INTRODUCING OUR NEW EMPLOYMENT COUNSELLOR

We are pleased to announce the recent appointment of Mr. Glenn Kolonel to the position of Employment Counsellor with our Division. Glenn has been hired for a six-month period to replace Chris Moyse, who is currently on leave. Glenn brings to the Division 15 years of public sector service experience, 10 of which have been in the field of career and employment services. His most recent role was as Team Leader for the Career Information Resource Centre, with Service Canada in Pleasantville.

The staff of the Division welcomes Glenn as the newest addition to the Employment Equity Team and we wish him the best of luck in his position. Glenn can be reached at (709) 729-2296 or by e-mail at glennkolonel@gov.nl.ca.

BOOK REVIEW

JOB-HUNTING FOR THE SO-CALLED HANDICAPPED: OR PEOPLE WHO HAVE DISABILITIES

A sensitively written job-hunting manual for persons with disabilities, which offers practical advice on how and where to find a job, explains the reasons behind employers' reactions to disabled persons, and provides useful tools for challenging stereotypes.

This book, found in our resource centre, though designed as a complement to the famous What Color Is Your Parachute? does a great job of identifying and empowering resourceful methods for job search and on-the-job strategies. Richard Bolles succeeds in writing a sensitive book about "enabling" persons with disabilities. His empathy and understanding of the feelings of persons with disabilities and their employers, makes him proficient at providing good advice that works. Great Read. Original.

STUDENT SUMMER EMPLOYMENT PROGRAM

In mid-March, we will be launching our Student Summer Employment Program for 2006, placing post-secondary students with disabilities in provincial government department offices throughout the province. To be eligible, students must be currently attending a post-secondary educational institution, returning to school in the Fall of 2006 and registered with our Division. Please contact one of our employment counsellors to indicate your interest in gaining valuable career related work experience through our upcoming summer employment program.

Do You need to update us??

In order to maintain an accurate employment profile for referral purposes, you are required to provide us, on a regular basis, with any changes to your address, telephone number(s), employment status, educational qualifications and your ability/availability to work.

Outdated employment and/or contact information will result in your file being considered inactive, so don't delay, contact us today!!

ALTERNATE FORMAT AVAILABLE UPON REQUEST
By: Lynn Champdoizeau

With a diploma in Food Administration, I had been working in the field when I was injured in a motor vehicle accident in January 1998. This accident changed many aspects of my life, including my career goals, as it was clear I could no longer work in the Food Service industry due to my injuries. I was at a standstill, not really knowing what to do or where to turn. I met with a counsellor at Ability Works who introduced me to the Opening Doors Program.

I became a client of the Employment Equity and Strategic Initiatives Division in 2001. I met with an employment counsellor who offered insight on career choices that I might enjoy, all of which required me to return to school to retrain. I returned to Keyin College where I completed a two-year program in Office Administration. During my time in college, I kept in touch with the counsellors at the Division by sending in copies of my transcripts and letting them know how my course was going.

I had started my work term when I received a call from Opening Doors informing me there were two opportunities available through their Targeted Wage Subsidy Initiative that I would be referred on. I went in to the office and completed some pre-employment testing, had an interview and was offered the position of Secretary/Receptionist with the Employment Equity Division. I met many clients of the Division during my two years of employment there and made many good friends.

In September 2004, I was interviewed for, and offered, a permanent position with the Dept. of Justice at Her Majesty’s Penitentiary. I love my new job and enjoy working with the Administration and Correctional Officer staff here at the “PEN.”

I was lucky that people took the time to assist me in getting my life back together and offered me opportunities to find very rewarding employment. I can never thank the staff at the Employment Equity Division enough for the difference they have made in my life. I know they truly care about their clients and about the needs of their clients – they work hard and are happiest when one of us finds success. I know, because I was one of them!!

If you are interested in telling us your success story or know someone with a story to tell, we would love to hear it. Contact us!

The Independent Living Resource Centre (ILRC) can be referred to as “your disability resource centre.” Their services are open to everyone who has any type of disability. They can help you find all kinds of information and resources and assist you in accessing the services and supports you may need. They offer a variety of peer support, including a Women's Group and a Men's Group. And, if you want to do some volunteer work, the ILRC might be the spot for you.

Roger Baggs is the Career Development Coordinator at the ILRC. Roger can help with all aspects of your career search, including: exploring training and education, job search, researching self-employment, negotiating workplace accommodations, and accessing funding programs, etc.

There is a fully accessible computer room located in the Centre in St. John’s. It's free to use and has loads of adaptive computer technology. The staff and volunteers are ready to help you at any time.

Although they are located in St. John’s, they do work with people throughout the province with the help of our toll-free line, e-mail, fax, and our web site.

The ILRC is open from 8:30 - 4:30, Monday - Friday. They are located at 4 Escasoni Place, St. John's, NL A1R 3R6. You can reach them by telephone at 722-4031, toll-free at 1-866-722-4031, TTY at 709-722-7998 or via e-mail at info@ilrc.nf.ca. You can also view their website online at www.ilrc.nf.ca to learn more about their programs and services. Get in touch with them today.

Feature your Programs and Services!
Submit your programs and services to be featured in future newsletters, keeping your submission under 100 words, via email to openingdoors@gov.nl.ca.
A WINNING COVER LETTER

Cover letters give you an opportunity to “narrate” to your potential employer, your work story. Since you are competing with others to secure a job interview, it is important that employers not only obtain accurate information about your knowledge, skills, and experiences, but a short story about that information. Try thinking of your resume as snapshots/pictures of you, and your cover letter as a video version of those pictures.

Four important areas of interest for employers reviewing applications are: previous experience, work ethics, goals and personal values. Therefore, since you are competing with others, having specific details about these four areas helps employers to paint a more individual and accurate picture of you. You need to be able to stand out from other applicants who in many ways, because of their skills and qualifications, are similar to you.

To start making your cover letter “3-dimensional” or video-like, consider adding some emotion to your opening. Instead of writing “I am applying for …” or “Regarding the position of …” or “please find enclosed …” try writing openings like, “I’m enthusiastic about working for a company that promotes/does … particularly in the position of …” or “I’m most interested in the position of …” or “a friend recommended I try securing an interview for the position of (name of position), and that working for your company would be both rewarding and enriching.” Additionally, if you meet ALL of the qualifications for the position, your opening statement should always be followed with a statement like, “I meet all of the requirements, (or specifications), for the position.”

Somewhere in the body of your cover letter, consideration should be given to telling your story, so that the potential employer can “visualize” you in “action” mode. Here’s an example of a man who was a flight desk attendant but was applying for a steward position. “In my current position I am responsible, creative and solution-oriented. On one particular occasion, late at night when only a colleague and I were available with no supervision, a flight from Germany arrived, but the passenger luggage did not. Many customers were clearly upset. At the end of the evening, letters and emails of commendation to our supervisors were many, and happy customers abounded, though all were still awaiting their luggage …” This statement clearly gives a visual “back-up” to the responsibility, creativity, and conflict resolution skills of this man and his colleague. Wouldn’t you be interested, too, in interviewing someone like this man?

Finally, always close your letter with a work ethic statement. Something regarding the way that you work gives valuable insight to an employer. Words concerning the way you feel or think about what it means to truly do a good job, can make or break whether or not you are successful in securing an interview. Statements like “I strongly believe in supporting the needs of my customers at all times” or “I feel that a job completely done, is a job well done” or “I believe that respecting my clients should be first and foremost to whatever other tasks are required of me”, serve to provide employers with real insight as to who their potential interview candidate may actually be.

A winning cover letter that secures you a job interview, is one that identifies you clearly as an individual. And, remember, without an interview, your chances for accessing employment are diminished. Write a letter about you, and watch the positive results.

Success is a science; if you have the conditions, you get the result.

-- Oscar Wilde, Irish Author (1854-1900)

Have you completed our Online Survey?

If you haven’t already completed our survey, now you can do so easily online! By taking only a few minutes of your time, you will be providing us with valuable feedback that will help us enhance our programs and services to suit your needs. You can find it at: http://www.exec.gov.nl.ca/openingdoors/Survey.htm

To find out what one is fitted to do, and to secure an opportunity to do it, is the key to happiness.

-- John Dewey, American Philosopher (1859-1952)
In the workplace, persons with disabilities have many considerations about how to make a smooth and productive transition from their current situations to a new job. Regardless of the breadth of concerns the “bottom-line” will always be inclusive of two main questions:

1. How will I be accommodated?
2. How will I accommodate my employer and co-workers?

Empowerment is contingent upon the answers to these questions and, though there are many points to be made about the topic of empowerment, ultimately, points that address these two questions are the ones that will be the most useful.

On the issue of being accommodated, one of the best places to start is with your new supervisor. If at all possible, and you are comfortable with it, have a candid conversation with him/her. If he/she is aware of your specific needs, as with anyone’s needs, he/she will be better able to make arrangements necessary to accommodate those needs. Furthermore, developing a good working relationship with your employer is paramount to your being facilitated, empowering you with the tools and resources necessary to complete the duties and responsibilities of your position. In a way, having an open initiating conversation with your boss will help to answer both the question of being accommodated and of accommodating. Sharing as much as you are comfortable with your boss, regarding your needs as related to your disability, is a good way of accommodating your employer. Your employer will be better able to facilitate you quickly and appropriately while at the same time, you are making it easier for the company.

Regarding how you can accommodate your employer and co-workers, you are already off to a good start with your new supervisor by taking steps to ensure that initial talk. Ultimately, in some way, you will find yourself engaging someone else, whether this be via correspondence, phone, email, or in person. He/she may not be aware of your needs, and it will be up to you to provide the necessary information to have those needs appropriately facilitated. As with your supervisor, it’s helpful when you share information with co-workers; unlike with your supervisor, each individual will only be involved in some part of the company’s plan or agenda, so the information you share may be more limited than that you’ve chosen to share with your employer. Nonetheless, information, carefully chosen, will help you to be better facilitated, and will likely be interpreted by your co-workers as useful and helpful. Your empowerment comes from being perceived as helpful, cooperative, and sociable, and this will certainly help to construct for you a better connection with your co-workers.

There are many considerations for empowerment, but knowing that making better connections with your employer and co-workers because you have shared information about your disability and your needs, is one of the most rewarding. You’ll likely be better able to fulfill the requirements of your job position, and feel less stressed about difficulties you may experience during your workday. Additionally, you will have better communication with those around you, and reduce the likelihood of becoming isolated from others. In the end, share what you comfortably can, to make it a better working experience for you and for others.

EMPOWERMENT is …

The process of people discovering the power they have within themselves and using that power to create practices for success and achievement in their lives.

Always bear in mind that your own resolution to succeed is more important than any other.

-- Abraham Lincoln, American President (1809-1865)

If there is anything you would like to see in future issues of the Career Lens or on our website, please let us know.

Next Issue Spring/Summer 2006