



Event Report:

MilSpouse Job Club Meeting Jacksonville, FL June 17, 2010



Summary

MSCCN hosted the first meeting of the MilSpouse Job Club in Jacksonville, FL on June 17, 2010. The event was held at the Mayport USO, one of our BrAlve partners, and attended by Pam Ottesen from the Mayport Fleet and Family Support Center. This event was a test program for determining interest in a club for military spouses needing job search help. The test was a success. The four participants who attended the meeting agreed there was a need for the club and all were interested in joining the club and expanding the meetings. Since the first meeting, applicant interest in the club has spread and the number of requests for information has increased.

Overview

The meeting started with introductions from the group - participants shared personal information about where they lived, their families, and their job search story. The comfortable atmosphere allowed the group to express both joy and frustration with each other about the area and job search resources. Pam Ottesen introduced herself and the Fleet and Family Support Center's (FFSC) programs and classes to the group. Three of the participants had not heard of the FFSC or the resources offered. After the meeting, a tour of the FFSC was given along with information on additional area resources available to military job seekers. MSCCN, Worksource, and the Chamber of Commerce were mentioned.

The meeting focused on networking: how to increase networking opportunities and make each more effective. It started by discussing how to create opportunities to tell people about yourself and your goals. The exercise consisted of several scenarios – one was an example of someone sharing what a hard time they are having finding a job and are desperate and willing to do ANYTHING. The scenario was replayed in a positive way, the person clearly stated what they

were looking for, and asked open ended questions to keep the conversation going. Participants were able to see the difference and felt better equipped to handle future opportunities.

The conversation progressed to informal vs. formal networking. The group developed a list of networking suggestions, including volunteering and joining professional organizations. Then participants developed stories to highlight work achievements using Situation – Action – Result. Each person shared their stories and reworked it after suggestions were given from the group. Common suggestions were to add industry specific terms, good action words, and statistics. It was valuable for participants to see how sharing a simple statement requires refinement and practice to be effective. By the third and fourth time the statements were given all participants were giving advice on how to improve the stories. Homework was assigned, to incorporate the story into an elevator speech.

The meeting closed and the participants were surveyed for feedback on the structure and format of the meeting for evaluation of success. The first hour of the meeting was informal allowing the participants to share information. The next two hours were structured, an agenda and handout with information being presented was followed and participants preferred the structured portion of the meeting. They felt like the meeting should start a little more structured, not a formal training with a power point, but a topic to discuss with an agenda and handout to follow. The first hour was too informal and they expressed that portion could be at the end of the meeting with a semi-structured networking or sharing session.

Specific participant suggestions:

- Medium structure following some sort of handout
- Meetings once a month
- Time frame 2 hours, with extra time at the end to stay and network or get individual advice
- Graduation - Successful job seekers come back to a meeting to share their story and advice
- Condense the introductions and network at the end of the meeting
- Have cards to write down questions or advice when we are in the middle of a topic and then go through that at the end

Conclusion

The first meeting of the MilSpouse job club was a success. After reviewing comments, there is a need among military spouses to have a place and group of support to receive information and resources to improve their job search. The club also allowed participants to network and practice sharing information in informal settings. The club will continue meeting monthly with a structured subject followed by an informal practice session.

Grant: North Florida BrAlve Grant
Attendee: Lisa Blevins