

Training **TOOL-KIT**

A TRAINING TOOL FOR THE JOB DEVELOPER TO SHARE WITH CLIENTS TO ASSIST THEM IN SECURING EMPLOYMENT

Job Clubs: *Vocational Tool should be Better Utilized*

By Robert T. Fraser



Job developers who aren't touting the benefits of job clubs to job-seeking clients are missing out on an important aspect of job development. The job club is a particularly helpful tool for use in vocational programs, but it remains underutilized even though it dates back 30 years.

In the 1970s, Dr. Nathan Azrin and his colleagues developed the job club model as a job-preparation tool. It was later formalized in the *Job Club Counselor's Manual* and became the Bible for job club development and implementation nationwide. More than 30 studies have been conducted using this model across diverse client groups – such as individuals with psychiatric and other disabilities, people on public assistance, and college students.

The model works. Employment outcomes tended to average about two-thirds of the job club participants going to work versus only one-third of study control group members. It should also be pointed out that the Azrin model is distinct from the job-networking group that has become common today.

How it Works

The Azrin approach involves several weeks of structured full morning and afternoon sessions in which the group leader uses a direct, but positive and reinforcing facilitative style. The job-seeking skill modules are very structured and include

application completion, résumé development, finding leads, and interviewing. Club membership initially involves 10 to 12 people, but it can be expanded for participants that previously received core skill training.

An emphasis is placed on skills development based on a member's needs. This approach automatically rotates clients on different skills using brief, open discussions as opposed to more hands-on practice. External contact with the employment community is continually reinforced at job club meetings with members disclosing their goals and strategies. Facilitators emphasize personal contact with employers.

Model is Updated

The Neurological Vocational Services Unit (NVSU) at Seattle's Harborview Medical Center at the University of Washington has adapted the Azrin model as part of its core vocational services for nearly 30 years. The NVSU approach uses modules that are rotated, based on needs "voted" upon by group members. For example, job club models might include sessions on online or e-job searches, employment interview/telephone interview approaches, strategies to staying motivated, disclosure to the employer, and others.

The accompanying graphic on page 2 provides a brief review of each module.

However, there are a number of ways in which this adaptation differs from the original Azrin model. They include the following:

- Job clubs at NVSU are *ongoing* and involve semiweekly sessions on Monday and Wednesday mornings that last between 1 hour and 1-1/2 hours.
- Job clubs at NVSU use *two* facilitators in order to provide a more engaging club, and to free up more staff for individual job-skill mentoring.
- Job clubs at NVSU actively engage employers several times a month. This enables employers to provide “cutting edge” advice within different modules and to reinforce member attendance and involvement. The message is that involvement in the job club will result in employment success.
- Job clubs at NVSU are tailored to each member. After every session, each member meets *individually* with his or her counselor in order to shape and reinforce job-seeking progress. This gives the job club approach a *tandem* career-counseling element.

- Job clubs at NVSU emphasize emotional and behavioral reinforcement throughout each session. Some modules even deal with maintaining motivation and managing moods, which are important aspects of the often-difficult job-search process. Community resources such as YMCA memberships are emphasized as avenues of social support and mental and physical health.

Summary

Job clubs not only develop clients’ skills and help them find a job, job clubs at NVSU have become a core component to program infrastructure. For one thing, job-seeking clients commit to being engaged during the job-club process. Moreover, although NVSU has evolved into a larger vocational rehabilitation program, the job club approach was adopted by NVSU when there were only two vocational staff members. As a result, this model maximized efficiency in job-skill development and job-search activities.

The job club model provides a valuable service while supplying a visible social support for clients with significant neurological challenges. ■

NVSU Job Club Modules:

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| 1. Developing Your Job Search Plan | 6. Grooming and Dressing for the Interview | 10. Disclosing Your Disability |
| 2. Résumés and Applications | 7. Staying on the Job Once you've Secured it | 11. Employer Incentives for Hiring People with Disabilities |
| 3. E-Applications and Effective Use of Websites | 8. Why do You Want to Work and How Do you Want to Work? | 12. Mass Mailings, Cover Letters, and Informational Interviews |
| 4. Assessing Job Offers | 9. Accommodations in the Workplace: <i>Americans With Disabilities Act</i> | 13 – 14. The Job Interview |
| 5. Stay Motivated in the Job Search | | 15. Keeping Your Job/Career Enhancement |

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