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THE JOB CLUB APPROACH TO JOB PLACEMENT: A VIABLE TOOL?

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The unemployed person faces the task of securing a job with whatever knowledge and skills that are at his disposal. Regardless of the individual's abilities, however, securing a job can become frustrating, demoralizing, and seemingly futile. For the hearing-impaired person, job seeking problems are compounded by difficulties in communication and, all too often, an inadequate understanding of the world of work. This situation is further complicated by the fact that most rehabilitation counselors, the primary placement resource for deaf persons, lack training in job placement (Usdane, 1974, 1976) and devote only six to 10 percent of their work to placement activities.

In order to facilitate the placement of job-ready clients, rehabilitation and service agencies are beginning to utilize a self-directed placement approach (Wesolowski, 1981). Central to this model is the notion that people should be taught how to find employment on their own. Perhaps the best known and most popular variation of this approach is the Job Club (Azrin & Basalel, 1980). It has been demonstrated to be a superior job seeking aid in many rehabilitation settings with chronically unemployed (Azrin, Basalel, Wisotzek, McMarrow & Bechtel, 1982; Azrin, Flores & Kaplan, 1975; Azrin & Philip, 1979; Azrin, Philip, Thienses-Hontos, Basalel, 1980, 1981), physically disabled (Kauss & Sota, 1981), and blind persons (Dickson & McDonnell, 1982). In addition, several agencies serving deaf persons have constructed Job Club programs for their clients (e.g., Dwyer, 1983; Torretti, 1983; West-Evans & Shiels, 1983).

While there is a great deal of enthusiasm for this placement approach, it cannot be viewed as a panacea. Problems have been experienced in designing and conducting Job Clubs with deaf persons. Moreover, it should be noted to date there have been *no* research studies conducted

on the efficacy of this model with the hearing-impaired population. In short, the breadth of knowledge concerning the Job Club approach as applied to the field of deafness is extremely limited.

The purpose of this article, then, is to review the existing literature on the Job Club to build a knowledge base. Specifically, the "traditional" Job Club, and a Job Club designed for use with deaf persons will be discussed.

TRADITIONAL JOB CLUB

In order to understand the application of the Job Club to the deaf population, it is necessary to first gain a knowledge of the "traditional" Job Club model developed by Azrin and associates (Azrin & Basalel, 1980). Toward this goal, both the underlying philosophical basis and the procedures of the Job Club will be discussed.

Theoretical Basis

The Job Club is based on elements of behavioral psychology. The specific theoretical principles employed are: specification, learning, reinforcement, extinction, and contracting. These principles will be discussed below. The information in this section comes largely from Azrin and Basalel's *Job Club Counselor's Manual* (1980) and articles by Azrin and colleagues (Azrin, et. al., 1977; Azrin & Philip, 1979; Azrin, et. al., 1982).

Specification. Behavioral psychology deals directly with overt behaviors. Thus, it is necessary to identify critical factors of the job finding process to guide skill training. Once delineated, these behaviors can be integrated into a standardized and consistent program for use in training job seekers to find work. The Job Club approach focuses on the steps involved in the job seeking task. Specifically, the clients are taught exact methods for executing these job seeking behaviors (e.g., obtaining job leads involves specific

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methods for use of the newspaper, the telephone book, friends, and relatives).

Learning. A basic tenet of the Job Club is that intensive behavioral training can teach clients the skills that will make them successful at securing a job. Modeling (imitation of other's behaviors), rehearsal (repeated supervised practice) and role playing (acting out procedures) are teaching methods that are utilized. Trainees model the behavior of the trainer and other members in the program who are rapid learners. In addition, standard forms are available to guide the preparation of the participants' letters to employers, job applications, and resumés. Rehearsal of job seeking skills is carried out in the Job Club meetings and in the actual job seeking process.

Reinforcement. Reinforcement (reward) is one of the main concepts of behavioral psychology. Briefly, in the Job Club it is believed that there will be greater behavioral change when social reinforcement is used in the job seeking process. Thus, the Job Club is structured to include enthusiastic praise for every correct response made during training. The praise is given by the counselor and other group members. It should be noted that trainers and members are encouraged to reinforce job seeking behaviors that approximate correct performance. This technique, called successive approximation, eventually leads to appropriate behavior. In addition, charts are utilized to display completed tasks (e.g., securing job leads, follow-up of job leads, interview behavior, job attainment, and providing an index of client progress). Finally, group members are assigned a "buddy" who provides private support in the job seeking process.

Behavioral Contract. The behavioral contract is designed to provide an understanding between the trainee and the counselor by clarifying the expectations and duties of each. A form included in the *Job Club Manual* identifies 11 duties of the trainee and 20 duties of the trainer. Examples of the trainee responsibilities include: attend meetings on time each day; carry out home assignments; help others in their job search; attend all interviews on time and fill out checklist immediately following the interview. Examples of responsibilities for the trainer include: to provide necessary photocopying service of letters of recommendation, applications, resumés, and other job seeking

material; to provide necessary newspapers, telephone books, and other listings of jobs; and to help the trainee write a resumé and make copies of it.

It should be stressed that in the Job Club the counselor's principal duty is to help the trainee obtain a job by improving the client's skills in job seeking. Conversely the member's principal duty is to carry out the counselor's instructions and to consider job seeking as a full-time job.

Procedures

The Job Club program is designed for, at most, 12 persons and is to be two weeks in length. The group meets each day for two to three hours with the goals for the day being explained and visually displayed at the start of each session. The traditional Job Club consists of six distinct components. These components, and the corresponding training procedures, are reviewed below.

Introduction. The initial session begins with a description of the Job Club. Factors such as the cost of the program to the trainee and charges (if any) for such services such as long-distance calls, photocopying, typing, and mailing are clarified. Next, transportation problems are discussed and are remediated within the group. A discussion of the effect of securing work on public assistance or unemployment benefits as also made, preferably by representatives from agencies that refer clients to the program. Finally, the trainer stresses a personal commitment to helping each trainee in all tasks of the job search and a Counselor-Job Seeker Agreement is signed. This form is essentially a contract that specifies the duties and responsibilities of both the trainer and the client in the job-seeking process.

At the end of the first session, the counselor asks trainees to identify several areas of vocational interest to guide the job search. For those having difficulty specifying job areas, time is taken in a later session to help in identifying these interests.

Obtaining Job Leads. A major part of each session is devoted to obtaining job leads. Members are encouraged to recruit friends and relatives to assist in finding employment. In addition, they are encouraged to make a list of persons in the neighborhood (e.g., bank tellers, clerks) who may have knowledge of potential

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placements. The trainer also maintains a job leads list from: 1) job leads gathered by former group members, 2) referrals to the Job Club, and 3) job leads from current trainees.

The telephone directory is considered the greatest single source of job leads in that an overview of existing businesses and potential employers is provided in it. The help wanted advertisements in local newspapers also afford valuable work leads. Consequently, phone-books and local newspapers are made readily available to members at the meetings.

Along the same line as the help wanted advertisement, a trainee can also utilize a job wanted advertisement. This is a statement that is placed in the newspaper describing the position that is being sought and a thumbnail sketch of the individual's qualifications.

Job Contacts. Contact of job leads is usually initiated after the first session. Members are taught four essential concepts when investigating potential placements:

1. Stating one's position of job seeking,
2. Stating that the employer contacted can help in locating possible jobs,
3. Stating one's skills for a particular job area, and
4. Stating what assistance would be helpful in securing work (e.g., scheduling the interview).

These points are listed on a form that the trainee completes prior to making the contact. In this way, the meeting can be structured and rehearsed. The trainee and the counselor practice the contact procedure through the use of standard scripts and role playing.

In general, phone calls are considered the best method for contacting job leads. Each member practices job-related phone conversations prior to making actual calls. They are encouraged to practice exactly what will be said to a potential employer about securing work. This rehearsal is conducted with the trainer acting as an employer and with the other participants serving as a critical audience. After acting out a phone call, the trainer gives praise for correct responses and asks each member of the group to comment on the strengths and weaknesses of the call.

If it is not feasible to talk with an employer by phone, a contact letter may be used. The same information supplied in the phone contact (i.e., the four essential points) is included in

the letter. The Job Club manual contains a form letter that can be adapted for each participant.

Documentation of Work History. Previous work experience is documented by developing a resumé and filling out sample applications. The resumé is designed to present the trainee's employment experience, personal information, family background, references, hobbies, and special interests. It is written to make the member distinct and to be noticed by an employer. It is suggested that the resumé be not longer than two single-spaced typed pages and, as with other documents employed with the Job Club, example forms are included in the manual for adaptation.

In addition, members are encouraged to secure general letters of reference from past employers or figures of authority in the community. These letters are incorporated into a placement packet that serves as a major tool for the job seeker.

Finally, trainees are instructed how to fill out work applications. Initially, it may be necessary for the counselor to explain and demonstrate what is being requested for each part of the sample employment applications. Trainees are then required to fill out applications as homework. These homework specimens are brought to the next meeting and critiqued. Thereafter, the practice forms are used as a quick reference guide in filling out actual work applications.

Preparation for Interview. The employment interview is the most critical part of the job seeking process. In addition to securing work, the interview is considered a method for obtaining other job leads from the employer and/or to lay a foundation for future employment. For example, members are encouraged to set-up an interview even if a company does not have openings, and thus gain an advantage when a job is available. The members are also trained to request other job leads from the contacted employer.

Through rehearsals in the Job Club meetings, trainees are taught to be courteous, friendly, and confident in the job interview. Members are also taught how to answer questions that are commonly asked in an interview (e.g., what are your work strengths?). If there is a particular part of the application or resumé that needs explanation, then proper ways to discuss these issues are rehearsed (e.g., why haven't you worked for two years?). Thus, the job interview

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should not present any unexpected problems for the member.

It is recommended that trainees take a folder containing a sample application, open letters of recommendation, a resumé, appointment schedule, and an interview checklist to each interview. Immediately after meeting with the employer, the checklist is filled out. The checklist verifies the points covered in the interview and assists in designating follow-up tasks and procedures. It also serves as a monitoring device for the Job Club Counselor. The form is reviewed by the trainer and praise is given to members for the points completed successfully and assistance is given in those areas that were unsuccessful.

Summary. The Job Club teaches job seekers how to secure employment. It differs from traditional job placement activities in that the responsibility for finding work is placed squarely on the shoulders of the job seeker. In order to prepare the individual to accept such responsibility, the Job Club is structured to be an intensive learning experience that provides training in the components of finding work. Further, it is designed to provide reinforcement and support to the trainer during the job procurement process.

ADAPTATIONS FOR HEARING-IMPAIRED CLIENTS

From the previous discussion it may be seen that the traditional Job Club model is heavily dependent upon oral and other language abilities (e.g., phone conversations). Thus, a strict Job Club approach is not appropriate for most hearing-impaired persons. Consequently, several agencies serving deaf people have developed their own Job Club programs to meet the needs of this population. The goal of this section is to provide a brief overview of one such program. Specifically, the Florida Deaf Services Project (Justl, McMahon & Lewis, 1983) will be discussed.

Theoretical Basis and General Procedures

The Florida model essentially embodies the basic theoretical basis as that of the traditional Job Club. The principles of specification, learning, reinforcement, extinction, and contracting are carried out in the instruction of job seeking behaviors. The bulk of these behaviors are in

line with Job Club procedures, but additions and adaptations to the basic model have been made to accommodate the unique skills and limitations of deaf job seekers.

In the Florida Job Club it is recommended that a certified interpreter be available during testing and training sessions. The interpreter's role is primarily as a facilitator of communication. An additional function of the interpreter is to help trainees learn and review vocabulary used in the job seeking process. An extensive vocabulary list with appropriate signs is provided in the manual to help members who are having difficulty with work-related vocabulary.

A pre/post test to assess the job seeking skills of its members is also included in the curriculum. The test consists of a sample job application and questions about job seeking and interviewing. The pretest can be used to initiate training at an appropriate level for the clients' skills. The posttest is used to give an indication of the Job Club members' improvement in job seeking skills.

The major areas of instruction of the Florida model parallel that of the traditional Job Club. The accompanying support materials have been changed in order to make the information more understandable for the deaf members. The instructional units are described below.

Obtaining Job Leads

Many information sheets about methods for obtaining job leads are provided. They are simplified descriptions of the methods used in the Job Club for obtaining work leads and are designed to accommodate those persons with a lower language level. In addition, diagrams accompany the explanations. Short self-tests accompany the information sheets to insure that the important points in the material are understood by the trainees.

Job Contacts

In the Florida model, a personal visit is considered the best method of making a contact. Explanatory handouts to guide this visit are given during class and are later used as reminders when making contact with employers. To assure mastery of the contact skills, self-tests are provided on each method.

Further, members are taught to write letters of application and to make telephone contact. These methods depend on the member's language

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ability and the availability of an interpreter and are not as highly recommended as a personal job contact for the deaf job seeker.

Documentation of Work History

Personal information is collected on a fact sheet that is filled out by the trainees. The same information (family background, references, hobbies, and special interests) is compiled on the Florida fact sheet as that collected in the traditional Job Club. The fact sheet is also utilized in guiding the completion of work applications and resumés. Sample resumés and employment applications are provided for each member.

The trainer assists members in writing a resumé and in completing employment applications. Neatness, completeness, and correctness are stressed in completing applications. Members are led step-by-step through a sample application by the trainer. The members then use actual applications from employers they have contacted to gain more experience in filling out job applications.

Interview Preparation

Members are given information on different types of employment interviews (e.g., screening, selective). A short lecture on preparation for an interview covers personal appearance, participation, closing, and follow-up and the same information is included in the manual. In addition, trainees are taught how to discuss their hearing impairment with an employer. The members learn what type of information the employer may need to know concerning their hearing disability whether the employer asks about it or not (e.g., explain what can and cannot be heard; points on the way the job can be handled adequately; how the disability occurred and whether it is stable, improving, or degenerating). If the member has had a job before, the individual is trained to comment on methods of compensating for the hearing disability that have been used successfully in the past.

Work Adjustment

The FDSP contains a section on adjusting to work. Members are given a copy of a book on work rules. This section includes such guidelines as arriving to work on time and calling one's employer if an emergency arises or arrival at work will be late. In addition, a section on payroll deductions and employment benefits are included. A booklet on these topics is used as a discussion guide and each deduction and benefit is briefly explained by the counselor.

Summary

The Florida Deaf Services Project is an excellent adaptation of the traditional Job Club. It appears to be well suited to a deaf clientele and is written to compensate for the verbal limitations of this population. Further, it was constructed in comprehensive fashion and is designed for easy and practical application. Pilot studies of the program are encouraging (Justl et. al., 1983), but it should be noted that this model has not been subjected to an intensive experimental investigation.

CONCLUSION

Research documenting the employment success of chronically unemployed and physically disabled persons involved in the Job Club gives reason to believe that such a model will also be effective with a deaf clientele. However, investigations must be conducted to establish the impact of the approach and to pinpoint appropriate revisions in the philosophy and content of the model for deaf persons. The Job Club is a potentially powerful tool for the rehabilitation professional. We must be careful, though, not to grasp at it as a cure-all for problems encountered in placing deaf persons in jobs. Such blind acceptance may lead to disaster and extensive modification of the Job Club approach may lead to a similar end. It will only be through an extensive and intensive experimental examination that firm conclusions regarding the efficacy and content of the approach for deaf persons can be made.

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