

FROM PINK SLIP TO PAYCHECK!
HOW TO HELP DISLOCATED WORKERS
GET HIRED IN LESS TIME THAN EVER!

A series of three articles by

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**Originally published in the Advantage Newsletter
of the National Association of Workforce Development Professionals**

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Larry Robbin, Executive Director of Robbin and Associates, has over forty-five years of experience providing training to people in the workforce development field. Larry is widely regarded as a national expert in workforce development and on the topic of improving the employment outcomes of dislocated workers. Larry has trained more than 100,000 people and presented over 300 webinars. His services have been used by the Department of Labor, workforce boards, America's Job Centers, nonprofits, unions, training providers, government agencies, schools and many other types of organizations.

Larry managed the dislocated worker program for the city of Oakland California. In three and a half years the program served over 14,000 dislocated workers that came from twenty-four diverse layoffs and closures. The program used an innovative service delivery design and pioneering employment counseling services which led the organization to having outstanding employment outcomes. The program won awards from the National Association of Counties and recognition from the Department of Labor for its outstanding outcomes. Larry worked with unions and management as he served as Chairperson for the Labor Management

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Outplacement Coordinating Committees that were instrumental in the program's success.

The Department of the Navy used Larry's services to design outplacement services to provide reemployment assistance to over 10,000 civilian employees that were laid off in the closure of the Mare Island Naval Shipyard. The Department of the Navy gave Larry a Certificate of Appreciation for the success of this project.

The Marin Education Fund used Larry's services to design its dislocated worker program that focused on serving dislocated upper level white collar managers, supervisors and technical staff. This population came with many different reemployment barriers that made them very difficult to serve. Larry's model was instrumental in helping the program exceed all of its performance goals.

Because of his extensive experience with dislocated workers, Larry was appointed by the Mayor of Oakland to serve on the government commission that oversaw the closure of the Navy hospital in Oakland California.

There are many other examples of Larry's work to improve the employment outcomes of dislocated workers. Besides his professional work with dislocated workers, he has also spent many hours of volunteer time helping people that have lost their jobs. Larry has worked with many government workforce programs and trained their staff in how to effectively serve dislocated workers. Over 10,000 workforce staff have been trained by Larry on how to provide more effective services to dislocated workers.

For more information about the many other webinars offered by Larry Robbin, go to <https://larryrobbin.com/v2/about/>. For more information about Larry and to sign up for his free monthly workforce newsletter read by over 25,000 people in workforce development, go to <http://www.larryrobbin.com>. To email Larry send an email to <mailto:larry@larryrobbin.com>

Please feel free to share these articles with people serving dislocated workers.

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FROM PINK SLIP TO PAYCHECK IN LESS TIME THAN EVER!

HOW TO GET BETTER OUTCOMES WITH DISLOCATED WORKERS

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The original version of this article was published in the Advantage Newsletter of the National Association of Workforce Development Professionals (www.nawdp.org) as part of a series of articles on this topic.

As depressing as it may sound, everyone who serves dislocated workers should Google job loss and death. You will find an endless amount of entries and studies that show how job loss is a killer and will shorten people's lives. This understanding will make you more successful at serving these customers.

Depression, frustration, chaotic thinking, trauma, substance abuse, domestic violence, thinking about suicide, and self-blame are all very powerful barriers to employment that come from job loss. They block motivation, make decision making difficult, cause people to not interview well, drop out of training, quit jobs, and lead to a whole host of problems that will prolong unemployment.

While we often focus on the loss of a paycheck as the most important thing that comes from being laid off, for many dislocated workers, the bigger loss may be the loss of support they will get from their workplace family once they lose their job. In many cases, the workplace family is often a stronger support system than people's actual family. Most people will spend more time with their workplace family than with their actual family. Workplace families are in a unique position to help people deal with many of the crises and challenges in their lives. When people are dislocated, they not only lose the vital support system of the workplace family, they also quickly find out that the traditional ways they deal with difficulties may not be numerous or strong enough to help them cope with the profound challenges of being laid off and the challenging job search that often awaits them.

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RUN EMPLOYER-SPECIFIC CAREER CLUBS

One strategy that can be very helpful to address this issue is to run weekly online and in-person Career Clubs and recruit people to them who have worked in the same company. These groups should have the elements of a support group, a source of labor market information, and a place to get career counseling and job search strategies. They should help people overcome common employment barriers and feature presentations by employers and people from organizations that can be of help to people in the group.

Career Clubs should be co-led by your staff and someone from the rank and file who got laid off from the company, has leadership skills, and is a person widely known and respected by the workforce. While you should let attendees in the Career Clubs vent their frustrations with being unemployed, keep the conversation focused on making progress, and do not let it disintegrate into a depressing complaint session. Get rounds of applause and give certificates of recognition for people who do things that will shorten the period of their unemployment. End the group with people saying what they got out of the session and what they would like to have happen in future sessions. These groups can help people develop new support systems and learn from each other.

You can have a topic for part of each group session and also allow plenty of time for people to raise their immediate concerns that they need to address. Some of the topics that have proven to be of interest in Career Clubs include the following:

What Can I Do to Help My Family Survive My Job Loss?

What Can I Do to Maintain High Levels of Job Search Motivation?

How Can I Live on Less Money While I am Laid Off?

What Types of Jobs are Growing and What Types are Disappearing?

Should I Consider Starting My Own Business?

Is Skills Training the Right Strategy for Me?

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USING YOUR PROGRAM ALUMNI AS ROLE MODELS

A very popular feature of a Career Club can be a panel presentation composed of people who were laid off, faced numerous challenges, and are now employed. They may be able to participate on their break or day off. You can also use cellphones, FaceTime, Zoom, or other methods to facilitate their presentations. Ask people to be in the conversation who have faced and overcome some of the difficult types of challenges that are common among dislocated workers.

Dislocated workers desperately need role models to help them believe they can find a good place in the world of work. Oftentimes, people start on a downward spiral because they can't believe someone like them can survive this job loss. While our programs give people plenty of information (often too much), we typically do not give them role models, which is what they desperately need. Guest speakers in Career Clubs who are your program's alumni can provide that kind of inspiring, transformative role model that people need to hear and talk to.

Make sure you use an anonymous evaluation form at the end of every Career Club to find out how to improve them. Also, conduct one-on-one interviews with people to get their feedback. Ask people for ideas, topics, and what types of presenters they would like to see. Use the principles of Human Centered Design to make the groups more meaningful and effective. If your attendance is shrinking, don't keep doing the same kind of group. Change the content, leadership, location, time, format, how you publicize, and how much you publicize the Career Club until you find what works to attract the most people.

If you find a way to run successful Career Clubs, they will not only help you exceed the goals of your program, but they will also help cut the amount of time it takes for dislocated workers to become successfully employed. Without any exaggeration, that will also help them live longer and more fulfilling lives. It will also have a positive impact on their families, loved ones, friends, other people in their lives, the economy, and the quality of life in the community.

HOW TO HELP DISLOCATED WORKERS OVERCOME THE THREE MOST COMMON INTERNALIZED BARRIERS TO EMPLOYMENT

By Larry Robbin

HOLDING ON TO UNREALISTIC SALARY AND BENEFIT EXPECTATIONS

You can help people deal with this by running a workshop titled How to Find Out How Much Jobs Pay and What Benefits They Offer. This can feature labor market information experts sharing resources, websites and other ways to get this information. You can also propose a strategy where people look for and take a lower paying job or a temporary job as a transitional employment strategy while they keep pursuing a better job.

You will often get pushback and resistance from dislocated workers when you give them the reality check about what lies ahead for them in terms of salary and benefits. No one wants to hear this kind of news. Customers may even get angry at you and “shoot” the messenger. It is frustrating to watch this happen, but with some people who are very resistant and in denial about labor market economics and realities, the best strategy may be to let the labor market be the teacher. I don’t prefer this approach, but in my experience the only way some people will adjust their expectations is by seeing that they can’t find what they want because it doesn’t exist. This is unfortunate and we don’t like seeing this play out, but with some people this kind of reality check is what it will take for them to get the message that they need to adjust their expectations to fit the reality they face. If they don’t do this, they will be making their job search much longer than necessary and they risk the problem of getting job search burnout which makes it more difficult to get a job.

RESISTANCE TO CHANGING CAREERS

The one career lifestyle is a vocational dinosaur and these days very few people will only have one or two careers in their working life. Going through a voluntary or involuntary career change is a growing part of the reality of working in today’s labor market. Your program can run a panel presentation titled, Do You Want to Know How

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and Why I Changed Careers? This can help people learn how to make this transition and get the best outcomes. Sometimes our work with dislocated workers is filled with so much information it can be overwhelming especially when they have been traumatized by job loss. Instead of information, many dislocated workers will benefit much more from hearing from people who have already been through these transitions. If you can shift your work from being exclusively information based to exposing people to real life role models, the lessons of that experience will be a much more powerful teacher than just giving people information.

Helping people get informational interviews from other people who have already successfully made the kind of career change a job seeker is considering can also be a great way to help people adjust to the reality of the multi-career lifestyle. For example, a white collar worker thinking about pursuing a skilled trades career can really benefit from talking with someone that has already made a similar transition like going from being a data processor to a carpenter. Informational interviews with our successful program graduates are an underutilized strategy for helping people learn about the changes they are facing. Think about more ways to incorporate getting information from people with lived experience and you will be much more successful with dislocated workers.

Another way to help people think more broadly about how they fit into the world of work is to encourage them to do volunteer work or get internships that will expose them to other careers. Going on tours of workplaces and training programs can also help to open people's minds about their future journey in the world of work as they see people do work they may have never imagined being a fit for them. Encouraging people to do some of the assessments that can be found online at <https://www.onetonline.org/> can open their eyes to their potential to do other kinds of careers. The transferable skills tools on that website can also be helpful in expanding people's awareness of their true career potential. The future of the world of work is unpredictable and the people who survive it the best are the ones that are the most flexible about what they will be doing.

BECOMING TOO DEPRESSED TO JOB HUNT **AND GETTING IMMOBILIZED BY UNEMPLOYMENT**

This is a very common barrier among dislocated workers. Not only are people depressed about the loss of a paycheck and the uncertainty of their future, but they are also depressed biologically. We may not realize it but work often involves exercise. The act of getting up and getting ready for work involves physical activity. Shoveling snow to get the car out of the garage so you can go to work is a form of exercise. Walking from the parking spot to the workplace is physical activity. Even office workers with relatively sedentary jobs can actually often walk many miles in a day. Blue collar workers get a workout every time they go to work. It is important for people to replace the level of physical activity that they got from work with other physical activity that comes from exercise, playing sports, volunteering, walking a dog, jogging etc.

These activities release chemicals in the brain called endorphins that control mood. Exercise is an anti-depressant. You should help people incorporate exercise as part of their job search day and take this seriously. Many unemployed people will think that exercise is a frivolous activity that takes time away from job search, but that is not the case. Depressed job seekers frequently do not job hunt enough to find a job because rejection is too hard for them to take. Depressed job seekers lack energy in interviews, can't sell themselves and what they can do and often do not come across as positive enough or highly motivated for employers to want to hire them. People who are depressed stay unemployed longer than people that use exercise for its mood altering potential. People should not think of this as wasting time. It is changing their body chemistry so they can fight the depression of being dislocated.

I have seen these strategies work for thousands of dislocated workers. They will help dislocated workers go from pink slip to paycheck in less time than ever. Do you have some favorite strategies for success with dislocated workers? Please send them to me at larry@larryrobbin.com so I can share them in future articles.

WHY DON'T EMPLOYERS HIRE DISLOCATED WORKERS AFTER INTERVIEWING THEM?

By Larry Robbin

Executive Director of Robbin and Associates

3rd Article in a Series on Dislocated Workers for the NAWDP Advantage

One of the most heartbreaking things I have observed in my consulting work helping employers improve their hiring processes and hiring decisions, is to see a very qualified dislocated worker interview and inadvertently do the wrong things that will keep them from getting the job offer. I have seen candidates share in the interview that they have gone through interview training at a workforce program, but the interview training did not understand the employer's mindset toward dislocated workers. As a result, the workforce program actually prolonged the unemployment of the dislocated worker.

There are other more general reasons why employers don't hire people after interviewing them, but these reasons are the most common with the dislocated worker candidate.

1. "They complained too much about their former employer."

When dislocated job seekers are asked questions about their previous employer, it can be like opening Pandora's box. Many dislocated workers carry a lot of pent up anger about the layoff and their former employer and this may be justified, but it should not come out in the interview. Employers don't like to hire disgruntled employees.

Dislocated workers need to realize that the person in management that is interviewing them may have laid people off as part of their job. The interviewer can take the negative things a candidate says about their former employer as an implied criticism of them. The interviewer may think that someone with this kind of negativity and anger issues will be difficult to manage and that they will regret it if they hire them.

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People do not have to be fake and pretend like the layoff did not bother them, but they should not take this too far and risk being labeled as a potentially problematic employee. Some people have so much anger that you may want to refer them to counseling where those issues can be processed in the right environment and not in the job interview.

2. “They seem to set in their ways, and I am not sure they could do things the way we do them here.”

Dislocated workers often sell their experience and work history, but not their trainability and flexibility, which are very important qualities a new employer looks for. While employers are interested in what people have done, they are even more interested in what they can do in the future.

In our employment counseling we should help people look for examples in their work history that demonstrate trainability and flexibility as well as their experience. They can bring these things up in the interview, so the employer sees them as the evolving employee of the future and not as the rigid employee of the past. Experience may help people to get the interview, but their future potential will help them get the job offer. This information should also be highlighted in people’s resumes.

Some examples of this kind of information include the following:

“During my time at Anderson Electronics we went through four complete changes in our computer and data management systems. These were not simple modifications. They completed overhauled the old ways of working. My boss complimented me on how quickly I learned the new systems. In fact, I often was called on to tutor other employees in the new systems.”

“Over the years that I worked at Vulcan Iron foundry, I worked on four different shifts, I had six different supervisors, and I worked in five different departments. I operated seven different machines. I adapted quickly to

these changes because I knew that these were things that kept our company competitive and successful.”

3. “I know they will be taking a cut in pay and benefits if I offer them a job and I am concerned that they may continue to job hunt to look for something better in terms of pay and benefits or return to their previous employer if an opening occurs.”

This is a very legitimate concern of many employers when they think about hiring dislocated workers. The dislocated worker needs to know how to make a very strong and compelling case about why the place they are applying to is their employer of choice. They need to answer the question that is in the employer’s mind. That question is, “Why would you take a cut in pay and benefits to work here?”

Here are some examples of things the applicant can say to address the employers concerns.

“I know that the way traditional food processing is done is a dying industry. Between automation, robots and artificial intelligence I can see that staying in that industry I will risk being laid off again. I changed careers and went into training in healthcare because it is something that I feel is part of my mission in life and it has the advantage of also being a type of work that will be in high demand for a long time. That is why I want to work for you.”

“I know from learning about your company that you are growing quickly. You are building new factories and acquiring additional businesses and that means that you are going to be a place with a lot of opportunities for advancement. The company that I worked for could not offer that kind of a future. While I know I will take a pay and benefits cut in the short run, I want to be a part of your growth and advance in the long run. I think working for this company means a better future for me and my family.”

“I have read about how your company values employee input and that part of your success comes from listening to the ideas of the people that work here. In most of the places I worked in the past, employee feedback was not that important. I want to feel like a valuable and respected part of a team. That is important and I will get it by being part of this workforce.”

4. “I didn’t sense any enthusiasm for really wanting this job or for working here.”

Research shows that most employers make their first decision about whether to hire or not hire a candidate in the first few minutes of the interview. The rest of the interview is seeing whether that first decision is correct or not. The employer starts scoring the dislocated worker as soon as they appear on a Zoom call or come into the interview room. First impressions are extremely important in the hiring process.

What the employer should see is a person with a big smile, lots of energy and enthusiasm. The employer should see someone that is obviously motivated. However, what they often see with dislocated workers is the exact opposite. They see a person with a frown, low energy and little enthusiasm. This is also what the customer will see and what coworkers will see. This comes from the depression of being laid off and out of work. When the employer experiences negative energy and affect, they know that this employee will not be a profit builder.

Dislocated workers need to address their depression through counseling, getting involved in supportive activities, doing volunteer work and other things that are anti-depressants. When they practice interviewing, they should start by walking toward a full length mirror so they can see the body language they bring to the interview. Record mock interview Zoom calls so people can see body language and not only focus on what they say.

I hope these pointers help to open the doors to more job offers from interviews for the dislocated workers that you serve.

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A webinar presented for your program by
Larry Robbin Executive Director of Robbin and Associates

*** This training has been sponsored by the Department of Labor**
and presented to more than 10,000 dislocated worker program staff!

*** Over 45 Years of Experience with**
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*** Trained Over 100,000 People and**
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A research study cited by the British Broadcasting Company showed that 89% of laid off workers experienced serious health problems as the result of the layoff. Substance abuse, depression and other mental health problems and even suicide rates increase dramatically because of layoffs. Actually, the health problems start before the layoff as people feel the incredible stress, pressure and anxiety as they wait to hear if they are going to lose their jobs.

While losing a paycheck and benefits are very serious, they are far from the only thing people lose when they are let go from their jobs. They lose structure in their lives. They lose purpose. They lose respect and self-esteem. They lose

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the support and friendships that come from their workplace family. In many cases they lose their dream of a career and a better future.

The loss often spills over into their families and can lead to the breakup of relationships and even divorce. The New York Times cites the often overlooked profound impact parental job loss has on children. Children with parents that have been laid off have lower test scores than their peers, more school suspensions and lower high school graduation rates. These children also have an increase in health problems from the indirect impact of the stress on the family that comes from parental job loss. People who go through job loss often experience the same devastating feelings that people experience with the death of a loved one and this often goes beyond its impact on them and into the lives of their family members.

It is easy to underestimate the impact of being laid off unless you have experienced it. The presenter of this webinar, Larry Robbin, has been dislocated twice and his wife has been dislocated two times as well, so he understands from firsthand experience what being a dislocated worker really means. In this webinar, Larry integrates his extensive professional experience with dislocated workers along with the personal lessons he learned from going through challenging job losses.

People that have lost their jobs can be very difficult to serve using our traditional workforce program services. They often transfer the anger and resentment they feel from being laid off to their relationships with employment program staff. Dislocated workers can be disoriented from the trauma of being laid off and many of them find it difficult to make decisions about training, job search, career goals and getting the most out of our services. They frequently have very unrealistic expectations about how long a job search will take, salary

expectations and what we can do to help them. Many workforce staff will say it is often easier to serve people who have no or limited work histories that are going up the success ladder than to work with people who have lost their jobs and are coming down the success ladder.

You can be successful with dislocated workers if you have the right program design and skill sets to address their challenges. If you want to get better results than ever with people dealing with job loss and help them go from pink slip to paycheck as quickly as possible, bring this webinar to your organization. You will learn about the different ways layoffs happen and how the type of layoff should change how you work with people to get the best results. The session includes new employment counseling, case management and program design strategies that can make your program a powerful springboard to reemployment success! Get the best practices that will help rapid response services contribute to rapid reemployment! This training has been designed using proven strategies that will work for all types of dislocated workers including laid off government employees, blue collar workers, managers, displaced technology employees, white collar workers and others.

Learn from interviews with hundreds of dislocated workers what they actually did to maintain job search motivation and the strategies they used in their job search that led to them getting job offers in less time than many other people that were laid off. Learn from employer feedback why they often don't hire dislocated workers because of the mistakes they make in job search and interviews. Get practical ideas that will help people turn interviews into job offers. If you are going to refer people to training, get new ideas for assessment and improving retention in training to get better outcomes. If you want to help people go from pink slip to paycheck in record time, you need this webinar!

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