Job Club Method

Nathan H. Azrin
Nova Southeastern University

I. Theoretical Basis
II. Empirical Studies
III. Description
IV. Summary
Further Reading

GLOSSARY

job-finding Viewed as a chain of responses from the initial step of identifying a job lead, each of the steps being taught and supervised in the Job Club session, rehearsed, and actually put into practice under the supervision of the Job Club instructor.

I. THEORETICAL BASIS

The Job Club method is based on established principles of learning similar to those used in behavior therapy and by applied behavior analysis for treating psychological problems. The process of job-finding is viewed as a chain of responses from the initial step of identifying a possible job lead, each of the steps being taught and supervised in the Job Club session, rehearsed, and actually put into practice under the supervision of the Job Club instructor. Also included are modeling (imitation), self-recording of each of the job-seeking behaviors, progress charting, and "homework" assignments for out-of-session behaviors. The same rationale governs the conduct of the Job Club instructor analogous to that of the therapist in behavior therapy; specifically, the Job Club instructor constantly reinforces the job seeker using descriptive praise that designates the specific behavior being praised. The instructor is always positive, praises any action in the direction of the final goal of obtaining a job, never criticizes, and directs attention to future constructive actions rather than past difficulties.

The program takes place in a group for reasons of cost/benefit but also to obtain group support including finding job leads for each other, transportation assistance (car pools), and assigning each job seeker a partner such that they work in pairs with the partner providing a role model, reminders, and assistance, thereby having each person receiving continuous individual assistance while still functioning in a group.

Also similar to behavior therapy, the Job Club program is highly structured with standardized forms and scripts that are individualized for each person.

II. EMPIRICAL STUDIES

Prior to 1975, many types of job-finding programs were being promoted and used, such as those relying on "Job Development," or subsidized priming (such as the G.I. bills), or motivational seminars, interview rehearsal, and public employment agency listings of openings by employers. Controlled evaluation of all of these programs using the accepted scientific require-

Copyright 2002, Elsevier Science (USA).
All rights reserved.

ment of a randomly assigned control group was absent, similar to the situation that had existed previously in medicine and clinical psychology.

In 1975 my colleagues and I, as part of an Illinois research group (see Further Reading) conducted the first controlled evaluation using the Job Club method to help normal job seekers to obtain jobs. The result was that in 3 months 92% of the Job Club members had obtained jobs compared with 60% of those in the comparable wait-listed control group.

In 1979, the Job Club program was evaluated with job seekers who had severe job-finding handicaps: former mental patients, retardation, prison records, physically handicapped, and other such difficulties. As compared to a control group of similar job seekers who were given a motivational and information counseling program, 95% of the Job Club members obtained jobs versus 28% of the information counseling members. In 1980, the Job Club method was evaluated in a controlled study with chronic welfare recipients by the U.S. Department of Labor. The results were that twice as many job seekers enrolled in the Job Club obtained jobs than did those counseled by the agency's existing program.

Since that time the Job Club has been evaluated by many different controlled studies, all of which have found the method to be more effective than any of the alternatives with which it has been compared. More specifically, the Job Club has been found effective in different studies with high school students, the elderly, the visually impaired, the intellectually handicapped, the chronically mentally ill, unemployed professionals, deaf people, workforce programs, physically handicapped, state hospital patients, halfway house and outpatient mental patients, alcoholics, drug addicts, those with psychiatric disorders, criminal offenders, and in several foreign countries.

The Job Club method also has been found empirically to decrease depression and to increase feelings of self-efficacy, indicating its value in improving one's psychological state as well as in obtaining employment.

III. DESCRIPTION

A. Setting

The job seekers meet as a group—preferably 8 to 12 persons in a room equipped with a large table for ease of writing. These should be several telephone lines and a extension phone for each primary phone such that the assigned "buddy" and instructor can listen to all calls made. The facility also provides a copy machine for résumé copies, secretarial assistance for typing résumés, daily copies of the help wanted advertisements in the local newspapers, and several copies of the Yellow Pages telephone directory. The room also contains a file of job openings uncovered by previous and current club members. A bulletin board displays for each member a visually conspicuous record in histogram form of the (1) number of telephone calls, (2) number of letters written, and (3) number of interviews obtained; these serve as a progress chart.

B. Schedule

The members attend each day for 2 weeks, arranging interviews during half of each day and attending the interviews during the other half of the day. The second half of the day after the first 2 weeks is attended by all those members who have not yet obtained a job during the first 2 weeks. The local telephone calls, photocopying, postage, stationery, and secretarial assistance are provided without cost to the job seekers. A new group can start every 2 weeks.

C. Initial Session

During the initial session, the members briefly introduce themselves to the group and identify what type of work they have had and hope to obtain. A written form is circulated on which members list their telephone number, address, and any transportation needs. This list is photocopied and distributed to all and arrangements are made to assist those with transportation needs. Each person is paired off with a "buddy" to work together. An explanation of the program and its record of successes is provided. The members are instructed to attend any interviews arranged in the sessions that day and all future days.

D. Specific Procedures

1. Job finding is treated as a full-time job; as stated, half of each day is spent in the Job Club office, and the remainder of the day is spent attending interviews.

2. Personal sources of job leads. Because surveys have consistently shown that the initial job leads for two-thirds of jobs obtained were first identified by a friend, relative, or acquaintance, the Job Club makes a systematic effort to contact those persons and not to rely primarily on published job listings.

3. Supplies and services. As noted above, the program provides all supplies and services necessary for the job seeker without cost. The actual cost to the agency has been found to be very slight relative to the usual cost of a job-finding person.

4. Group support. Members are instructed and prompted to assist each other with transportation, obtaining job leads for others and providing mutual encouragement and advice.

5. Buddy. Each member is paired with a "buddy" to provide each other with assistance. The buddy is given a checklist to record the other buddy's phone contacts with potential employers; they review the checklist recordings together.

6. Positive personal and social attributes. In addition to work skills, the Job Club approach stresses the communication of positive personal and social attributes. The job seeker is shown how to identify these attributes and how to stress these attributes during an interview, in the job resume, and when first contacting a potential employer to arrange an interview.

7. Open letters of recommendation. The job seekers are taught to obtain open letters of recommendation that can be given to interviewers and possible employers at the time of initial contact to maximize the initial positive impression.

8. Interview rehearsal. The program has each jobseeker rehearse being interviewed using common questions asked by job interviewers and is given written material describing how such questions might best be answered for maximum benefit.

9. Interview behavior reminder checklist. The program provides instruction and a checklist of behaviors to be considered in interviews, such as proper posture, eye contact, arranging a call-back date, handshake at start and end, describing positive personal attributes, and so on. The completed checklist is reviewed the next day with the Job Club instructor.

10. Assistance by family. The program sends a letter to the family (spouse, parent, or significant other) providing suggestions as to how they can assist the job seeker, such as by actively seeking job leads, providing needed transportation, relieving the job seeker of household activities that would interfere with Job Club attendance, providing encouragement, assistance in typing or letter writing, and so on. Surveys have shown that family members are typically a source of productive job leads.

11. Counselor individual attention. In order to provide the job seeker with continuing feedback, advice, and support in spite of the group setting, the counselor follows a "continuous rotation" rule in which the counselor observes each club member in systematic rotation, spending no more than about 1 minute per club member. The counselor examines the forms being filled out, listens briefly if needed on the extension phone to job seeker calls, praises for efforts made (e.g., number of leads collected), and gives brief instruction as to what to do until the next counselor contact. This procedure plus the "Buddy" procedure described earlier provides continuous feedback and support.

12. Telephone book. The "Yellow Pages" of the local telephone book is used as a major source of job leads in the session. Because companies are conveniently listed by the type of business, the job seeker contacting those businesses will know if they are likely to utilize the job seeker's skills. As noted above, surveys have consistently shown that jobs were obtained from contact with nonpublicized sources.

13. Current job leads leading to new leads. Because personal contacts have been found to be the most frequent source of productive job leads, job seekers are taught (and supervised in session) to request additional leads from any contact person who has no positions immediately available; this situation occurs often in the telephone book contact, with friends, or at the termination of unsuccessful interviews.

14. Auto transportation is often a problem for job seekers possibly because of insufficient funds, or relative lack of public transportation in rural areas. As noted in "Group support" earlier, the club members are encouraged to assist these members with this need. Also as noted previously in "Assistance by family," family members are sent a letter urging them to supply auto transport to interviews and indeed to the Job Club location as well as to the job site when a job is obtained.

15. Telephone as initial contact. Rather than using actual "drop-ins" as a method of contacting potential employers, which usually allows 2 to 4 contacts per day, the Job Club arranges for the telephone to be used as the initial contact to arrange an interview. The telephone contacts can be made under supervision in the Job Club session and in great number.

16. Number of sessions. The goal of the Job Club is to obtain employment for all (100%) of the job seekers. If a fixed number of sessions are allowed, the most needy or job handicapped are likely to remain unemployed. Therefore, the Job Club program allows and encourages continued attendance until a job is obtained. Even after a job is obtained, the members are encouraged to return if they again become unemployed. This continual access

is logistically made possible by having the continued access members meet in the afternoon each day, while new members meet in the morning hours, with a new group starting in the morning every 2 weeks. After the 2 weeks, the members attend in the afternoon. In practice, past club members attend only occasionally, usually to use the copy machine, or telephone, or to obtain postage or typing assistance, but this continued availability appears very important in assuring the most difficult-to-place persons that they will not be abandoned.

17. Multiple sources of job leads. Surveys reveal that productive job leads result from many sources, primarily from personal contacts, but also about a third from various public announcements. The Job Club accordingly emphasizes primarily the personal sources (see "Personal Sources of Job Leads" earlier), but also common public announcements that are obtained by visits to a local public service employment agency, and announcements in newspapers' help wanted advertisements and professional and trade newsletters.

18. Personal orientation of résumé. In recognition of the great role played by personal attributes, the résumé does not only chronicle the Job Club members' job-relevant experience but also positive personal attributes of the job seeker, such as being "a team player," a "leader," "dedication to one's employer," "motivates the employees reporting to him," "needs no supervision," "well-liked by customers and fellow employees," and so on, whichever attributes honestly apply to the specific job seekers. These personal attributes are noted and emphasized in the interview as well.

19. Type of job applied for. In recognition of the diversity of skills of a given job seeker, they are encouraged to apply for more than one type of position (grant writer as well as English teacher, for example) and also to list the diversity of their experiences that may not be evident from the listing of their work history, such as being multilingual, computer proficient, organizing groups for community service, or club projects leader.

20. Structured job-seeking schedule. The job seeker is given preprinted forms and taught by the counselor to use them to arrange each day's activities with regard to interviews (date, time, name of interviewer, address, telephone number, etc.), call-backs after an initial inquiry or after each interview, persons to contact for possible leads, and so on. By structuring each day's activities the job-seeker's job search is focused, organized, and full-time.

21. Job Seeker Progress Feedback. A major problem in the job search is the discouragement and loss of motivation that results when no job placement has resulted from one's initial efforts. To help overcome this problem, the program provides feedback to the job seeker via a visual display on the wall of the room depicting separately how many interviews, telephone calls, and letters were completed by the job seeker since the start of the research. Also on the wall is a chart showing how the probability of success increases as the number of interviews increases, as determined by the results of all previous Job Club members. A job seeker's attention is directed to this chart as feedback on how his or her efforts are increasing the probability of success even though no placement has yet been obtained.

22. Counselor's style. The counselor's style is consistently positive, never criticizing or pointing out shortcomings or errors in carrying out the specific steps of the search. Rather, the counselor praises all progress and all efforts, even the fact of attendance. To address any omissions or errors, the counselor follows a "future-oriented" style, describing to the client what changes or additions might be made in future efforts to improve the chances of success.

IV. SUMMARY

The Job Club method is a program f g job seekers to obtain employment that has nd effective in several controlled outcome stu quires an experienced counselor as the leader ons in a group format. The members do not p sten to suggestions, but rather are actively eng l supervised in the job search during each sess taining job leads and arranging interviews. T ons continue for each job seeker until he or sh s a job or discontinues attendance. The results intensive program has been that more than 90% attendees obtain employment. The program is b the principles of learning and motivation emb n the psychological body of knowledge kno behavioral psychology, which emphasizes rehearsa functional improvement.

See Also the Following Articles

Behavioral Contracting ■ Contingency Management ■ Good Behavior Game ■ Homework ■ Token Economy ■ Vocational Rehabilitation

Further Reading

Amvine, C., & Bullis, M. (1985). The Job-Club approach to job placement: A valuable tool. *Journal of Rehabilitation of the Deaf, 19*, 18–23.

Azrin, N. H., & Besalel, V. A. (1980). *A Job Club counselor's manual: A behavioral approach to vocational counseling.* Austin, TX: Pro-Ed Publisher.

Azrin, N. H., Flores, T., & Kaplan, S. J. (1975). Job-Finding Club: A group assisted program for obtaining employment. *Behavior Research and Therapy, 13,* 17–27.

Azrin, N. H., & Philip, R. A. (1979). The Job-Club method for the job-handicapped: A comparative outcome study. *Rehabilitation Counselors Bulletin, 25,* 144–155.

Azrin, N. H., Philips, R. A., Thienes-Hontos, P., & Besalel, V. A. (1980). A comparative evaluation of the Job Club program with welfare recipients. *Journal of Vocational Behavior, 16,* 133–145.

Elksnin, L. K., & Elksnin, N. (1991). The school counselor as job search facilitator: Increasing employment of handicapped students through job clubs. *School Counselor, 38,* 215–220.

Jacobs, E. (1984). A skills oriented model facilitating employment among psychiatrically disabled persons. *Rehabilitation Counseling Bulletin, 28,* 87–96.

McGurvin, M. C. (1994). An overview of the effectiveness of traditional vocational rehabilitation services in the treatment of long-term mental illness. *Psychosocial Rehabilitation Journal, 17,* 37–54.

Murphy, G. C., & Athanson, J. A. (1987). School to work transition: Behavioral counseling approaches to the problems of finding jobs for unemployed adolescents. *Behavior Change, 4,* 41–44.

Stilham, H. H., & Remley, T. P. (1992). The Job Club methodology applied in a workforce setting. *Journal of Employment Counseling, 29,* 69–76.