



MAKING WORK SEARCH SMART - MISSISSIPPI

WIA CASE STUDY

Client Industry:
Local WIA Board

**Challenges
Addressed:**
Work search
skills gap

Budget limitations

Lower-than-desired
client landing rates in
the field of their
training

Job Seeker Results:

Clients voluntarily
completed 45% more
modules than required

Clients improved
preparedness from
a C- to an A-

The Challenge: Job seekers suffer from a major skill gap - the skill of conducting an effective work search. The average job seeker will change jobs 13 times in a career, with significant financial, social, psychological impacts. Yet job seekers rarely learn job search skills - in high school, community college or at a university. With limited funding and less-than-ideal job seeker engagement, most state workforce agencies are adequately able to train only a small portion of all job seekers in job search skills.

The Client: Southcentral Mississippi Works (SCMW) operates nine one stops, comprising over 1/4th of the state's workforce. In January 2012, SCMW began using NextJob's system as an integral part of Individual Training Account (ITA) applicant requirements.

The Solution: SCMW asked ITA applicants to complete the first three learning modules, including: 1) an overview of job search, 2) how to write an excellent resume and 3) how to choose a career direction that fits who they are.

Its goals were to: 1) Increase trainees' likelihood to find work in their field of study - by improving their job search preparedness; 2) Increase the percent of ITA recipients completing their course of study - by ensuring each recipient had demonstrated their willingness to do their part to be successful; and 3) Ensure that ITA recipients demonstrate they cannot find work without additional training - by requiring them to learn three work search topics.

The Results:

Job Seeker Engagement. Most applicants (60.9%) were eager to engage in job search learning for the opportunity to gain state-paid training. Over half of those completing three modules, completed them within two days (58%). The system also proved "sticky" and engaged applicants at a deeper level. Applicants getting "over the hump" of trying a new system continued on to complete 45% more modules than required and completed 51% of the learning *pages*.

Job Seeker Preparedness. The system surveyed each claimant on job search preparedness in seven skill areas, from resume writing to networking to interviewing. Surprisingly, claimants rated their *initial* preparedness at the equivalent of a C-. On completion, they rated their new preparedness at an A-. Through online learning, they improved their preparedness by 24.6%.

WIA Program Integrity. Thirty-nine percent of applicants ultimately refused to participate, apparently not valuing the opportunity for state-paid training or finding they could land a job without it. This self-screening by applicants improves program integrity by saving scarce dollars for those more willing to work at their studies and prepare themselves to land a job.