

# STAFF DEVELOPMENT

## Recommendations for Training and Networking

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ITHACA

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## *Introduction*

This document is a product of the working-group *STAFF DEVELOPMENT*, one of the three working groups in the transnational partnership ITHACA. All Members of this group are managers in educational, scientific and other social Non-Profit-Organizations. The organizations are striving to integrate members of groups with special disadvantages, especially women, migrants and elderly persons, into the labour market. Through the working group, the organizations are seeking a cooperation in their common pursuits.

“STAFF DEVELOPMENT” was a very urgent topic for all members, because they suppose a relation between staff competences and a successful integration of clients into the labour market.

The specific goal of this working group was to exchange experiences about staff qualification and training within their respective national framework, to present and exchange examples of good practice and to develop a staff training module for the Greek, Spanish, German and Dutch DP group members. This training module should close the gap between the existing competences and those needed.

The process of exchange of experiences, good practices, similarities and differences was very intense and creative for all members. With this document we want to spread the results and sensitize for risks and chances that have to be respected in training and development of staff members and organizations who work in the field of education and training with the common goal of bringing disadvantaged people into work.

The challenge for the staff is that they have to serve two very different kinds of client: unemployed people on the one hand, employers on the other, both of which respond to different culture codes. Nevertheless, the specific interests of both must be identified and satisfied. The permanent question is:

How to mediate between particular clients of both kinds in order to get employment for the unemployed and a productive workforce for the employers?

## *Similarities and Differences in Staff Organisation and Development between the DP-Partners*

We have realized that, generally speaking, Spain, Greece and Germany have similar structures concerning staff organisation and development, whereas the Netherlands follow a different model.

In the three countries - Spain, Greece and Germany - the staff, consisting of counsellors, academic experts and social workers, will train the unemployed client and to bring him into work. Staff members consider themselves as facilitators of the clients in order to bring them into work, but very often they do not really know the rules of the labour market. Their language is different from the language of employers and managers. They have competencies in training and communication related to the unemployed client, but concerning the other client, the employer, there are deficiencies. Competences in acquisition, marketing, selling and presenting, which are in demand by the employers, are not available with the staff.

The Dutch organization model is different: They have a **Front-Office** which takes care of the acquisition for the whole project, and the **Back Office**, the reintegration bureau, which takes care of its clients, the unemployed people. So there are specialists for each sort of client, for the unemployed people and the employers.

### *Similarities*

Although the national organizations and structures are different, there are similarities in their paedagogical approach, philosophy, message, communication techniques, procedures of approaching and building relationships with companies.

Below we will present some **Good Practice Examples**:

*Acquisition techniques (GREECE)*

*A strategy to attract the attention of employers (SPAIN)*

*Communication techniques in building relationship with employers(GREECE)*

## *Acquisition Techniques*

The main objective of these techniques is the successive building of a good relationship with employers. We separate between respective techniques for the case of the centre locating an employer and for the case of an employer locating the centre.

### **1. The Centre Locates the Employer**

Location includes the following steps:

1. Compilation of an informative letter, addressed to the staff manager of a prospective employer, which has to be carefully adapted to the specific needs of the employer. In general, the letter includes some information on the organization, on the particular project and on the services offered by the employment Centre. It will also indicate a future phone contact.

2. Phone contact about 10 days after the letter has been posted. During the phone contact the career counsellor of the centre will try hard to understand the intentions of the staff manager:

3. In case the staff manager will respond negatively the career counsellor will explore the reasons in order to improve possible weak points of the approach of the centre.

In case the staff manager will respond positively the counsellor will arrange a meeting with him / her or any other representative of the prospective employer.

### **2. The Employer Locates the Centre**

This process is similar to the above, with the difference that the first steps are omitted. In this case the Career Counsellor can be sure that the employer is positive, so the communication is much easier. The only step that remains in this occasion is the arrangement of a meeting.

## ***A Strategy to Attract the Attention of Employers***

Most of the organizations of EQUALBUR have developed actions to attract the attention of the employers. They all agree that the very best strategy is to design a social awareness campaigns, which will include different activities/tools, funded by Public Administrations and Chambers of Commerce, and with the support of the mass media.

<b>STRATEGY</b>	<b>DESCRIPTION</b>
<b>Social awareness campaigns:</b>	Diffusion of an idea/project/ to attract the attention of the employers. In general social awareness involves networking; most of the campaigns are funded by Public Administrations.
<i>A social campaign can include all or some of the following tools:</i>	
<b>TOOL</b>	<b>DESCRIPTION</b>
<b>Employers' club</b>	It is a club of employers that have signed an agreement with a non profit organization to fulfil a commitment. Belonging to this club will improve their social image.
<b>Specific magazines</b>	Social marketing: Interesting experiences referring to social events or actions developed in the companies are published in this kind of specific magazines. These publications are distributed among the business sector.
<b>Publications</b>	Other publications referring to social initiatives that are distributed among the business sector.
<b>ACTIVITY</b>	<b>DESCRIPTION</b>
<b>Open days</b>	Organizations show what they are doing, activities, work places, etc, to let the general population know and mainly the employers, how their functioning is.
<b>Conferences and training days with employers</b>	A theoretical approach to the reality of the organizations and their target group.
<b>Round tables</b>	Networking which involves the participation of several members coming from different domains, to discuss about a subject in which they are all concerned.
<b>Solidarity Fairs</b>	Networking among the non profit organizations that want to reach a common goal: to hold together a fair where all the activities developed by them will be shown.

## ***Communication Techniques in Building Relationships with Employers***

Main objective of this process is the building of a good relationship with the co-operating employer. The first meeting is very important for the achievement of this goal. The whole process includes two phases, each of which is described through the following steps:

### **Phase 1: First Meeting**

#### **1. Preparation for the Meeting**

- Gathering all available information regarding the enterprise in the centre database.
- Collecting good quality background information on the enterprise as an organization and on its activities
- Collecting informative material on the project and the services of the centre which may be presented to the representative of the prospective employer
- Developing a communication strategy according to the following criteria:
  - What kind of enterprise is it and what may be its specific needs?
  - Which features will entice the enterprise to cooperate with the centre? (e.g. information on subsidies for hiring unemployed persons, a web presentation of the enterprise etc).
  - What can the centre provide for the prospective employer?
  - How can the counsellor promote the services offered by the centre and correspond to all possible requests?

#### **2. The Actual Meeting**

1. The success of the first meeting depends on the kind of preparation mentioned above. The essence of this preparation is: if the meeting is successful, the whole approach process is successful, too. The meeting must as long as the staff manager requires, not tiring, and very particular in its thematic strands. In fact, the counsellor must follow marketing's rules if he / she wants to have results.

#### **3. Meeting Analysis**

1. Defining the quality and the particular elements of the newly established relationship between the Counsellor and Employer, including a detailed description.
2. Recording the main requests of the enterprise. Any open job offer has to be described in details (filing a structured job description form).
3. Recording other requests of the enterprise (i.e. creation of a web page)

## **Phase 2: Developing a Stable and Long-Term Relationship with the Enterprise**

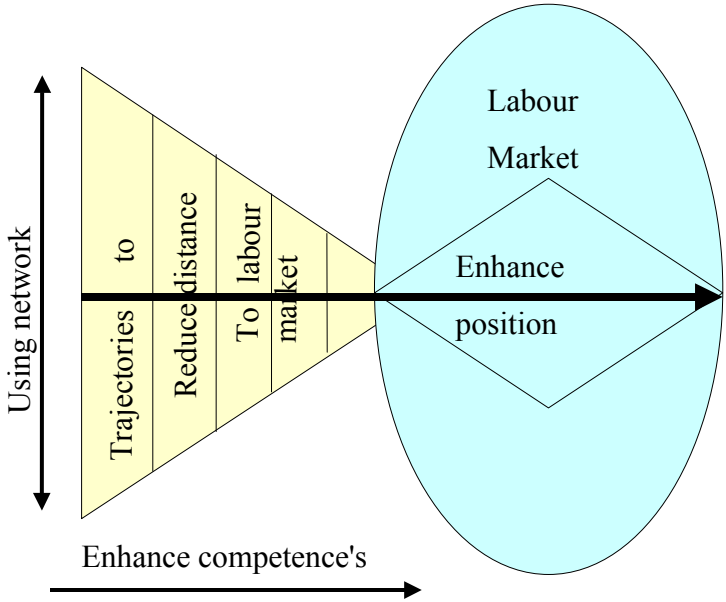
1. All effort must be invested to satisfy the main request of the employer. According to the described profile of the working place the counsellor tries to locate all possible candidates among the clients of the centre that may fulfil the requirements of the employer.
2. The counsellor remains in frequent contact with the enterprise and informs the representative on his / her progress.
3. The counsellor sends a curriculum vitae of the candidates to the employer and schedules appointments for them with him.
4. At the same time, the counsellor tries to satisfy any other requests of the enterprise.
5. Soon after the enterprise decides to hire a candidate for the open job a threepartite contract between the centre, the employee and the enterprise is signed, containing
6. A six months follow up process is then established in order to facilitate and ensure a successful job placement.

*Training-Module: A Client- and Demand-Oriented Approach  
Trajectories and Pitfalls*

During the meetings of Ithaca the differences between the participating DP's became clear. They seemed to be so wide that the last goal, a common module, is out of range within the limited possibilities of Ithaca. Never the less the workgroup reached a high level in achieving the first two goals. And what we did is to offer the second best: a list of recommendations. Within this chapter we rejoice to share the results of our efforts with you.

Problem description.

Within Ithaca the background of the members of the staff is very diverse. Some have a background based on social studies, some on economics or on knowledge of labour market ...Whatever the background: the attitude towards the clients must be a demand directed approach. In order to get a clear picture we conclude that each member has an orientation on two clients: the person to guide towards the labour market and the employer who wants a good match.



competences

The first achievement must be to put the potential employee in charge of his or her own life, so he / she will be able to continue the second achievement: getting paid labour or entering into a career job.

A key to success is to bring the two clients together. This requires a good relationship with both our clients. It has become clear that individual professionals more often have a single orientation, mostly on the employee, and sometimes neglect the interest of the employers, or worse: have a negative attitude towards them.

Client 1, the candidate employee

Four success factors can be discerned:

The client should be in charge of his own (life) trajectories as much as possible.

Trajectories should be guided by an assessment of the core aspects that drive an individual person

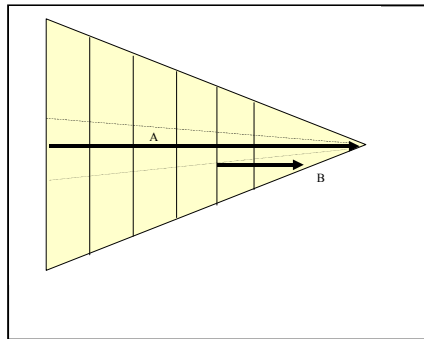
The interaction between client and professional has to be based on equality, respect and mediation.

The interaction between the primary process and secondary process has to be characterised by reciprocity.

*1. To be in Charge:*

The central aim is to teach and enable the client to be in charge of his own life in an adequate way, to have a clear view on the choices that can and must be made. That means a good information of the client in due time about the particular decisions with all the consequences. In due time means that the client has the opportunity to think and reflect upon the upcoming decisions and to let it sink into his/her consciousness rationally and emotionally.

It is the duty of the professional to propose a trajectory in line with the starting position of the individual client. The steps to be taken and the resulting responsibilities have to be in line with the possibilities and competences of the client and the professional (as well!). Coaching has to be aimed at an enhancement of the competences of the client and at his/her encouragement to take recourse these competences in order to be able to take charge of his own life and career. Experience has shown that the question is not whether the client is taking charge but to which degree and how adequately he/she is handling things.



Pitfalls:

- The professional has no, or is not using his, network.

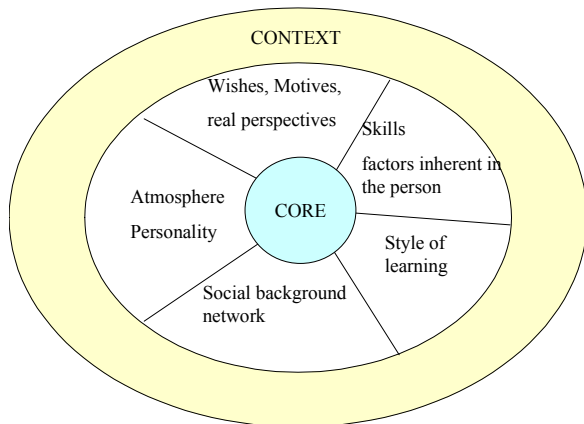
He wants to level all obstacles met by the clients by himself and thus gets out of line with his own possibilities and competences. (A)

- The professional has a limited view/possibilities and unnecessarily limits the ongoing process of enablement by solving only a part of the blockades experienced by the clients. (B)

Many institutional practices are still characterised by a top down approach, in which the role of the objects of the policy with regards to the development, enactment and administration of the particular policy is very limited.

- The most important steps have already been taken before the individuals for whom the policy is designed, enter the picture.

2. Trajectories should be guided by an assessment of the core aspects that drives the client.



The client is a person with particular strengths, possibilities and competences in a specific social context, and these correspond to his/her particular contextual background.

Competence must be understood in the widest of meanings; it comprises several aspects: (see figure):

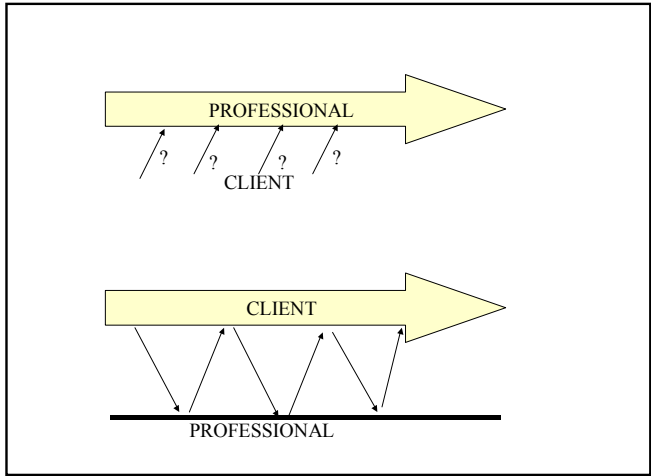
The underlying intentions that the client wants to realise; the degree to which the client is motivated to put his or her wishes into practice and act upon them; the way the general need for safety and security of the client is reflected in a particular action repertoire to fulfil his needs; the present and potential skills and possibility to learn.

Awareness of the fact that paid labour will have an effect on other domains of life (functioning in a family). The social background of the client brings with it a certain atmosphere and personality, certain meanings, norms and attitudes to himself and to the relation with important others.

Pitfalls:

- For the development of a trajectory it is of crucial importance that all these aspects are considered in their mutual interrelation. It happens often that the professional restricts the competence only to the skills of the client.
- Under pressure of time and money (performance agreements) the professional fails to take the perspective of the client as point of departure, as interpretative framework to get a view on the coherence of the different aspects. The result will be that aspects like motivation and developmental potential remain just loose parts, that are only brought together from the perspective of the professional but do not actually relate to each other in the eyes of the client.
- The organisation in which the professional works committed herself beforehand to the aim of the trajectory, there is no space to describe the aim in the process of development and to refine it as the trajectory takes its course.

3. *The interaction between client and professional has to be based on equality, respect and mediation.* Coherence and continuity in the diverse stages of the trajectory of the client may be achieved only if the counsellor establishes and maintains a high quality interaction with the client.



The communication between client and professional has to break away from a one-way traffic (see figure). The relationship is characterised by an interaction aimed at concrete goals, in which client and professional play an equally important role and treat each other with respect. The goal of the meetings, appointments and activities have to be clear for both. For the professional it forms the basis to find out which needs to be taken into consideration and which rather not, for otherwise the recurrent assessment may be transformed into a permanent occupation.

The point of departure is that everybody can learn if the right conditions are created. People can gain new knowledge and insights and master new skills, and can learn to put these into practice if:

- The process links up with the development potential. The learning process is aimed at the next development step, by learning new competences already existing competences are used;
- The process links up with the development process of the client, so advantage can be taken from the fact that it is easier for the client to acquire new competences when he/she can actually practically use it in the day-today activities.
- The client must be stimulated to transfer acquired competences from one context to other contexts: learned how to learn.

The role of the professional must be a mediating one.

4. *The interaction between the primary process and the secondary process has to be characterised by reciprocity.*

The professional can fulfil his/her task to satisfaction only if the organisation creates the necessary conditions:

- Made-to-measure coaching is possible only if coherence and flexibility in the trajectory are maintained;
- The overall responsibility for the trajectories of the client and the responsibility for parts of the trajectory must be clear;
- The reciprocal, demand driven approach must be embedded within the overall organisation;
- Evaluations must also be related to criteria regarding the qualitative content of trajectories, the management and the steering of the organisation has to be adjusted to these made-to-measure coaching enhancing conditions.

Pitfalls:

- Evaluations tend to be based solely on output-criteria.

- Each organisation involved with parts of the trajectory has different policies. It is hard to get the demanded co-operation between them in order to achieve coherence in the overall trajectory.
- Often different departments are involved with the client, each of which may have different interests. E.g. the municipal social services tend to be interested in a trajectory to paid labour as short as possible, the same interest may guide the organisation of the professional, if this organisation has a contract based on a fixed price. In this way there is a risk of a short term solution and a repetition of the problem (revolving door client)

Client 2: The employer.

Without the client no 1, the potential employee, the professional will not be in business. Without client no 2, the employer, the trajectories leading towards paid labour are limited, and the organisation will have a weak competition. Getting the potential employee into (paid) labour demands a good knowledge of the labour market in order to fit in the employee. Therefore a wide and intensive network of employers is of great value to the organisation of the professional.

Your goal is: The realization of a successful job-placement and a long lasting relationship with employers.  
 Your message is: We offer very good products and services, we are a good company and produce quality.

*Building a network with employers.*

The approach of an employer should be done professionally: acquisition is a profession!

**Pitfall:**

The organisation combines the acquisition with mediation. The professional does not always (mostly not) have the skills needed for acquisition, he/she is getting out of line with his/her possibilities and competence's.

The number of employers within your region is limited. If their approach is not organised, and every single mediator tries to get in contact, there arises an avalanche. This will arouse irritation instead of a good contact.

**So:**

Every organisation has to select and qualify persons for this special task: canvassers.

They are part of the process the mediator has with his/her client, a good communication is indispensable.

The canvasser is representing the whole organisation and must have a survey of the entire business, all products and demands within the organisation.

This does not exclude any individual approach. In our opinion every professional within our organisations should be aware of the fact that in every opportunity, formal and informal, he/she represents his/her organisation with an attitude that leads to new contacts with employers. Formalising is the job of the canvassers, making a first contact the job of all. In his/her contact with employers the mediator should be aware of the fact that his/her attitude is of great importance for a good and long lasting relationship. He/she must keep the fire burning!

Informal, unforeseen, contacts are only one, and the most uncertain way to get in contact. You can use other ways:

Visit clubs of employers	The local entrepreneur club, the Lions' Club, the Rotary Club.
Participate in meetings	Visits or, even better, perform in formal meetings of the chamber of commerce or branch organisations.
Conferences	Promote and use conferences between employers and initiate your own conferences.
Recognition of good practice	Give the employer free publicity as a reward for good practice, reward him or nominate him for a reward.
Specific magazines	Interesting experiences referred to social events or actions developed in the companies

***Recommendations for the Development of Staff***  
concerning

***Philosophy and Attitudes***

Your **goal** should be:  
Realizing a **successful job-placement** and a **long lasting relationship**  
with employers.

You should take care of the indispensable personal characteristics of the staff  
such as

- client-oriented thinking
- open mind towards the clients
- optimistic belief in what you are doing
- ability to communicate
- empathy
- charisma
- ability to overcome difficulties, objections
- self confidence

***Message***

We offer very good products and services.  
We are a good company. We produce quality.

***Organisational Structure***

Acquisition is a profession. You have to be an expert in this field.  
Keep in mind, that the employer is a client, too.  
Every organisation has to select persons with a special task for acquisition: canvassers.  
Use the professional skills in your company, don't try to do everything by yourself.

***Competences***

The canvasser must have a good knowledge of the labour market and the legal frame.  
He/she needs

- professional communication skills
- marketing skills
- knowledge about human resources management
- informatic skills
- techniques of consulting

## Recommendations for networking

<b>STRATEGY</b>	<b>DESCRIPTION</b>
building a network	general and individual approach of employers. Publishing an idea/project/ tool. Calls, visits, letters, social
with employers	awareness campaigns and other campaigns.

<b>TOOL</b>	<b>DESCRIPTION</b>
Clubs of Employers	Regional clubs, for instance: local entrepreneur club, Lions' Clubs, Rotary Clubs etc.
Cooperation meetings with chambers of commerce and labour market actors	Use formal meetings, gremiums for formal and informal contacts
Individual contacts with employers.	Use your formal and informal contacts and sources
Forums, meetings, Round Tables and workshops	. . . use it for formal and informal contacts
Conferences	Promote and use conferences between employers and initiate own conferences
Recognition of good practice	promote and use recognitions and rewards
Specific magazines	Marketing: Interesting experiences referred to social events or actions developed in the companies may be published in magazines. These publications are then distributed among the business sector
Publications	Publications referred to initiatives that are distributed among the business sector
web-site	well-linked web-site, procuring information about the services of the centre, online communication, offer employers to use it.

<b>ACTIVITY</b>	<b>DESCRIPTION</b>
Open days	Organizations show what they are doing, activities, work places, etc, to let the general population, and namely, the employers, know what they have to offer and how to make use of the offered services
Individual meetings with employers	Pre-planned meetings, for example: acquaintance meetings, informative meetings, follow-up-meetings etc
Conferences and training days intended for employers	A theoretical approach to the reality of the organizations and their target group
Round tables and workshops	Networking involving members coming from different domains, discussing subjects by which they are all concerned
Solidarity Fairs	Networking among the non profit organizations that want to reach a common goal: hold a fair together where all the activities developed by each of them will be shown.



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This manual is the result of the team-work of participants of this group. Here we present those members that have worked continuously on transnational conferences and will continue to be contact persons for this working group.

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