

## **Compass Centre points to jobs**

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This is the first in a three-part series of articles on employment and job-search skills.

A one-of-a-kind job-search scheme is on the lookout for new candidates willing to question their self-awareness.

The North Shore Compass Centre is the only employment-action program throughout Greater Vancouver to examine the deeper drives which steer people. And those taking part must be willing to examine their own motivation.

Past participants say this journey of self-discovery has led to a whole new sense of purpose and greater scope for employment.

The centre offers free four-week courses for groups of 11, including mainstream job-search skills such as networking, resum, writing and interview techniques, while branching out to offer self-awareness workshops in the form of the Implicit Career Search.

The program is run by Nanaimo career practitioner Steve Miller, who explains: "The Implicit Career Search moves career planning from 'What's happening out there?' to 'What's happening in here?' ... for those of us willing to dedicate ourselves to discovering our life purpose, the future holds fulfilment and rewards."

Participants are forced to ask searching questions about their true selves or, as Miller puts it, their essence. This section of the program is delivered by career counsellor Susan Petrina.

"We are the only centre in the Lower Mainland to offer the Implicit Career Search," she said. "Most approaches to career exploration examine issues at the level of personality, but the Implicit Career Search attempts to go much deeper to chose your career from your essence.

"Most job-search programs focus on modifying behaviour, but behaviour is driven by self-concept, so it makes sense to look a little deeper.

"If you know yourself, you will know the type of work you want to do. Self-awareness can change every aspect of your existence, going beyond looking for another job to considering your lifetime career.

"These days you have to put so much into your working life that you can only succeed if you find work inspiring. If you approach a job-search from a purposeful perspective you will have drive and determination."

This route to self-awareness begins with truth telling. The course leads people to take responsibility for all past events, which, says Petrina, empowers them to take control of their future lives.

Participants use a number of tools to examine themselves. Central to the course is FIRO (fundamental interpersonal relation orientation) theory, which states that our self-concept derives from our need for inclusion, control and openness. Thus our main hang-

ups are that we are insignificant, incompetent or unlikable.

Petrina says that once people get a grip on these issues they can overturn the self-created barriers to landing a top job. This is backed up by sessions coaching networking and marketing skills, led by career counsellors Shane Carphin, Sharon Clarke and Nazmiye Gurbuz.

Brent Donnelly, 50, of West Vancouver, attended the January 2001 sessions. He said that the course had a huge impact on him.

"It changed my life," said Donnelly. "At that point I was completely lost. I had been working in construction but was finding myself too old.

"I was very bitter, but I realized I could still find something worthwhile to do. We examined my past experience and knowledge, and I decided to look for work in a hardware store. I had two job offers within three weeks of finishing the course, and had to choose which one to take.

"They should teach the Implicit Career Search in schools to give people a sense of direction."

West Vancouver actor Michael Tayles is one of the centre's more high-profile "graduates" - he will be appearing on television screens this spring in the mini-series *A Wrinkle in Time*.

He joined the September 2000 course to get a better grip on the business side of his profession, but found increased self-awareness has helped his acting abilities.

"When the course started I knew I was in my chosen career," he said. "But I found I had transferrable skills, should I want to go into producing in the future.

"The Implicit Career Search is about communication, which is what acting is all about. You have to be as open and vulnerable as possible so people can relate to your performance.

"Every human being wants to contribute something to society in some way, so when someone loses their job it feels like the end of the world. But through the course I could see the self-esteem of people in the group growing.

"I found the course very motivating. It put me back in touch with the reason why I became an actor in the first place. There is always a job if you are willing to be the best you can be."

All this self-awareness may sound too philosophical to some, but the centre's claims are substantiated by statistics: last year, 85 per cent of their 200 clients went on to find work or training.

Meanwhile, the latest Statistics Canada figures for the Vancouver area - which includes North and West Vancouver - show unemployment increasing, making job-finding harder. As of November 2001, 7.1 per cent of the population is without work, which compares to 5.5 per cent jobless this time last year. The youth unemployment rate is worse still: 14.8 per cent of all residents aged between 15 and 24 years are jobless.

Federal finance minister Paul Martin acknowledged the country is in a shallow recession, earlier this month telling the House of Commons that the events of Sept. 11, "introduced a new level of uncertainty into the economic outlook."

However, North Shore Human Resources Development Canada spokesman Rick Waters



said "sunny self-starters" have a head start in the race for jobs.

"It is important that job-seekers get skills that are in demand, and those who are self-motivated are better placed than those who are less positive," he said. "Although the tech bubble has burst there is a big demand for computer skills across the job market. Occupations in demand right now include health care, teaching and skilled trades."

The next session gets under way on Feb. 4, at the centre, 311-255 West 1st. St., North Vancouver. Staff can offer individual career counselling before sessions begin. For more information call 604-984-4567.