

Job Carving: Mini Paid Jobs in a College of Further Education

City of Westminster College



Summary

This case study focuses on a project undertaken by City of Westminster College to provide part-time paid employment opportunities for young people with learning disabilities and difficulties within the college. It began in the academic year 2011/12 with a proposal to the governing Body and Senior Leadership Team which was approved ready for 2012/13. Jobs were identified, costed, advertised and applied for. Six students have carried out these mini paid jobs during this academic year. We have called it the 'Mini Paid Jobs project'.

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Introduction

City of Westminster College is an inner city, general Further Education College offering a wide range of courses at different levels including specialist provision for learners with moderate, severe and profound learning disabilities, within a mainstream environment. The courses are full- time, personal development and life skills courses for approximately 60 young people aged between 16 and 23.

What we wanted to achieve

We wanted to carve out meaningful jobs within the college which current and past learners with learning difficulties and disabilities could apply for. We wanted the jobs to be real and that the whole process for the young people who applied for the jobs be real too, including the application and interview process, carrying out the job role, and being a member of college staff. We wanted the college to show a commitment to supporting young people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities at work and to send out a positive message about the college's commitment to working with disabled people.

Implementation

The successful implementation of this project took time and built on partnership work already underway with Westminster Adult Education Service. This is what we did:

- The tutor of the supported employment course and the college's job coach attended governing body meetings firstly to ask for small job roles to be identified within the college and then to outline the Mini Paid Jobs proposal. Initially we wanted to run the scheme in a cost neutral way but after further discussion we decided to request that a small budget be allocated in order to run the project, at least initially.
- The proposal was supported by 3 members of the Senior Management Team.
- The proposal went to and was approved by the Senior Management team and a pot of money was set aside.
- The proposal had included some jobs which had already been identified but once the proposal was approved, other line managers identified mini paid jobs too.
- The posts were advertised internally in September 2012, using the normal college procedures. They were advertised as fixed term one year contracts and consisted of 2 hour slots which would be paid at the college casual rate.
- Current and former students were supported to apply by the job coach, at the weekly Job Club and by tutors
- Each post holder shortlisted applicants and interviews were arranged.
- The applicants were interviewed by a senior member of staff, the post holder, the tutor of the supported employment course and a senior member of Human Resources. Support at the interview was provided where appropriate: e.g., use of MAKATON or an interpreter.
- Successful applicants were given a start date, induction and appropriate support on the job from a job coach, in one case using Access to Work funding.

Outcomes and impacts

What we achieved

Six mini paid jobs were successfully carved and carried out by one current student and five former students. These included:

- Learning centre assistant
- Photocopy paper supply assistant
- Kitchen cleaning assistant
- Kitchen porter
- Recycling assistant
- Late slips distributor.

- There has been an obvious increase in confidence in the young people who participated in the project as a result of doing paid meaningful work, where they have received very positive feedback from their line managers.
- An unintended achievement has been the support and enthusiasm for the project from the line managers as this e mail illustrates:

Hi Eshita [job coach],

What can I say?! Despite impressing me highly at her interview in my heart of hearts I only agreed to supporting this project because I felt it was the 'right thing to do' and I suspected it might be a bit more trouble than it was possibly worth. However, how wrong was !!! Xxx has done an absolutely brilliant job – and a very important job too, in terms of the College's attendance and punctuality policy. She has shown tremendous initiative, independence, responsibility and dedication to her role. She has had to be tactful and diplomatic... Moreover she has proved herself to be honest, trustworthy and reliable, as I'm sure the other members of staff in the office would testify to. I can't put into words how pleased I've been with xxx if there is any chance of having her back next year - I want her!

Pete

Head of Teacher Training

What we learned

- To be truly meaningful, a job-carved position has to be meaningful to both employer and employee.
- There is potential for carving out plenty of job roles within a college, suitable for people with learning difficulties/and or disabilities.
- Having the opportunity to carry out real jobs has a huge impact on confidence, as well as supporting the development of employability skills.
- The college itself can benefit enormously from providing job-carved roles, with line managers and senior staff enjoying having people with learning difficulties work for them and appreciating the real work skills of the students.

What we are taking forward

A full evaluation of the project is planned which will enable us to apply lessons learned as we take the project forward next year. We are considering using current post holders to train up new recruits.

Advice we would give to others

- Allow time to get it started
- Be prepared to apply persistence and tenacity
- Make sure you have support from governors and senior members of staff
- Involve HR from the start and get their buy-in early on
- Job coaching is crucial so that support for both employee and manager can be provided at the start of the job
- On-going monitoring and support is important
- Make sure the jobs are meaningful: job-carving is not 'make-work'.

For further information, please contact

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