



QUALITY EDUCATIONAL DESIGN OF SAN DIEGO  
A hypothetical Corporation

*Initial Analysis of  
Problems and Opportunities*

# Young Adult job seekers- an opportunity for instruction

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### *Young Adult Job Seekers- an opportunity for instruction*

#### **Introduction**

The role of work in our society is pervasive and unavoidable. Employment and its daily preparation consume ten to twelve hours of our day. Young adults entering the workplace for the first time are disadvantaged by their lack of exposure to work culture. Because work is crucial to the effectiveness of our society, students must gain possession of the soft and hard skills associated with employment. Such skills should be given serious thought and not left to chance or common sense. A firm grasp of job readiness skills not only makes a difference in obtaining a job but are also the key to advancing in the workplace.

The Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS, 2004, para.4) press release infers that people hold “an average of 10.2 jobs from ages 18- 38.” Job changes are a part of our life. This means job seeking skills are ones that are used many times over during a lifetime. Teaching high school students to acquire job preparation skills allows young adults to gain independence and financial stability. We believe that our QED product will make a positive impact on our society for years to come by empowering our youth.

#### **Analysis of Problems and Opportunities**

##### **Description of the Educational Context**

The high school environment poses a number of challenges for students and teachers. To begin with, the pressures of standardized tests and college enrollment eligibility leave secondary schools ill equipped to focus on the job preparedness for young adults. In addition, high school instructors are further discouraged from addressing this need because of the time and expertise required to deliver this type of instruction.

##### **Learners**

Our job search acquisition skills product is geared toward high school students between the ages of 15 and 18. In our analysis these students expressed an overall eagerness to better ready themselves for the work world.

Our survey revealed the following characteristics of these learners and their experience with the subject matter:

- 50% of the learners have no prior work experience to offer employers.
- The remaining 50% of learners have limited work experience.
- Presenting one’s self at an interview was the single greatest confidence issue of survey respondents.
- 50 out of 54 students felt comfortable using a computer to find jobs.

##### **Evidence that Instruction is an Appropriate Strategy**

High school is the perfect environment for such a product to be circulated because:

- Students are already gathered in one place.
- Students have a willingness to learn the information we are presenting.
- There is a teacher present to ask questions and reinforce instruction.

- Classrooms have computers and equipment needed for instruction already present in the classroom.
- Everyone is at the age when learning such skills are most relevant.

With the lack of student's existing job hunting skills discovered during our research we concluded that most students are not being effectively taught these skills in their regular high school curriculum. Teachers may see job-hunting skills as a responsibility of the parent but since such a high number of people surveyed had not acquired such skills by the time they are about to graduate, it was found that they are not learning such skills at home either. Due to this reality, an instructional product is the most appropriate way for high school learners to become familiar with job hunting basics just in time for when they will be most likely to start seeking employment.

### **Justification for Using an Instructional Product**

A few hours of instruction would not take much time away from other regular high school curriculum and a packaged instructional product will make the information easy to disseminate. It will focus attention to the most needed and important information students need to conduct a job hunt instead of the general overview usually given to them by their regular homeroom teachers. Giving students tips from experts instead of the limited experience of one high school teacher can help students build their confidence and gain a competitive edge. Packaged instruction containing *standardized* methods to embark on a successful job hunt can effectively teach job hunting skills. For example, we can provide them with a basic framework of resumes and provide them with ways to customize it to their own needs.

## ***Sources and Methods of Data Collection***

### **Sources of Data**

Responses from fifty eight individuals were included in our initial analysis. Our sources and their corresponding roles are as follows:

- 54 high school students, age 15-18 (Role: Learner/user of product);
- a line manager for McDonalds (Role: Constituent/Employer);
- a service manager for Ralph's (Role: Constituent/Employer);
- a GEICO hiring team employee (Role: Constituent/Employer);
- a SDSU career center supervisor (Role: Subject Matter Expert);
- a community clinic supervisor (Role: Subject Matter Expert).

### **Methods of Data Collection**

By focusing on the needs of the learner, our initial survey was designed to gauge the students' exposure to job hunting techniques, cover letter and resume skills and their confidence in their ability to interview successfully. These results allow for a benchmark of the existing knowledge and concerns of the learner. We then chose two managers in industries most likely to hire these students. The questions asked of these managers were developed to establish existing skill deficiencies in the average high school applicant as seen by established industry members. These results helped illuminate the existing lack of knowledge/preparation as seen by potential employers. Our questions for the career center, hiring team, and clinic supervisors focused on the skill set, common areas of need and additional job related skills needed from high school applicants.

# **Findings**

## **Description of Problem and Opportunities**

The initial analysis of the students and the interviews of key constituents and subject matter experts confirmed a significant knowledge and training gap to fill.

From the student surveys conducted, the following training needs were identified:

### *Job hunting skills:*

- Only 26% have been taught how to conduct a job hunt.
- Nearly 60% have never used the internet to look for a job.

### *Cover Letter and Resume creation:*

- Over 45% have never been taught how to create a cover letter.
- Only 33% felt they could effectively prepare a resume that communicated their skills.

From the interviews conducted, we found the following common areas of student training needs as seen by potential employers and hiring managers:

- Increased interpersonal skills
- Improved communication skills
- Interview preparation
- Appropriate attire and grooming

## **Learner Attitudes, Knowledge, Skills and Goals**

The students surveyed expressed a variety of reasons for getting a job; earning money, gaining work experience, helping to financially supporting their family, and increasing their self reliance. The desire to work is present however the majority of these students do not possess the technical expertise or confidence in their abilities to effectively seek out and acquire a job. For instance, while over 80% of the students indicated they were comfortable using the internet to look for a job, only 20% felt they had the skills necessary to create a cover letter and resume using a computer.

The two key areas students have indicated they are least confident in are interviewing skills (41%) and resume/cover letter creation (39%). With 59% of the students having never been interviewed and 81% having never used a cover letter or resume when applying for a job.

# **Conclusions and Recommendations**

## **Summary of Findings**

We had successfully predicted that resumes and interviews would be key areas of concern. We were surprised by the large percentage of students that already felt comfortable finding job listings and open positions. This has changed our focus to job application preparedness versus job finding.

## **General Recommendations**

From our Initiating Memo we stated that a series of individual instructional modules would be created. Students will then have the opportunity to access one or the entire instructional content based on students individual needs. Since students had varying areas of concern ranging from using the computer for a job hunt to interviewing skills, the addressing of each area separately is appropriate.

# **Goals**

## **Learner Goals**

This initial analysis uncovered a number of learner goals. Some of these include:

1. I want to be able to not be nervous or say the wrong things in an interview.
2. I want to be able to create a resume that shows off my skills.
3. I want to be able to find a job that fits my abilities and interests.

## **Instructional Goals**

With proper training and access to examples and non-examples learners will gain the skills and confidence necessary to complete a job hunt and acquisition. To achieve these goals, the following intermediate goals will be accomplished:

1. Learners will be able to compile a list of job or transferable skills to list on a resume.
2. Learners will be able to write appropriate answers to common interview questions.
3. Learners will be able to write down a list of five ways to prepare for an interview.
4. Learners will be able to write a company history and detailed job responsibilities for a position they are interested in.

## References

The number of jobs held, labor market activity, and earnings growth among baby boomers: recent results from longitudinal survey (2004, August 25). *Bureau of Labor Statistics Press Release* Retrieved October 22, 2005, from <http://www.bls.gov/news.release/pdf/nlsoy.pdf>

## Appendix A

# Student Survey Questions and Results

A total of 54 high school students took part in our survey. The survey included five yes/no questions, seven statements asking them to rank their level of agreement and three short answer questions. The following tables/charts summarize the results.

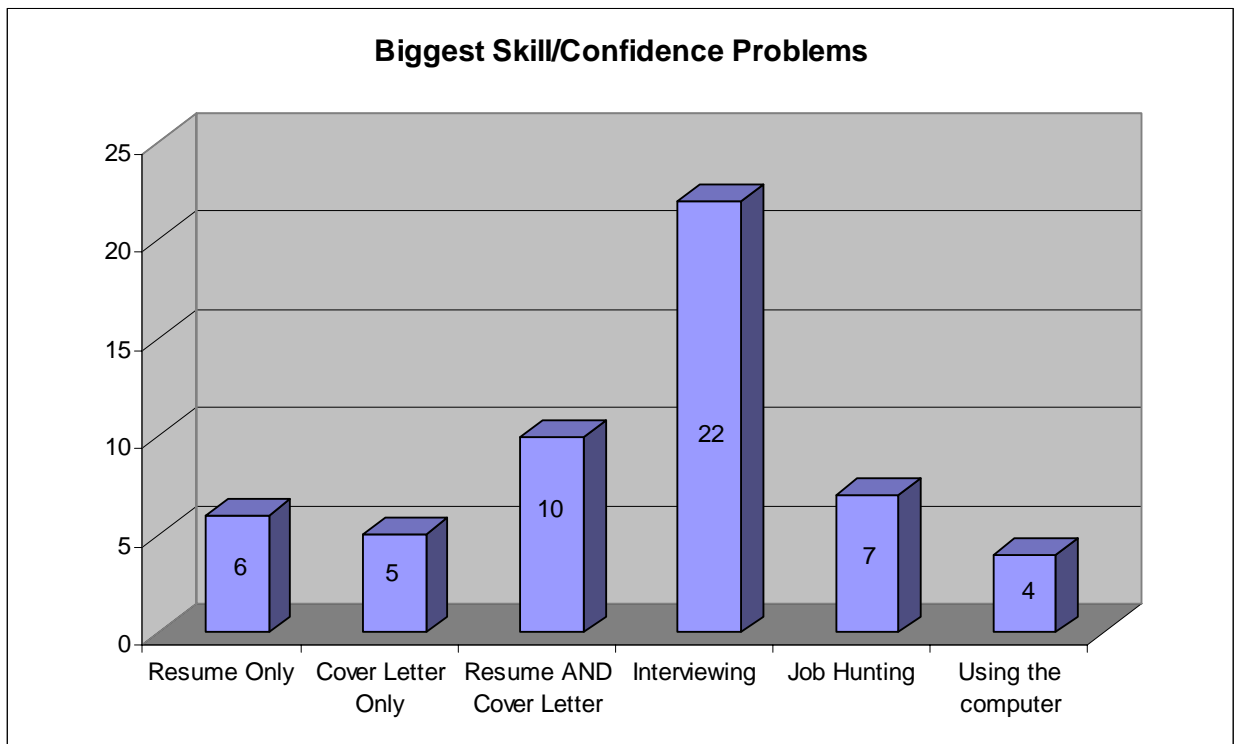
<u>Age</u>	<u># of Students</u>	<u>YES OR NO</u>	<u>Yes</u>		<u>No</u>	
<u>15</u>	<u>4</u>	<u>Have you had job?</u>	<u>50%</u>	<u>27</u>	<u>27</u>	<u>50%</u>
<u>16</u>	<u>26</u>	<u>Have you used a resume or cover letter to get a job?</u>	<u>19%</u>	<u>10</u>	<u>44</u>	<u>81%</u>
<u>17</u>	<u>23</u>	<u>Have you used the internet to look for a job?</u>	<u>43%</u>	<u>23</u>	<u>31</u>	<u>57%</u>
<u>18</u>	<u>1</u>	<u>Have you been interviewed for a job before?</u>	<u>41%</u>	<u>22</u>	<u>32</u>	<u>59%</u>
<u>Total</u>	<u>54</u>					

	<u>Strongly Disagree</u>	<u>Disagree</u>	<u>Neutral</u>	<u>Agree</u>	<u>Strongly Disagree</u>	
<b>#1 I feel comfortable using a computer to look for job openings</b>						
	<u>1</u>	<u>1</u>	<u>10</u>	<u>22</u>	<u>20</u>	<u># of Students</u>
	<u>2%</u>	<u>2%</u>	<u>19%</u>	<u>41%</u>	<u>37%</u>	<u>Percent</u>
<b>#2 I have been taught how to conduct a job hunt</b>						
	<u>3</u>	<u>18</u>	<u>19</u>	<u>9</u>	<u>5</u>	<u># of Students</u>
	<u>6%</u>	<u>33%</u>	<u>35%</u>	<u>17%</u>	<u>9%</u>	<u>Percent</u>
<b>#3 I have been taught how to create a resume</b>						
	<u>6</u>	<u>5</u>	<u>14</u>	<u>16</u>	<u>13</u>	<u># of Students</u>
	<u>11%</u>	<u>9%</u>	<u>26%</u>	<u>30%</u>	<u>24%</u>	<u>Percent</u>
<b>#4 I have been taught how to create a cover letter</b>						
	<u>12</u>	<u>13</u>	<u>13</u>	<u>10</u>	<u>6</u>	<u># of Students</u>
	<u>22%</u>	<u>24%</u>	<u>24%</u>	<u>19%</u>	<u>11%</u>	<u>Percent</u>
<b>#5 I feel confident in my ability to explain my job skills and motivations</b>						
	<u>0</u>	<u>4</u>	<u>21</u>	<u>18</u>	<u>11</u>	<u># of Students</u>
	<u>0%</u>	<u>7%</u>	<u>39%</u>	<u>33%</u>	<u>20%</u>	<u>Percent</u>
<b>#6 I know how to prepare an effective resume, using action verbs to communicate my job skills</b>						
	<u>3</u>	<u>12</u>	<u>21</u>	<u>13</u>	<u>5</u>	<u># of Students</u>
	<u>6%</u>	<u>22%</u>	<u>39%</u>	<u>24%</u>	<u>9%</u>	<u>Percent</u>
<b>#7 I feel comfortable in my ability to create a resume and cover letter using computer</b>						
	<u>4</u>	<u>7</u>	<u>19</u>	<u>14</u>	<u>10</u>	<u># of Students</u>
	<u>7%</u>	<u>13%</u>	<u>35%</u>	<u>26%</u>	<u>19%</u>	<u>Percent</u>

The following three short answer questions received a variety of answers which were incorporated into the report.

1. Why would you want to get a job (be specific... not just "MONEY")?
2. List at least three different ways to find a job.
3. What are you least confident about in regards to the job hunt (e.g. looking for a job opening, creating a resume or cover letter, interviewing for the job, using the computer or something else) and why?

The last question resulted in enough common response lending itself to be represented graphically. The results are shown below.



**Appendix B**

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**Constituent and SME Questions and Results**

**Referral Guidelines**

1. We are thinking of developing a product to help young adults gain the skills to conduct a successful job search. Do you think there is a need for this product?
2. What would you say are some common areas of deficiency?
3. Are there any skills or skill sets you would like to see employees come in the door with?
4. Are there any characteristics, attitudes or personality issues that interfere with job performance?
5. Are there any additional considerations that should be addressed with this population?
6. Is there anyone you would recommend that I talk to gain further insight?

**Interviewee Information**

Interviewee Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_  
Interviewees  
Position: \_\_\_\_\_ Prism: \_\_\_\_\_  
E-Mail Address: \_\_\_\_\_ Telephone Number: \_\_\_\_\_

**Additional Steps/Notes**

Next Steps: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Notes:



## ***Interview Response from Constituents, and Subject Matter Experts***

1. We are thinking of developing a product to help young adults gain the skills to conduct a successful job search. Do you think there is a need for this product?

Yes (3) Most employees come lacking in some areas.

2. What would you say are some common areas of deficiency?

Basic English grammar, the ability to write in English and converse with supervisors and employees. Hard working, dependable. Not lazy. Job search etiquette -showing up rather than calling to inquire about openings. Put on your best attire when you do show up for an application. Interview preparedness realize that they are going to ask questions. Be ready to respond thoughtfully and intelligently. Have the ability to follow written instruction.

3. Are there any skills or skill sets you would like to see employees come in the door with?

Customer service being kind and courteous to others, greeting people, eye contact, being warm and genuine. Customer service skills and counting skills.

4. Are there any characteristics, attitudes or personality issues that interfere with job performance?

Irresponsibility, refusal to accept responsibility and ownership for actions, basic workplace etiquette is lacking there is no line differentiating work from other activities. Being happy or friendly.

5. Are there any additional considerations that should be addressed with this population?

Other issues use of appropriate language , appropriate attire and appropriate accessories in the workplace (e.g., nose rings eyebrow rings, tattoos, cursing, physical fighting)

Appropriate dress and hygiene .Cell phones, earrings, tattoos, and piercings.

Being too confrontational – High school mentality. Let's deal with it right here (Ralph's and Mid- city)

Notes: The ideal employee takes the initiative is a self-starter wants to take on new tasks seeks out sup for help, does not argue. In her customer service role, the ideal employee, a thinks about things from the customers perspective.(Mid- City)