

'Motivation enhancement' key for success in job training programs, study says

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(Phys.org) —Freshly minted college graduates, take note: Buying a new suit may be No. 1 on your list for landing that first big job, but new research shows picking the right job training program could give you the real winning edge.

How to choose the best one? The most effective teaches you how to set

goals, be proactive, boost self-confidence and even get your whole family involved.

"This is the first study that systematically quantified the overall effectiveness of [job search](#) interventions in facilitating job search success," said Mo Wang, an associate professor and director of the Human Resource Research Center at the University of Florida's Warrington College of Business Administration, "This study is also unique, because it identifies the critical ingredients in job search interventions that lead to successful employment."

Wang and colleagues Songqi Liu of The Pennsylvania State University and Jason L. Huang of Wayne State University found that the likelihood of employment increased among job seekers only when the job training programs that they went through combined both skill development and motivation enhancement.

Wang and his colleagues analyzed data from 9,575 job seekers who participated in one of the 47 "job search intervention"—training programs designed to help job seekers look for employment or secure employment faster—studies in the past 40 years. While they found that job seekers who participated in these interventions were 2.67 times more likely to obtain employment than those who did not, the odds increased even more if the training included critical elements, such as encouraging proactivity (5.88 times higher), promoting goal setting (4.67 times), enlisting social support (4.27 times) and boosting self-efficacy (3.25 times.)

Skill development elements that performed well in these training programs were improving self-presentation (3.40 times higher) and teaching job search skills (3.32).

In addition, Wang and his colleagues also examined whether the age of

job seekers made a difference. They found that younger (age 35 years and under), middle-aged (35-50) and older job seekers (50 and older) all benefited from participating in job search intervention programs compared with those who didn't participate. But the impact on middle-aged job seekers (1.80 times higher odds to be employed) was minimal compared to younger (4.05 times) and older job seekers (8.80 times).

They also found that participants classified as "job handicapped"—job seekers with previous injuries, chronic health problems, mental disabilities, etc.—benefited from job search interventions by finding employment at a rate 4.6 times higher than similar job seekers who did not participate.

With the U.S. still recovering economically from the financial crisis, Wang and his colleagues hope that their research will influence those who administer job training programs to blend skill development learning with motivation enhancement learning. For example, because enlisting social support is proven to be an effective tool in acquiring employment, the researchers suggest involving a job seeker's entire family in the intervention to create a motivating and supportive job search environment.

"Now that we know what the critical ingredients are for successful job interventions, practitioners should design their job search training programs to maximize [job seekers'](#) exposure to those components," Wang said. "Career counselors could become more effective if they combine both [skill development](#)-focused and motivation enhancement-focused techniques in their day-to-day practices."

More information: "Effectiveness of Job Search Interventions: A Meta-Analytic Review." Liu, Songqi; Huang, Jason L.; Wang, Mo. *Psychological Bulletin*, Mar 3 , 2014. [dx.doi.org/10.1037/a0035923](https://doi.org/10.1037/a0035923)

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