

Attitudinal Segmentation of Australian Job Seekers: A Work in Progress.

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The Department of Employment, Workplace Relations and Small Business have commenced a program of research that attempts to identify and quantify attitudinal segments in the job seeker population.

This paper discusses the method used to develop the segments, the model and the results from the first applications of this segmentation. The segments are discussed in terms of the relationship between segment and perceptions of service quality, types of assistance received and outcomes. Discussion also focuses on future applications of the model in targeting assistance and early identification of relative disadvantage.

The title of the paper "a work in progress" serves to highlight that the segmentation work is developmental and that it is very early days yet. This is the first attempt by the Department to investigate and build an attitudinal model of the Australian job seeker population. The research described in this paper is the foundation for the model. As more is learnt about the attitudes of job seekers and the interaction with service requirements and outcomes, the model will evolve and necessarily be refined.

Job seeker attitudes

Case managers working with unemployed people will agree that the attitude of the individual job seeker has an important influence on the likely success of any labour market assistance. Research undertaken by Englert and Smith for developing a needs based assessment model for job seekers in New Zealand recommended that:

"Underlying factors such as motivation and work attitudes are crucial to job acquisition and therefore should be assessed using well-designed questions."

Attitudes have already been recognised in the Australian context in so much as the assessment of job seekers' level of risk of long term unemployment, and hence, access to intensive labour market assistance can be influenced by personal factors. Currently, the Job Seeker Classification Instrument (JSCI) includes the possibility of allocating points based on the identification of personal factors that may affect the job seekers ability to find and keep work. Poor motivation, poor self confidence and low self esteem are some of the characteristics that could lead to the allocation of personal factor points.

Segmentation

Segmentations group individuals into segments with like qualities. The segmentation research has been conducted by Colmar Brunton Social Research, using methods developed by these researchers whilst undertaking similar segmentation studies for the then New Zealand Employment Service during the early 1990s.

The research developed by Colmar Brunton Social Research draws on the concept of social marketing and on the behaviour change model of Prochaska and Di Clemente. As described by Andreasen (1995), social marketing is used to influence the voluntary behaviour of target audiences in order to benefit the target audience and/or the society as a whole. A key element in influencing the behaviour of job seekers is identifying at what stage of the behaviour change model they are and what services or actions are therefore required to assist them.

Behaviour Change Stages

- *Precontemplation*: people are not thinking about the behaviour as being appropriate for them at this point in their lives. People in this stage require education.
- *Contemplation*: people are actively thinking about and evaluating recommended behaviours. People at this stage will change if they can see the increased benefits associated with behaviour change as well as a decrease in costs of changing from current behaviour.
- *Action*: people are doing the behaviour for the first time or first several times. At this stage people need support and reassurance from influential others in their lives and to see reward for their actions.
- *Confirmation*: people are committed to the behaviour and have no desire/intention to return to earlier behaviour.

The social marketing concept takes the segmentation further than simply grouping job seekers into like segments. It attempts to match these groups with a set of service needs to more appropriately help job seekers towards active and successful job search by tapping into their attitudes, motivations and life experiences.

Why attitudinal segmentation?

In undertaking any program evaluation, one of the key questions researchers pose is: What works for whom and why? Pawson and Tilley (1997) have advocated considering the context for the individual in the program and stress that the role of the individual in making the program work is often very important in understanding how and when programs do and don't work.

Understanding the process through which employment outcomes are achieved for individual participants is a crucial step through which the effectiveness of labour market assistance is evaluated. Traditionally, evaluation analysis involves the disaggregation of clients by demographic characteristics such as age and gender and, in the case of employment programs, factors known to impact on the risk of long term unemployment such as duration of unemployment and educational qualifications. In some cases differences in program outcomes can be explained by these types of characteristics, however, as case managers will have seen in the field, when two individuals of the same age, in the same geographic location, with the same educational qualifications and labour market experience receive different outcomes from labour market assistance, there are other factors at play which can not be explained by the traditional analysis.

"For forecasting purposes variables such as demographics and bio-data are more than likely to have greater predictive power. However, psychological variables have a valuable role to play within the assessment process. Firstly, some may prove to be predictive in that they may account for unique variance related to job acquisition, beyond that accounted for by demographics."
(Englert and Smith)

The segmentation research confirmed that the Australian job seeker population is not homogenous. Job seekers are a diverse group of individuals who have very different needs, motivations, attitudes, backgrounds, personal life experiences and desires which may require a number of different services and programs. The attitudinal research provides an alternative way to describe and characterise job seekers. It becomes another tool in the evaluation tool kit to attempt to unravel and to explain the service experience and labour market outcomes of clients, that is, to inform the question: what services work for whom and why?

Possible uses of the segmentation research

The segmentation research provides valuable information to better understand the needs of the different job seekers to which labour market policies are targeted. Armed with a better understanding of client needs, program managers and service providers can refine levels and types of assistance provided to clients and improve targeting of assistance to ensure services meet the needs of the individual job seeker. Traditional programs are targeted to client groups for example, youth initiatives or services for older unemployed. The segmentation gives the Department, and its various service providers, an alternative way of dissecting client needs and refining services.

In the longer term, the segmentation research provides for many other useful possibilities. The tracking of individuals overtime is one such possibility. The segmentation is not static. Job seekers will shift around the segments during their job search experience as their confidence levels and job search intensity levels change and/or with the intervention of labour market assistance. Longitudinal studies to track movement of individuals between segments over time can inform the evaluation of labour market assistance.

A specific aim of the research is to replicate the segmentation model over time, that is, to quantify the proportion of job seekers in any one segment at different points in time. Tracking the relative size of the segments can contribute to measurement of the effect of government interventions. Policies such as mutual obligation and Work for the Dole, for example, are policies and programs partly aimed at increasing participation and developing work habits. By looking at the segmentation overtime it can be seen how the attitudes and job search behaviours of job seekers change with the longer-term implementation of these policies. This information linked with employment outcomes data, can contribute to the evaluation of the success or otherwise of such policies and, thus, inform policy refinement or new policy development.

In New Zealand the attitudinal segmentation research contributed to the development of a needs based assessment model (NBAM) as a component of individualised employment assistance delivered by the New Zealand Employment Service. The aim of the NBAM was to identify client need and categorise clients

according to their level of need. The model included a range of variables, some of which measured attitudes, motivation and willingness to work. The model was computerised and the procedures developed for employment advisors to use when assessing job seekers. The model also included appropriate interventions that could then be offered to clients. In a similar way, a longer-term use for the Australian segmentation research is to contribute to the current Job Seeker Classification Instrument (JSCI) used by the Department to assess a job seeker's risk of long term unemployment and their associated needs for labour market assistance.

Implementation of changes to the JSCI would require substantial further development work, testing, stakeholder consultation and most likely, piloting and full evaluation. As recommended by researchers evaluating the New Zealand NBAM, attitudes and motivation need to be included in the job seeker assessment but only through well-designed and tested questions administered by sufficiently trained staff.

Research methodology

The segmentation research project commenced in November 2000 and data analysis and modelling is still underway at time of writing, June 2001. The research involved two broad stages, qualitative and quantitative research.

Stage 1: qualitative research

Colmar Brunton Social Research conducted in-depth personal interviews with 52 job seekers in metropolitan, rural and coastal areas, including job seekers of different ages and lengths of unemployment. The interviews were intensive, two-hour sessions using psychological, projection and meditation techniques to enable the job seeker to reveal much about their personal attitudes, desires and life experiences. The result of the qualitative research was the development of a conceptual model of the segments existing among the job seeker population. In addition, the research provided insights into the service needs of each of these segments. Following the qualitative research, a set of attitudinal statements was developed as an assessment tool for discriminating between the segments. Using these statements, the conceptual model and the associated needs of the segments could then be confirmed using quantitative research.

Stage 2: quantitative research

As part of an ongoing service quality monitoring program, the Department regularly conducts telephone surveys of job seekers. Two such surveys have been conducted in 2001, one of which is still underway. The attitudinal statements were included as part of these surveys and the results from over 3,500 job seekers can be used to develop a quantitative model of the job seeker segmentation. Using various statistical techniques (discussed below) the data from these surveys will be used to refine the conceptual model and eventually quantify the segments. This stage of the research is not yet completed.

Research findings: the conceptual model

The qualitative research found that there are two key dimensions that discriminate Australian job seekers: level of motivation and level of limitation.

Motivation

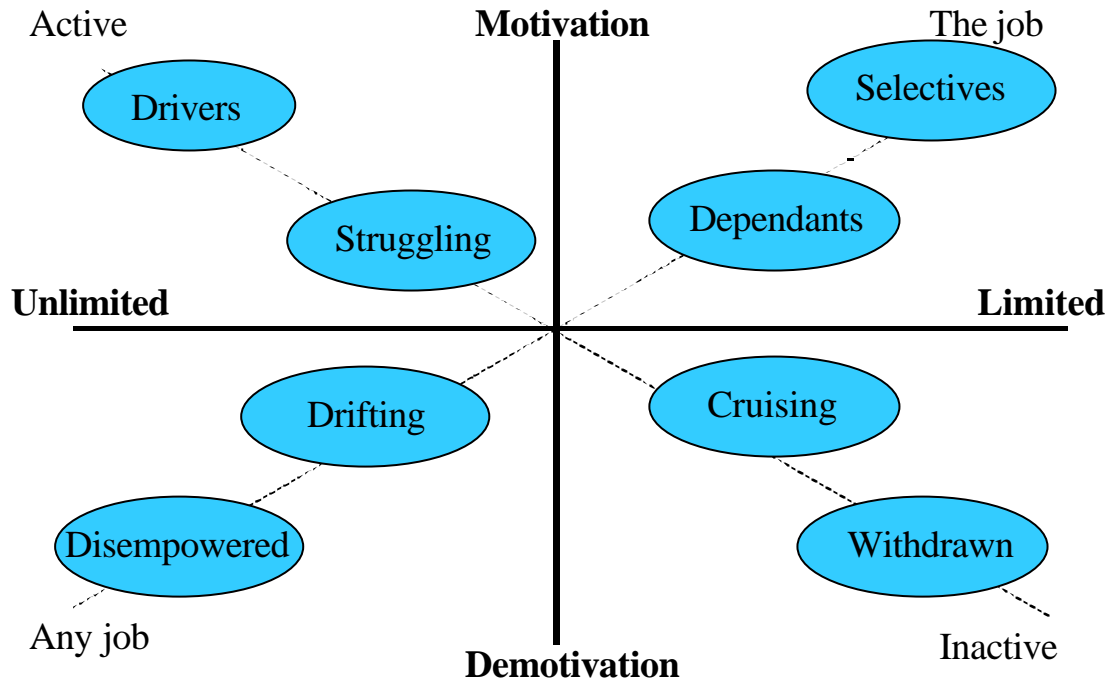
Job seekers have varying levels of motivation when it comes to looking for work and wanting a job. Job seekers who are motivated are typically actively looking for a job. These job seekers may have different levels of confidence about finding a job. Self-confident job seekers are optimistic and enthusiastic and believe in themselves. Others may be highly motivated to find work but be driven by a desire or need to get a job rather than by a strong sense of self worth. De-motivated job seekers are generally less active in looking for work. They may have lower levels of confidence and lower self-esteem. Some perceive themselves as being "unemployable" due to not having enough or the right skills, perceived age barriers, health issues or criminal records. These job seekers are further de-motivated with each job rejection and some have given up the idea of ever working again.

Limitation

Job seekers may place limits on the type of job they will apply for or on the types of job search methods they will use. Job seekers without limits are open to finding any type of job and are using different types of job search methods to find work. These job seekers may take any job and use it as a stepping stone to other work which may be of more interest or more relevant to their skill set. Job seekers with limitations are more likely to be searching for a certain type of job, either a desired occupation or hours of work or only for work in specific locations or only jobs attracting a high enough rate of pay. Limited job seekers may also only try certain types of job search methods that they are comfortable with, for example, only looking in newspapers rather than self-canvassing employers.

From these dimensions and characteristics, Colmar Brunton Social Research developed a segmentation model that identifies eight job seeker segments.

Figure 1: Job seeker segments



Drivers: Job seekers who are doing everything they can to find work. They are confident, motivated and open to any job opportunity and to different job search methods. They want to work and dislike being unemployed for a variety of reasons. They are optimistic that they will find work soon.

"I'll try anything if it means that I'll get a job. I hate just sitting at home and staring at the silly box. I know that if I go out everyday and look for a job one day I'm going to get one. It's better than doing nothing. At least if I'm looking and employers see that I'm really keen and want to work there's a good chance I'll get a job."

Drivers are at the Action stage of behaviour change in that they want to work and are actively looking for work. Their service needs centre around maintaining their motivation levels through encouragement and reward for their actions. They may also benefit from advice on the more effective job search techniques and access to resources such as job information and equipment to assist with job seeking such as faxes, phones etc.

Struggling: Job seekers who are willing, motivated and actively looking but have less confidence and may use more limited job search techniques perhaps due to rejection from unsuccessful job search attempts.

"I really want to work and I'm doing everything I can to get a job, but it's not that easy. Every time an employer rejects you, you get a little bit more down heartened and it can slowly chip away at your

confidence. I'm still pretty hopeful but if I don't get a job soon then I'll start to really worry."

Struggling job seekers are also at the Action stage of the behaviour change model, however, they require more support and encouragement than Drivers in order to increase their confidence levels and maintain motivation. These job seekers need positive reinforcement and advice on job seeking strategies.

Drifting: Job seekers who are unsure about what sort of job they want and how to go about looking for a job. They may be too shy to get a job on their own or feel they need help to get them a job.

"Since I left school I haven't really been doing anything. I've had a couple of part time jobs but I don't really know what I want to do and I don't like phoning employers because I don't know what to say or what they'd ask me. I need someone to help me find a job that I would like."

Drifting job seekers are at the Contemplation stage of the behaviour change model. They need assistance in identifying employment goals and learning job search methods. With direction and services such as career counselling and exposure to a wider range of job search methods, they will move into the Action stage of active and motivated job search.

Disempowered: Job seekers who have lost motivation and self-confidence. They feel they face too many barriers to getting a job that no employer would want them, for example, having a bad work history, or being perceived as too old for a job. They have often experienced rejection and discrimination and have resigned themselves to never getting a job and hence are less active in looking.

"I would love to be working but after years of trying to find work and not getting anything you start to think you'll never work again. I hate being unemployed; you can just barely survive on what they give you. You don't feel like a real person and life is depressing. I've worked all my life, but now I've just accepted that no one wants to employ me."

Disempowered job seekers are in the Precontemplation or Contemplation stage of the behaviour change model. They also need guidance and direction about work options but they first need intensive confidence and self-esteem building to regain hope, motivation and improved self image. They will likely need assistance back into the workforce such as work experience and continued post placement support.

Selectives: Job seekers who are motivated but have placed specific limits on the type of job they want. They have specific criteria the job must meet such as type of work, hours or level of remuneration. They are actively looking for "the" job and feel confident they will get it.

"I could get any job like scrubbing pots or waiting on tables but that would be so degrading and I'm far too qualified for that. I could go back into government where I could probably get a good paying job but that's not what I want. I want to pursue my ideal employment and get my business up and paying for itself. This would be far more rewarding and stimulating for me, I like to work autonomously and not have to answer to other people."

Selectives are in the Action stage of the behaviour model as they are motivated and actively looking for work. These job seekers need a service which maintains their motivation levels but also opens them to greater work and job search opportunities. They need advice on how to get 'the job' they are seeking and advice about labour market opportunities which helps them set goals and, if necessary, closes the gap between their expectations and reality.

Dependants: Job seekers who are looking for a specific type of job but who are losing some optimism and motivation compared to Selectives. They find it difficult to find the right job but are not open to other job opportunities or job search activities that they are not completely comfortable with.

"I'm not just going to take any old job. I know what I'm worth. If I take anything less than that then I'm just lowering myself even more. I may never get the right job but I'd prefer to wait rather than just taking anything even if it means I won't find it for awhile."

Dependants are also at the Action stage of the behaviour change model. They need education and support to maintain motivation and increase self confidence as well as increase openness about the type of job and job search activities acceptable to them.

Cruising: Job seekers who voluntarily choose the unemployed lifestyle over working because they prefer it. They are not motivated to find work as it may interfere with their ability to spend time with family or friends or undertake other activities. They are not active in searching for work other than to meet their obligations at Centrelink.

"I enjoy being unemployed. It gives me time to do lots of other things that I really enjoy. I never get bored; I love being able to do things whenever I feel like doing them. I've got old cars I'm fixing up and am working on other projects, I would never get the chance to do these things if I was working."

Cruising job seekers need a service which educates them about the benefits of working, increases motivation to find work and helps identify goals. These job seekers also need rigorous and regular auditing to ensure they meet their mutual obligations.

Withdrawn: Job seekers who are not motivated and not looking for work because they believe that they are unable to work. They believe they have health issues, psychological conditions or other disabilities that are severe enough to prevent them from working. They have withdrawn themselves from the job market because they feel they are not able to and should not have to work.

"My health is such that I will never work again. I've accepted it, I would much rather be working. Do you think I want to live on \$160 a week when I was earning \$800 a week before? I've got no choice, my doctor has told me I can't work. Why can't they (Centrelink) believe me?"

Withdrawn job seekers need a service which offers support and encouragement and listens to the circumstance of the individual. These job seekers may need intensive counselling or medical services before being able to attempt any job search activity. They need to be in a position to be able to work and feel confident in themselves that they are able to work. If they are unable to work, they need to be reassessed and placed on more a appropriate allowance.

Discriminating between the segments: the assessment tool

The following table illustrates the characteristics of each segment.

	Drivers	Struggling	Drifting	Disempowered	Selectives	Dependent	Cruising	Withdrawn
Motivated	33	3	5	55	33	3	5	55
De-motivated	55	5	3	33	55	5	3	33
Unlimited	33	3	3	33	55	5	5	55
Limited	55	5	5	55	33	3	3	33
The Job	5	5	5	5	33	33	3	5
Any Job	3	3	3	3	55	55	5	5
Active	33	3	3	55	3	3	5	55
Inactive	55	5	3	33	5	3	3	33

Each segment shares characteristics with other segments in its quadrant. For example, Drivers and Struggling are motivated, active and unlimited. However, their relative levels of motivation, openness, job search activity and selectiveness differentiate them. These relative differences are identified in the table above. A **55** means that the segment is strongly defined by the absence of this characteristic. An **5** means the characteristic does not apply to the segment, a 3 means that the characteristic applies to the segment and a 33 means that the segment is strongly defined by the characteristic.

In order to quantify the segments, the research needed to provide an assessment tool to discriminate between different attitudes of job seekers. A series of 21 attitudinal statements were developed and tested as a result of the qualitative research. The job seekers were asked to rate their level of agreement with these statements on a scale of 1 to 10 where 1 is strongly disagree and 10 is strongly agree.

Each statement was chosen by the researchers to reflect a dimension of the segmentation model. Depending upon the job seekers' level of motivation, limitation, job selectivity and job search activity they are more likely to agree or disagree with each statement.

Motivated job seekers are most likely to agree with:

- I try innovative and creative ways to find work;

- I really want to work;
- I have a lot of confidence in myself and my skills and abilities; and
- I know that I will find a job soon.

De-motivated job seekers are likely to disagree with the 'motivated' statements above and agree that:

- I don't think I should have to do paid work ;
- I don't think any employer would want to employ me;
- I believe I should not have to look for work; and
- I can't be bothered looking for a job.

Unlimited job seekers are more likely to agree that:

- I feel totally comfortable applying for jobs and going for interviews;
- I do more than the average unemployed person to try to find work;
- I try innovative and creative ways to find work

Limited job seekers are likely to disagree with the 'unlimited' statements above and agree that:

- I am uncomfortable about how to look for a job;
- I would rather be unemployed than take a job I don't like; and
- I don't think I should have to do paid work.

Job seekers who want 'the job' are more likely to agree that:

- I would rather be unemployed than take a job I don't like;

Job seekers who will take 'any job' will disagree with the statement above and are more likely to agree that:

- I would take just about any reasonable job at the moment Active job seekers are more likely to agree that:
- I do more than the average unemployed person to try to find work;
- I try innovative and creative ways to find work;
- I am doing everything I can but it's hard to get a job;
- I have recently been knocking on doors or phoning employers myself;
- I have been applying for lots of jobs recently

Inactive job seekers are more likely to disagree with all of the 'active' statements above and are likely to agree that:

- I can't be bothered looking for a job.

Quantifying the segments and refining the model

After establishing the conceptual model and assessment tool, the next objective of the segmentation research project is to model the survey responses and quantify the segments in the job seeker population. As described above, the assessment tool has already been used in one application and quantitative data obtained for 3,500 job seekers. This data is being used to refine the segmentation and, with the qualitative research results as a guide, develop a quantitative model. This process

is still being completed. It involves various multivariate statistical methods including factor analysis, principle components analysis and cluster analysis.

In undertaking any modelling process there are alternative approaches that can be taken in refining the model. The modelling process is an iterative one of exploring different models and testing at different levels, whether the model reflects the concepts discovered in the qualitative research ie does it hold true with what is intuitively understood from the qualitative research?

Once the model is developed the same algorithm will be assumed for future years to track changes in the segments. To enable this to be achieved, the model needs to be replicable. Techniques such as discriminant analysis are being explored to provide for a model that can be applied to future survey data.

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