

LABOUR MARKET DIALOGUES: ADVERTISING AND HIRING

Labour Market Dialogues is a project of the Community Council designed to explore how employers in BC's Capital Region may be better supported to hire and retain people experiencing barriers to employment. This is one of nine discussion papers that share information on each barrier, with recommendations that could strengthen employers' success in recruiting and retaining staff.

Using background research on advertising practices, interviews with 15 local employers, and a focus group discussion with people experiencing barriers in accessing the labour market, the project focused on how employers write job ads, where and how they advertise, how they hire and how people with barriers to employment respond to employer ads and hiring practices.

Advertising jobs

Employers know they need to make their jobs sound attractive and are trying to advertise widely.

Employers and job-seekers like employment ads in the local newspaper best, though the internet is becoming more popular.

People with barriers to employment and employers frequently report using the Service Canada Job Bank website to advertise and to look for a job.

Job-seekers felt ads in community newspapers were for "cheap jobs".

Signs in the business window were popular for businesses on high-traffic streets, but job-seekers in this study see jobs advertised this way as emergency or part-time jobs that offer minimum wage, so they would only walk in if they needed a job right away.

Employers and job-seekers like word of mouth as a way of advertising a job. However, advertising jobs by word of mouth may be a barrier for someone with no or few employment networks.

Networking and building relationships in the community, including through volunteering, is important when facing barriers to employment.

Applications and Interviews

Application forms are seen as impersonal, especially if the application form is a generic form, not specific to the business. Job-seekers report preferring to summarize work histories and qualifications in a resume.

Interviews place a lot of stress on job-seekers, as this is when some of the barriers to employment may begin to show. Interviews can create additional challenges depending on how easy it is to get to where the interview is and how flexible employers can be about when the interview is, depending on the job-seekers' schedule.

Communication and language barriers also start to come out in interviews. Job-seekers expressed concerns about the employers' expectations of their appearance and dress.

Job-seekers and employers considered 30 minutes the best length of time for an interview.

With the low unemployment rate, employers are more willing to hire people with limited experience, but who offer the potential to be trained and retained more easily.

Employers trying to accommodate job-seekers with fewer direct job skills have begun to ask more interview questions related to "soft skills" such as personality, ability to fit in and reliability.

However, people facing barriers to employment express dislike for these questions, preferring skills related questions.

Experiencing barriers to employment often affects self-esteem and confidence. "Soft skills" questions make job-seekers nervous, which in turn may give a negative impression during interviews.

Recommendations

Employers may find that where they advertise jobs sends a message to potential employees about the kind of job and rate of pay.

Employers looking for people above entry level may improve recruitment by staying with local newspaper or job bank postings.

Employers hiring entry level positions where direct job skills are not required can consider asking "soft skills" questions later in the interview, when people are more at ease.

Employers may miss good employees if they focus only on the confidence displayed in an interview, as people with barriers to

employment may start to shine more when on the job.

Employers can ask questions of people with limited work experience about direct job skills off the job, i.e. do you use a computer at home or at the library?

Employment service agencies can help job-seekers to prepare for interviews.

More research is needed into interview questions which give employers the information they need about soft skills, but keep employees with lower self esteem at ease.

Vancity Credit Union has contributed additional funds to the project.