

**D.O.M.E INC W.A. Employment Services
Lotteries House
79 Stirling Street
Perth WA 6000**

INTRODUCTION

D.O.M.E. is an acronym for Don't Overlook Mature Experience. The organisation is a not for profit, incorporated body which focuses on unemployed workers over 45 years of age and has been operating in a centrally located market place for over 10 years. D.O.M.E. has evolved into a specialist advisory and placement service for the mature age jobseeker. As a high profile organisation operating in a tight employment market D.O.M.E. has a high demand on its services and resources from all sectors of the community, including business, government and not-for-profit agencies seeking assistance for its employees or clients.

D.O.M.E. is currently sponsored by the State Department of Training, gaining approximately \$90,000 per year in core funding to provide services to this specific target group. As one of over fifteen Job Link programs in the metropolitan area of Perth, W.A., D.O.M.E. links into this network to provide additional choice to business in its available data bank of mature age experienced personnel. D.O.M.E. emphasizes the cost efficiencies of experience to business and is able to significantly contribute to the regional Job Link program success by networking positions to these State government programs for their registered mature clients.

Over the last five years, D.O.M.E. has demonstrated its capacity to achieve significant employment outcomes for its clients. On average registering over 350 clients per year and placing into employment on average between 230 and 250 clients. This achievement has been coupled with sound financial management, cost efficiencies and minimal staffing. D.O.M.E. also relies on financial resources from its personalised computer training arm which is aimed at the mature age jobseeker but responsive to business and government training opportunities. Trading as D.T.S. [D.O.M.E. Training Services] the not for profit business has been successfully operating for over four years in a highly competitive industry.

D.O.M.E. is consistently requested to handle long term unemployed clients via case managers in the metropolitan area. Currently there is no Commonwealth assistance available to D.O.M.E. to assist these long term unemployed clients. Therefore the current focus is on those who have most recently lost their positions in an attempt to prevent further statistics of long term unemployment.

The major focus for assistance at D.O.M.E. is currently on those clients who could be broadly categorized as recently unemployed [between one month to 11 months unemployed.] There are of course some exceptions and D.O.M.E. tries within its limited resources to assist as many clients as possible. D.O.M.E. considers that many of those who are long term unemployed will require considerable ongoing assistance to bring them up to employable standards.

LABOUR MARKET TRENDS AFFECTING MATURE AGE

The shrinking labour market opportunities available to the mature age dictate innovation and creativity in order to seek new avenues of job opportunities and to motivate, train and advise its client base.

Recent research by the organisation has demonstrated that, whilst in the current economic climate there is a reluctance on the part of employers to engage staff on a permanent full-time basis, business still has short to medium term needs which could be met by alternative solutions to full time employment.

D.O.M.E. will now focus on identifying opportunities for this market and has been afforded seed capital by the State government to trial and market this strategy over the coming 12 months. Our research has indicated a consistent, well targeted penetration aimed at the short term contractual market could increase the available job opportunities for the swelling ranks of white collar unemployed.

It is intended that contact and liaison with employers/agencies will lead to partnership agreements through which details of D.O.M.E.'s clients are regularly disseminated to potential employers and agencies and D.O.M.E will establish itself as a preferred supplier of mature aged contract personnel.

D.O.M.E. intends forging partnership agreements with employers in order to provide personnel for short term contractual positions with minimal costs and recruitment effort by the employer. Such term or temporary placements we believe could ultimately lead to sustainable permanent employment.

It is intended that D.O.M.E. will also forge relationships with major agencies to be a supplementary source of experienced personnel to complement their own registers, thus improving their own capability to service their customers needs. These agencies may elect to register some D.O.M.E. clients on their on registers for continuing placements.

D.O.M.E. has also begin to experiment with the delivering of specifically designed workshops directed at opening up new ways of thinking for success in today's changing labour market. With the assistance from the State government in innovation grants D.O.M.E. has designed and run two day workshops. Participants from these courses are forming support groups to research tenders, look at self enterprise and self employment and begin to think outside the square of full time positions.

Many mature clients have been unable to accept the growing transitory nature of job opportunities and the recognition of the concept of modular work.. The workshops begin to address the need for flexibility and acceptance of a range of opportunities in a changing work environment.

CURRENT RESOURCES

D.O.M.E. will over the coming twelve months employ four staff members and 2 - 3 part time contractual staff to deliver computer training and workshop facilitation. On a yearly grant of \$90,000 only 2.5 staff members are paid through government funding. The Computer Training manager moves between the employment and training arms of D.O.M.E. This coming year an additional enterprise option once off seeding grant from the State Department of Training of \$50,000 has been won by D.O.M.E. to continue with the Workshops, trialling of temporary placement strategies and generally increase opportunities available to the increasing numbers of clients accessing the organisation.

The Lotteries Commission has been generous in the past to D.O.M.E. providing capital grants for computer equipment and furniture and will be assisting in the relocation to the new Lotteries House in West Perth in July.

D.O.M.E. raises income through its Computer Training Arm marketing to business and government departments its flexible training operation. This extends the organisation's capacity to respond to the increasing demand on its resources. The Training service has been operating in a competitive market for over four years. Some Case Managers from both the Rehabilitation services and Jobs Network are beginning to see the merits of referring and paying for clients to attend these training courses.

THE MAJOR ISSUES

As a mature age organisation focused solely on placement, advice and trends in the labour market, D.O.M.E. is in a prime position to look at the major issues. Some of these issues are set out below:

The rate of redundancies and downsizing in industry and business such as the financial and insurance industries and the government sectors have delivered large numbers of lower, middle and upper level management clients to the market place. A significant number of these fall within D.O.M.E.'s catchment area of mature age.

The ageing of Western Australia's population will create an ever increasing under representation in the workforce of mature age unless definitive action resulting in the development of positive industry and business portrayal of the skills and experience held within this sector reverses the current trend. Part of this approach should include the promotion of reskilling, recognition of prior learning and the adaptation of the delivery of employment programs more streamlined to the needs of the age group. With ongoing commitment of government agencies, the private sector and the wider community, D.O.M.E. can significantly contribute to the vision of positive ageing become a reality in this state.

The problem of mature age male unemployment reflect 8,700 males to that of 2,800 females [ABS Statistics December '98]. D.O.M.E.'s registrations reflect proportionally similar ratios of male to female statistics. Compounding the problem is the high percentage of white collar vs blue collar unemployed. In the six months to December 1998, there were 99 new blue collar registrations in D.O.M.E. and 49 blue-collar placements (49%), whereas there were 219 new white collar registrations and only 78 (36%) white-collar placements. 1

D.O.M.E. currently draws over 60% of its clients from the "hidden unemployed" self supporting mature age unemployed. Many of D.O.M.E.'s clients are not currently in receipt of unemployment benefits, some have dependent children and may be subsisting on their partner's part time wage, or if over 55, are obliged to tap into their superannuation. A large percentage are fearful of depleting their superannuation earlier than planned and they may ultimately be in receipt of Federal Government Benefits.

The majority of D.O.M.E.'s clients would not qualify for assistance under the Federal Government's Jobs Network at the Flex 2/3 level of Case Management. Many of D.O.M.E.'s clients have held responsible or managerial positions and have invested their entire working lives in loyalty, long hours and hard work and find themselves overwhelmed by their current position. Many of these people are struggling to come to terms with a fast changing labour market with its requirement for new skills and transient frameworks. Retraining costs are expensive and out of reach of many mature age unemployed.

The current range of appropriate specific available services to the mature age jobseeker are virtually non existent. The range of services such as job clubs are focused at the young and unavailable to all but Flex 2/3 clients. For many of the clients who register with D.O.M.E. these services are not available.

The current emphasis by both Federal and State governments on youth programs such as the Apprenticeships and Traineeships have gained wide acceptance by business and industry. While Traineeships are open to the mature age, employment brokers confirm minimal take up by the mature age.

1. D.O.M.E. Statistics July '98 - December '98 - See Appendix Section

SUMMARY/CONCLUSION

D.O.M.E. is a small not for profit organisation with a potentially larger than manageable client base stretching its available resources.

D.O.M.E. was an accredited Case Manager but chose not to proceed with accepting a tender because of the doubtful cash flow projections. *[Case management was examined by three separate financial sources who advised a negative cash flow would result.]* D.O.M.E. was advised it would need a considerably higher capital base to support Case Management over a three to four year period. The Board of Management ruled against proceeding.

It is this organisation's view that working with the mature age jobseeker requires a vastly different professional approach to assisting the younger job seeker. D.O.M.E. is now trialling a range of approaches in the form of Training Workshops. In the future it is proposed to market places on these Workshops to Case Managers and private Agencies throughout the metropolitan on a fee for service basis. This will enable D.O.M.E. to respond to more requests to handle longer term unemployed.

The issue of the hidden unemployed will remain a large problem for the Federal government if it wishes to encourage the potentially large population of baby boomers to be self sufficient in retirement. If the large numbers of statistically hidden unemployed retire with insufficient savings, due to earlier than planned retirement, the burden for the future shrinking tax base will be substantial.

D.O.M.E. has achieved its targets and remains a strong performer for the State Government's Job Link Program. However, D.O.M.E. is struggling to deliver sufficient placement, training and advice to the swelling ranks of particularly white collar under-employed and unemployed clients. The shrinking and ever changing labour market opportunities available to the mature age dictate innovation and creativity in order to seek new avenues of job opportunities and to motivate, train and advise a growing client base.

Current ABS Statistics suggest over eleven thousand mature age clients in Western Australia. It is a problem beyond the scope of this organisation despite the organisation's best efforts and cost effective management.