flownotes

A flowork publication about social capital development.

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Narrowing Your Focus

Long before the first game, a good coach will throw all his players onto the field so he can watch how they work together. He might note how one player throws, how another runs, how yet another defends. With his attention on how they play without his direction, he can better focus his strategy on how he might lead them into becoming a better team. When first their strengths and weaknesses are thrown together, he can plan the necessary team-building activities and drills that might lead them to success.

Similarly, a career practitioner might consider this approach when working with a new client. Without first sitting back and watching the job seeker perform an actual job search, the practitioner has no idea how best to show him how he might attain bigger and better things. Read our first article for more information on how this might help you in your practice.

We've also focused a second article this month on job development and a reason to think strategically about your relationships with employers you might be trying to bring onboard. You spend so much time developing your personal relationships, why not place the same emphasis on the relationships you create for your client base?

As usual, I encourage you to continue sending in your ideas and suggestions to newsletters@flowork.com. We here at Flowork hope you're welcoming the entrance of Spring with a new hope for what successes you can achieve!

John-Paul Hatala, Ph.D
Flowork Founder

This month's FlowTIP:
Don't be lazy.
See page 4 for more information.

What's New?

Social Capital Development: An Online Learning Program

Flowork has created two new unique, self-directed, online, interactive courses and certification programs that instruct individuals how to systematically turn their own personal networks (online or off) into powerful tools for accomplishing their everyday goals and objectives. To get more information about these courses, go to www.socialnetworkaudit.com/community_online_training.php.

Dr. Hatala Conducting Presentations in Toronto

If your agency purchases ten copies of *The Strategic Networker* and is located in the Greater Toronto Area, Dr. Hatala will personally deliver and conduct a one-hour session on strategic networking for your staff and clients. For more information please email info@flowork.com.

Online Job Search Management Demo!

Flowork is proud to announce the launch of a unique online job search case management system that will allow practitioners the ability to monitor their client's job search via the Internet. If you would like more information on this online tool or would like to sign up for an online demo, please contact info@flowork.com. To find out more about it, visit www.jobsearchboard.com.

twitter Updates

Want to get Dr. Hatala's Twitter updates? Click on "follow" at www.twitter.com/jphatala.

It's Not What Your Clients Need
It's What They DO That Matters!

How much time do you, the career practitioner, spend conducting needs assessments on your clients? They can be formal or informal, but both lead to finding out what your clients require. Many times the client steps forward and tells you what they need — and other times you attempt to determine it on their behalf. It can be extremely time intensive and difficult to determine a job seeker's needs. Depending on the career practitioner's available time, caseload and access to resources, a true needs assessment may not even be possible. Even if it were, after all, what's the point?

There may be a greater argument for a needs assessment if you were able to spend a great deal of time with the client — or if you had a limited caseload. For those that are working in the public employment sector, there are many clients and limited time to help make the transition back to the labor market. So is conducting a needs assessment — or more accurately, taking the time to conduct one — a waste of time?

Sometimes conducting a needs assessment simply distracts from the intervention because it takes too long and focuses on areas that are not conducive to finding a job. With other clients, it makes sense to do it — in fact, it's imperative to success. The key is to not bog down the job search process. So how do we conduct a needs assessment that doesn't waste time and moves the job seeker closer to employment?

One of the most efficient ways to conduct a needs assessment is to determine what the client does. In other words, watch them conduct a job search — observe their process, see the steps they're taking and the leads they're following. Once you understand how the client is searching for a job, you are in a better position to help them do it more successfully. Develop some rapport, establish the direction they want to take (which doesn't have to be set in stone the first time you meet), and send them out for a job search. It's as simple as that.

It's important not to simply talk about what they've done in the past with regards to their job search — this may not be good enough. Have them conduct a job search real-time for a week then ask that they come back and share their experience with you. This allows you to determine where they need help and how you can assist them. Imagine that a client comes in for the first time. You conduct your regular intake and explain the process you employ to help other people find a job. Then you send them off for a job search.

Will this work for everyone? Probably not. But the act of getting them to conduct a job search right off the bat provides you with insight into what they are doing. It also sets the stage for your engagement — because the job search process requires effort on both sides.

The moment they return to your office and discuss what they've done, your intervention truly begins. Imagine the questions you could ask and the real-time responses you would get. Where did you go to look for job related opportunities? How many people in your network did you contact? Did you apply for any positions? What resume did you submit?

Let's suppose they come back after a week and start to describe their experience. They tell you that they were unable to identify any job opportunities because they had to take care of their children. A "need" has just presented itself and you didn't even have to conduct a formal needs assessment: it's obvious that the client can't conduct a job search because they need to deal with their children. An action item can now be implemented to deal with the issue. This can happen with all other items that arise simply by getting the clients to conduct their job search and talking about it.

Is conducting a needs assessment a waste of time? It doesn't have to be. It can actually be quite efficient as long as you do it the right way — because actually understanding what your clients are doing during the job search *is a needs assessment*. It's uncomplicated, to-the-point and really quite efficient. More importantly, it promotes client activity — which is critical to job search success.

The key is to ask the right questions so the job seeker can reflect on what they're doing in their job search. Getting a client to say "I may need help" because they were able to see the link between what they we're doing and the outcome they were producing will create more buy-in to your service and, possibly, a quicker transition back to the labor market.

Thinking Strategically:
There's More to Job Development Than Meets the Eye!

There are two fundamental sides to the job development process:

1. You develop jobs based on the client's need, then approach employers based on the client's situation.
2. You first get employers onboard, then find clients to fill the opportunities.

Choosing a side, of course, depends on the client population you're dealing with. Both differ quite dramatically.

If you're developing jobs based on each client's need, approaching an employer requires you to bring forward one candidate, possibly two. However, if you market to employers based on the need of your client base, being strategic about working with employers is important. Let's focus on the second approach.

Relationships take time — so should bringing an employer onboard. If you follow this logic, placing a client with an employer should not happen on the first visit, but should occur when the job developer completely understands what the employer is looking for. More importantly, the job developer should not only find a match for the job function, but identify an organizational fit as well.

This approach is advantageous in two ways. First, if a client doesn't match the job requirements but fits well with the organization, there is a good possibility of getting them hired. Secondly, this approach helps the job developer to create a relationship that's based on a strategic vision — when client is misplaced with an employer, the relationship is strong enough to move on to another candidate.

It's important to remain strategic. If the employer insists on receiving emails right away, inform them that, although you will provide some names, you cannot guarantee that there will be a match. Those job developers who sign up employers and refer clients on the first visit may be jeopardizing a long-term relationship. If a solid relationship is in place, a bad client referral will likely not prevent the employer from working with you again in the future. Instead of placing clients right away, delay it until you have gathered enough information about the employer and you can make a suitable match. So how do you do this?

The best way to hold off placement and create multiple visits is to tell the employer that you are working towards creating a proposal, but that you can only accomplish this by gathering enough information to allow you, the job developer, to make a suitable decision. This, of course, cannot happen in one visit —you will have to consult with other job developers, understand the organizational needs, determine a suitable employee profile, etc. Only after you have gathered enough information can a proposal be created and presented.

The proposal itself can be a hybrid of both template and customized content. For example, you could copy and paste your organization's overview and policies, then customize the employer's requirements.

Let's say you visit an employer for the first time and they want candidates right away. In terms of positioning the proposal concept with the employer, you could have a conversation like this:

"I would love to send you some candidates right away but I am afraid that I won't send you the right ones. Do you mind if I gather some information and put a proposal together for you?"

In some cases the employer will simply tell you that they don't have time to wait for a proposal and they need candidates right away. Your response could be:

"I completely understand. I could send you some candidates but cannot guarantee that they're the right fit — not only for the position, but also for your organization. If I do send some candidates, I hope that you won't hold it against me if they don't work out. Also, if it's okay with you, I would like to come back and work on a plan with you so that we can meet your future needs."

You want to delay providing candidates because you haven't developed a relationship with the employer. The two — developing a relationship and providing candidates — should occur in parallel. If they don't, the risk of sending the wrong candidate dramatically increases.

More importantly, if a candidate is referred and they're not the right one, there is no relationship to back it up. The employer is much more likely to stop working with you.

This, of course, doesn't work all the time — nothing really does. But if you take this approach, you're more likely to see increased loyalty and a better method of matching candidates.

Why should an employer use your services? The main reason is that you have a pool of candidates and the successful matching practices that rival any competitor. The key is that you have to demonstrate that the matching process takes some time, and the procedures you have in place requires that you gather enough information to make a good match. Hence, the proposal.

Taking this approach results in a "delayed reward" for any job developer. It may take three times as long to get an employer onboard than doing it with any other approach — but, in the long run, you have developed a relationship and taken the time to understand the employer's business, so referrals and repeat placements are more likely to occur. Though it took longer to place a client, they are more likely to last longer on the job because you took the time to find the right match for both the job and the organization.

This is by no means the only way to approach job development — this article did not spend any time on the client-driven job development side. However, if you wish to develop long-lasting, mutually-beneficial relationships with employers, this approach may have some merit.

This Month's flowTIP:

Don't be lazy. If you're conducting a job search, there's no time to be lazy. The number one barrier to finding employment is your inability to actually do something. The longer you remain idle, the less likely you are to find a job. Laziness leads to joblessness, plain and simple. So what do you do? Have a plan. Set targets and achieve them. Break down the overall objective of finding a job into smaller pieces so you start to experience success more frequently. The longer you go without the thrill of victory, the more lazy you will become. Finding a job is a long-term process — experiencing that feeling of success may be further down the road then we think. It's important to do the little things so that when you add them all up they lead to a job. Create a resume, volunteer, reach out to contacts, research companies and do whatever it takes to remain active!

Change Your Job-Hunting Strategy to Better Your Odds

by Katherine Yung – March 29, 2011 – Detroit Free Press

You've tried to find a job for more than a year. Your savings are almost wiped out. And if things don't change soon, who knows where you may end up.

That's the bleak situation facing many unemployed people these days. But don't despair. Job search experts and career coaches say there are things that people out of work for long periods of time can do to improve their chances of getting hired. Here is some of their advice:

BE ACTIVE, GET INVOLVED. Volunteer, do consulting work, get an internship or participate in professional or community groups. You don't want to have large gaps in your resume, said Chad Austin, a job placement officer at Henry Ford Community College in Dearborn, Mich. He particularly recommends volunteering because it shows employers that you "have a commitment to something more than yourself."

Lisa Kurtzhals, program director for the Southeast Michigan Community Alliance, which operates workforce development programs, said job seekers need to devise a daily action plan and set clear goals.

CHANGE THE WAY YOU HAVE BEEN LOOKING FOR A JOB. Jean Baur, a career coach in New Jersey and the author of the new job search guide "Eliminated! Now What?," said that if you're not getting good results, you shouldn't keep searching for work the same way.

She suggests changing your resume and sending targeted emails to hiring managers. Another tip: Make a list of companies you want to work for and use that as a tool to guide your networking efforts.

"You have to search smart," Baur said. "You can't keep going in the same rut."

Ed Kainz, a career coach and licensed professional counselor in Rochester Hills, Mich., said it's important to evaluate yourself, making sure that you know how to interview well and how to network. He urges job seekers to get a copy of the 2011 edition of "What Color is Your Parachute?"

GET A TEMPORARY OR CONTRACT JOB. Job search experts say that employers are more likely to hire someone who already has a job than someone who is unemployed.

Mark Lancaster, CEO of EmploymentGroup, a staffing and contracted services firm based in Battle Creek, Mich., advises talking to several specialty staffing firms depending on your skills. "It may be below what you want, but if you're working, you're a lot more attractive," Lancaster said.

LEARN NEW SKILLS IN FIELDS THAT ARE GROWING. Many positions these days require specialized training, so going back to school is a must. Kainz said it's OK to take a job you don't really want in order to keep paying the bills and get the education you need for your dream job. "Anything worthwhile is not going to happen overnight," he said.

NEVER GIVE UP. This may sound trite, but it's all too easy for people to get discouraged during a lengthy job search and stop looking for work. Support groups for job-seekers are available at many churches and Michigan Works! centers.

Unlike the past two years, many employers are now looking to hire workers. Kurtzhals has seen more job openings in fields such as information technology, engineering, health and human services and accounting.

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