

It follows the usual format, but now we have over 10 different speakers. This brings to our job seekers a range of perspectives.



Another feature introduced in 2009, and which has proved successful, is that of 'Spotlight Speakers'. These are not in the programme but happen on an occasional basis as and when people are available. They are 10-20 minute presentations at the end of the main topic in which an invited external expert talks about their particular service of interest to job seekers. Topics have included franchising, volunteering abroad (a short 'career break' for professionals), Business Link services and a job seekers' support website.

The full programme is available online at:

<http://www.careerswestberks.org.uk/info/prog10a.pdf>

Thanks to our New Supporters

As mentioned earlier, we rely heavily on our supporters to enable us to offer a full programme and range of services to our job seekers. Our main supporter since inception has been the Branshaw Foundation but its funding to us will run out in the not too distant future. During 2008-9 we were grateful for financial support from the Greenham Common Trust and Newbury Town Council. Most recently we have received these welcome boosts to our funds which secure our future for the next 18 months:

- Berkshire Community Foundation – a small grant for individual counselling of job seekers.

- Learning and Skills Council Community Grant – a grant to cover some expenses for administration and coaching. This grant is partly funded under the European Commission Social Fund to “support activities to extend employment opportunities and develop a skilled workforce”.

- West Berkshire Council ‘Beat the Recession’ grant. This follows a one-day seminar in May 2009 organised by the West Berkshire Partnership (www.westberkshirepartnership.org).

Proposals were sought for initiatives to help West Berkshire’s economy. Our proposal was successful and provides support to help us meet five outcomes in 2010:

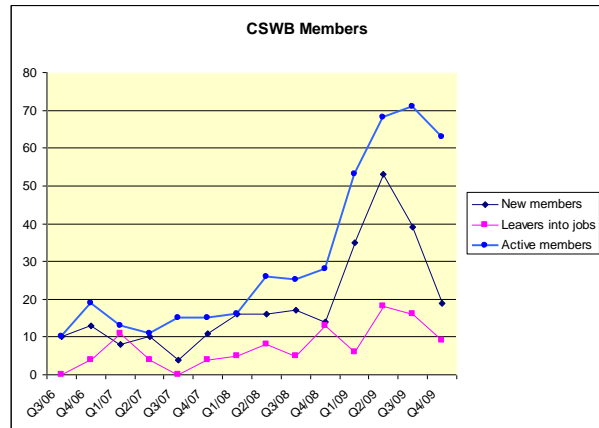
- increased awareness of our service
- enrolling > 60 more job seekers
- delivery of 42 weekly meetings
- helping > 40 people back into jobs
- delivery of > 50 individual support sessions

Combined, this support enables us to deliver a quality programme of meetings and services for the next year or so. Our thanks go to all our supporters for your confidence in our professionalism.

Is the worst now over?

A snapshot of our statistics shows that the number of active job-seekers peaked in the third quarter (top line of chart) while the number of new members (typically those recently made redundant) peaked in Q2. The chart also records (bottom line) the number of leaving members reporting that they had found jobs. Since CSWB started in September 2006:

- We have helped over 250 job-seekers.
- Of these, over 100 have reported success in finding new jobs (unfortunately, most of the rest leave without updating us with their status despite requests to do so).
- Our largest source of new members is Jobcentre Plus (40%). Friends and family, former members, newspaper articles and leaflets make up most of the rest.



- A growing source of membership (nearly 15%) find out about us through our website.
- Our average age of job seekers is now 47, compared to 50 when we started.

In general, our job-seekers do not get into the same high-powered jobs that they had previously, though there are exceptions. There are a few trends that emerge from discussions with those who keep in touch:

- Getting short term contracts (3-6 months) is increasingly common; these are often extended and turn into full-time jobs.
- Several job-seekers have found jobs in the local area, that although paying less than when they commuted, provide a better work-life balance.
- More are adopting a ‘portfolio’ career, doing a combination of part-time, freelance work and volunteering.

Some recent job-seekers’ feedback on leaving:

“An excellent schedule of meetings that enables people to get their thoughts together and to learn how to self motivate oneself in continuing to look for a job.”

“Overall, excellent service. You guys are doing great work.”

“Being with like-minded people in the same situation made me realise I’m not alone.”

“Very productive sessions overall with clear and easy to understand advice. Friendly and comfortable environment.”

“Very good for morale and networking.”

Job Seeker Profile: Simon Olford

Simon joined us in the Summer of 2009 and was with us for four months before finding a new job in November 2009. He writes:



“After 22 years in the Royal Marines I finally left in Oct 2001 and joined RFI Global Services Ltd in Basingstoke as a Senior Regulatory Engineer. RFI specialise in testing of all products for compliance to the worldwide markets and I eventually moved into the mobile side in the company and was made a Project Manager and had 15 other project leaders worldwide in China/Taiwan/Korea and UK after a few more years. As the recession hit the mobile industry quite hard, I saw my project team dwindle and eventually in mid 2008, there was just me left and the writing was on the wall. So knowing this I became Prince 2 Practitioner qualified and then was made redundant in Dec 2008 (great Christmas present!).

With this I decided to take 6 months off and enjoy life and my family and then in June 2009 started job hunting in earnest. This meant having to sign on and doing so after 2 months they told me about Careers Springboard. At the time I didn't take too much notice and foolishly thought that I could conquer the world by myself. Eventually I turned up and enrolled and from that day onwards I never regretted it as it was of great benefit in all aspects of job hunting and I could draw from a wealth of experience and it gave a great sense of comradeship as job hunting is a lonely and volatile businesses. I perfected my CV and gained confidence in interviews from the forums that we had completed and then in early Nov 2009, I got offered three different roles. Like busses.....”

I am now working for Global Crossing (a US Telecoms Company) in Basingstoke. This is perfect for me as I live in Newbury and I am working as a Project Manager and working within the Government department which means that I now have security clearance which again is an asset for future employers.

All I can say is that when I did leave Careers Springboard I felt sorry that I was leaving a

good team of people but happy to be employed – ecstatic would be a better word.

I passed on my company information to various persons at Springboard stating that they were still looking for project managers, and this resulted in one member getting two interviews, but unfortunately he didn't manage to get the role.

My advice to job-seekers is as follows:

1. Keep in touch with all your friends and previous work colleagues; use them to keep you updated for any jobs that may come up.
2. Speak to all the people at Careers Springboard and don't just sit at the back; you can gain a lot of experience from others there in the same boat.
3. Never give up, it may feel as if the world is against you but your job will come at the right time. It does take time but do persevere. Be patient.

Workshop Feature: Networking

Well over half our job seekers find their new job in what we call the 'hidden market'. This includes all those jobs (perhaps over 60%) that are not advertised, but are filled through contacts that the employer has. In some cases, the jobs do not initially exist, but one is created especially to bring on board a person who will bring specialist knowledge and skills to the business.

Making contact with potential employers is achieved through 'networking' where the job seeker uses all his contacts – not just business contacts, but social as well – to unearth those 'hidden' opportunities.

When we poll our job-seekers on how much time they spend each week on networking vs. responding to adverts, the ratio is usually less than 1 in 3, despite the fact that they are probably 3 times more likely to get a job through networking. Why don't we do it? Here are some common reasons they cite:

- “I haven't been in contact for over 10 years”
- “I don't want to appear to feel desperate”
- “I don't have a reason to contact them”
- “They won't have a job”.

Yet, if we are contacted by someone who we have lost touch with out of the blue, we are usually pleased to converse with them. Here is the systematic approach we recommend:

1. Develop your contacts list

When asked, most people reckon they have perhaps only 100 or so contacts. But this is because they have not systematically thought back through their mind or their diaries, emails and other records. With some triggers, and working through immediate contacts, it is usually not difficult to get to 500 or more.

2. Keep your antennae tuned

Active sensing of what is happening in your industry is required. As well as traditional sources (trade press etc.), it is people in your network who are most likely to appraise you of new developments. So maintaining regular contact with people in your network is what matters.

3. Develop your conversation ‘openers’

The key point is that you are asking for **help and advice, not a job**. Have a few basic questions ready – for example, about new products or new marketing strategies by key players. In particular, you want your contacts to suggest other people you can talk to, and so on, until ultimately you are talking to someone who can give you a job. And when you talk to those people, you can start by saying “... suggested I asked your advice” – that’s going to make them feel good!

4. Prepare your ‘hook’ - arrange meetings

A meeting (aka informal interview) is the ultimate stepping stone to a job. So obviously, you have to provide any potential employer, or person who can point you in the right direction, with a reason to see you. That’s why it’s important to have a ‘hook’ – a description of your skills and experience on how they can add value to their business.

5. Be organised and focussed

The statistics of landing a job can be quite awesome. For the job you land, you might go through several interviews, tens of meetings, a hundred or more approaches and up to a thousand contacts. Therefore, keeping on top of what you said to whom and when is

important. That’s where spreadsheets, databases or specific job-hunting software can really help.

There are a few additional tips that can help your networking:

- Reciprocate – always think if there is any way you can help the person you are contacting.
- Make full advantage of events where you can network, such as meetings of your professional society.
- Be prepared – have your 2-minute “Tell Me About Yourself” (your ‘Dragon’s Den’ sales pitch) ready to use at a moment’s notice.

And yes – networking does work. Here’s a couple of examples:

- One job-seeker was walking along the canal towpath and met someone he knew. After some conversation his colleague mentioned a potential opening in Wiltshire. He made contact and got the job.
- Another job-seeker made contact with all his previous bosses and subordinates. He eventually got a job; his new boss was someone who had worked for him over a decade earlier.

Volunteer Profile: Michelle Lucas



When I set up my own business in 2003 it was the beginning of my third “career”. When I started out I was a Psychology graduate and worked for 18 months at Broadmoor Hospital as a trainee Clinical Psychologist. However, this was the ‘80’s and I quickly realised that if I ever wanted to be a home owner – I would need to apply myself in a different environment that paid more ! This led to a career change into HR – where I stayed for almost 20 years. Initially I worked for household names such as W H Smith, Jewson, Unipart Oxford Instruments and in the latter part of my career I specialised in

Financial Services including Energy Trading with RWE (parent company of npower) and Investment Banking with Standard Chartered Bank. During this time I worked predominantly in the UK, but also gained experience in Continental Europe the USA and the Far East.

I have always practised a no-nonsense and commercial approach to HR and in the last 9 years of my commercial career I was a member of the management team. This not only allowed me to identify and reduce the people risk within the business but meant I was able to provide a confidential sounding board to Directors and Heads of Functions. It was this experience of working on a one to one basis (rather than developing policies and disciplining people!) that led me to discover the world of coaching. An opportunity came when the company I was working for got taken over and to cut a long story short – I decided to “take the money and run” ! So began my third career setting up my own business as a Coach. Wanting to ensure credibility and also continue my own development, I completed a PG Diploma in Coaching & Mentoring at Oxford Brookes (in 2008) and am now studying for a PG Diploma in Supervision for Coaching & Mentoring. Running my own business has been a bit of a roller-coaster – financially poorer than being an employee but personally so much richer as a result !

My business has two prongs – Executive Coaching with Senior Managers in Corporates (usually in London) and Career Coaching with local individuals, part of my values are around being able to give something back to the community in which I live. That’s where Career Springboard came in – I have always done voluntary work as part of my life and Career Springboard, was just a perfect fit with what I already wanted to do locally. I got introduced to Career Springboard through John Newell who I knew through local HR and Coaching networks. Initially I acted as a speaker – delivering the “What Employer’s want?” seminar. However, as the recession hit – more Springboarders arrived and my fee-winning work load reduced. This meant that more volunteers were needed to provide 121 sessions and I had time on my hands ... a

perfect match really! For me, this was a great opportunity not only to “help” a good cause – but there was also a level of self-interest involved.... I got to keep my skills “fresh” when my paid work was patchy.

All the volunteers are a great bunch to work with and listening to some of the seminars, I get to pick up tips too! It’s particularly useful to hear how the market for job seekers is “really” like, this is vital information when I am working with someone who’s currently employed and is thinking about handing in their resignation without a job to go to. I am able to provide them with a very credible reality check – thank you Career Springboard!

Thanks To....

Our project manager, Isabella Kerr. Isabella is employed by the Branshaw Foundation (currently our core funder) as the project manager for all the five executive job clubs in the Thames Valley Executive Job Network. In addition to helping all job clubs run smoothly and learn from each other, she has been instrumental in helping us at CSWB gain additional funding to replace that when the initial core funding from Branshaw disappears.



Based at the Thames Valley of Chamber of Commerce in Slough, she regular visits each job club and is also active in hosting, chairing and speaking. Without Isabella’s dedication, we would not be able to offer the services that we do today. Nor indeed, would we probably function at all. It was Isabella who called a meeting of potential volunteers together in March 2006, that led to the formation of Careers Springboard West Berkshire.

Thank you, Isabella!

More Thanks To....

Chris White

Chris[tine] has worked with Isabella for more years than CSWB has existed, and has been working behind the scenes chasing membership data, especially exit forms.

This can prove a difficult task when, having just GOT new job, the last thing you want to think about is the past. It is a critical task as some of our funding depends on proving that people have got work.

We are not saying goodbye completely as Chris will still be working (part time) for some of the other Job Clubs in our network.

Many thanks to Chris for all her unseen efforts!

Hugh Miller

A founder member of CSWB – After more than three years, Hugh has decided that he can be of more help to job-seekers by operating outside the constraints of the CSWB Constitution.

Obviously, we are very sad to lose him, and anyone who has been “Hewn” will know what a major contribution he has made to their overall Job Search.

Many of you will also remember there were times when numbers were low, believe it or not! Hugh was a major stalwart keeping us all going.

We are privileged to have known him, and we thank him for his contribution.

Welcome To.....

Due to increased workload with membership tracking for LSC /ESF Community Funding we are pleased to announce that Gayle Penrose has agreed to become our new **Membership Secretary**.

Some of you will recognise her name as indeed she is a former job-seeker from CSWB.

We need your cooperation with membership and alumni data, and any changes to your contact details should be sent to:

membership@careerswestberks.org.uk

Committee Changes

At the AGM of CSWB, held in January, the following changes were made:

David Skyrme resigned as co-chairman to concentrate on his role as **Information Manager** (including webmaster, managing information resources and editing this newsletter).

George Athorn stepped up to be the sole **Chairman**.

David Skinner took up the post of **Deputy Chairman**, in addition to his existing role as **Employer Liaison Officer**.

Michelle Lucas was appointed Volunteer liaison Officer.

John Newell continues his role as **Programme Manager**.

Michael Pritchard continues in his role as **Treasurer**.

One of our pieces of advice to job-seekers:

Looking for a job is a full-time job

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

david@careerswestberks.org.uk

Thank you for your support.