



# Creating the Conditions for Agency

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# Summary

Training Attention designed a short motivational programme 'Skills4Success', aimed at the 'hardest to help' long term unemployed

We used the Drama Triangle to analyse our responses to unemployment, the group and individual clients

We chose Clean Language as a facilitation technique to keep us out of 'drama'

On average Skills4Success has a job outcome rate of 70%

# Overview

The Drama Triangle analysis



Principles and practice



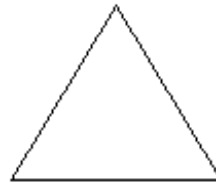
Results and feedback



Implications for wider systems

# The Drama Triangle

Persecutor:  
Your benefits will be  
stopped unless you ....



Victim:  
I can't find work  
There aren't any jobs

Rescuer:  
I've got you 3 applications  
We'll write your CV for you

# Individual Principles

We based the course on the coaching and counselling technique 'Clean Language'

- On a 1:1 level, Clean Language assumes the following:
- The client has more expertise on his / her problems and potential solutions than we do
- Any solution that is self generated will have a more sustainable effect as it will be 'owned'
- The client is not broken and does not need 'fixing'



# ...in practice

Making all interactions in the group 'live' and examples of how we operate in the workplace

Using any disagreements or conflicts within the group to explore barriers to work

Separating our inferences from what people in the group were presenting to us

Using clean questions to facilitate group debriefs

# Group Principles

At the group level, we assumed the following:

- Within the group, ourselves included, there will be more expertise on being unemployed, interviewing and finding work than from us alone
- Making sure that solutions and ideas come mainly from group members will create more sustainable effect than didactic teaching
- The group is not necessarily 'broken' and does not need 'fixing', by us. Group members, and all of us, have patterns that are working well for them and patterns that are not working well



# ...in practice

All members of the group gave each other feedback every day, including the facilitators, creating a peer coaching network

Traditional subjects such as goal setting, career stages, change processes, interviewing techniques, CV writing and cold calling were covered, with participants coaching each other

The majority of the last 3 days of the course was devoted to active job search in small groups

Expertise, ideas and experiences were shared between diverse group members, who might not ordinarily talk to each other at all

# Organisational Principles

At the organisational level, we assumed the following:

- The welfare to work organisation has more expertise on unemployment, its causes and solutions than we do
- By creating ownership of the Skills4Success course within the organisation and allowing it to be influenced by our customers we improved results.
- Welfare to work organisations are not necessarily 'broken' and do not need fixing by us. Our course is not instead of what they do, it is additional.



# ...in practice

Every course had at least two advisors representing the welfare to work organisation we work with

We delivered to clients and simultaneously trained in house staff to deliver our material and work according to 'Clean' principles

They took learning back to their 1:1 work, adapted it into their own courses and eventually took over the Skills4Success programme

Advisors reported improved relationships with their clients and less need to 'rescue' or 'persecute'



# A Calmer Triangle

Instead of persecuting,  
we gave feedback

Instead of rescuing we  
asked the client what  
they like to have happen.  
I.e. what would they like  
instead of feeling stupid  
when they sign on?

As a result, instead of  
behaving like victims,  
within 6 days our clients  
were all making cold calls  
and sourcing their own  
work



# Evaluation

95% retention rate, mixed voluntary and mandatory programme

Voluntary programme for long term unemployed and hardest to help

West London including deprived NDC wards and outreach in partnership with social landlords

Overall a 70% job outcome rate since 2004

# Evaluation

2004 – 2007: 6 courses (100 participants)

Participants	Control	Participants	Control
In work	In work	College complete	College complete
78%	54%	100%	73%

Response rate 26%

# Evaluation

2008: 4 courses (70 participants)

In work at 4 weeks	In work at 8 weeks	In work at 6 months	Drop outs within period
30%	54%	68%	1

Response rate 100%

# Evaluation

The success rates improved dramatically over time. The case study of Hufrish demonstrated this:

Hufrish had been looking for work in retail, with an advisor, for 18 months

Had not worked in the UK since arriving 8 years ago, due to raising young children

During the course she reflected on her career and her aspirations, and revealed to the group that she had actually qualified as a dentist before moving to the UK!

Following Skills4Success she took a conversion course and 3 months later started working as a dentist

**Advisors told us that clients moved, on average, 5 points on a 10 point scale of 'job readiness'.**

# Implications

Is it ethical to create the conditions for agency?

Are we setting people up for a failure they have no control over?

- Drop in confidence at 8 week follow up interval
- Recessions, evolving labour markets, flexibility of the workforce
- Housing benefit and childcare
- Mixed message of responsible (explicit) yet powerless (implicit)

# Implications

To what extent is group training the  
antidote to the Drama Triangle?

Skills4Success *in addition* to a 1:1 service

- Drama Triangle can be avoided in 1:1 and group
- Working particularly with the hardest to help
- Is the approach congruent with intended outcome?

# Implications

How can welfare to work agencies use our work to improve their own job outcome rates?

- Training for advisors?
- Peer support for advisors?
- Reflective practice and supervision?
- How can we incentivise independence from the system?

# Implications

## What next?

- Explore how to make Skills4Success part of community development
- Train past participants to deliver courses
- Let the material develop and evolve in response to community needs

# References

- **Drama Triangle**

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