

Case study 1: three job clubs in the Thames Valley area

Aim

The aim of the clubs was to inform and motivate.

Membership

The three job clubs were all aimed at managerial, professional and executive jobseekers because this seemed to be a group that Jobcentres were finding difficult to help. In practice, while there were no exclusions, the clientele was predominantly older and the average age never dropped below 50.

Younger jobseekers and those who had held manual jobs, while they attended the club, said they found it helpful but tended to self-select themselves out of it. This seemed to be mainly because of the differences in age and experience. Newly qualified graduates are selling their qualifications while older professionals are selling their experience. The two groups' perceptions of the job market and how they approach it are different. Manual workers can feel inferior and find much of the discussion irrelevant, particularly if the club has a larger number of managerial jobseekers and if they are older.

One of the clubs had 'escapees' from other clubs, one run by a retired schoolteacher, and one by an ex-public sector recruiter. Both were too narrow in their approach to redundancies in the financial and IT sectors.

Format

We ran four-hour sessions comprising an open networking discussion or activity, a led discussion and a discussion on a relevant job search topic, and one-to-one sessions as time allowed. Members came and went as they wished or needed to, and there was a weekly email letter to all members.