Making A Career Change Attainable for Mature Job Seekers
A Goal-directed Instructional Design Plan

Maria "Kit" Cresencia Fishell
Author

1. A PROBLEM OR A NEED

There are some tough truths as we continually take in the economic reality especially in Michigan:
• Even when rehired, displaced workers from the auto industry are not likely to earn the high salary they are used to.
• Farming and tourism industries may also not be a substantial source of good-paying jobs.
• Most of the affected workers who have been displaced, lost their job due to a factory closing, or downsizing are from the older generation.
• This affected generation has dedicated at least 15 years of their lifetime in the same industry hoping to retire someday. Unfortunately, their dreams have been disbanded by reality and they need to find a job in a different environment.

There is a need for an educational strategy that will help this generation to bridge the gap between their previous semi-skilled jobs and today's employment opportunities that require computer skills, interpersonal skills, and business skills that are essential to getting back into the workforce.

This generation, which I call the mature group, has found it daunting to find jobs and it can be to their self-confidence as they compete with younger job seekers who have just earned their college degrees and who have grown up in a lifestyle that is dependent on technology.

With this instructional plan, teachers will be able to partner with adult learners. This partnership should result in students making attainable career change goals and creating intermediate steps to achieve these goals.   In addition to setting goals, there is a need for a networking plan and a support role to prompt these students in the right direction to prepare for career opportunities.

2. A REAL-WORLD PERFORMANCE

Dr. Merrill underscored three essential elements to make a goal-directed instruction design plan valuable to a student: demonstrate, apply, and motivate.

In this instructional design plan, the teacher demonstrates the news, trends, challenges, and the hard facts of career search and career change, especially for older people. This strategy is not supposed to discourage students but instead show them how to prepare for the real world and that there are success stories for people who have dealt with change. The next step is to have the teacher exemplify the steps on how to deal with the reality and reach the goal of making a career change realistic for unemployed mature students.

Applying what has been demonstrated in real world tasks is very crucial. Some examples such as:
• letting students become independent, creative, and innovative in their hands-on computer projects (creating resumes, cover letters, and thank you letter)
• having students realize what transferable skills can they use in jobs they are aiming for
• teaching students to use social media to connect with people/companies
• using discussion posts and emails to collaborate with classmates.

A student will be motivated if he is able to redefine and reinvent himself by developing the skills that meet the requirements of the type of job he is seeking.   He will gain the self confidence needed to identify opportunities that would have been overlooked before this educational experience. He will be able to see himself following a variety of career paths that were unimaginable prior to his retraining. Just what Dr. Merrill said, " … now that's what real motivation is all about."

3. AN INSTRUCTIONAL OBJECTIVE

By the end of the course, the students should be able to:
1. Use their internet research skills to search for jobs.
2. Identify scams and evaluate the authenticity of the web sites visited.
3. Use technology productivity tools in creating and updating a resume, reference page, and cover letter.
4. Customize a resume and cover letter based on the company's job description and job skill requirements.
5. Create and customize a thank you letter that describes their job interview experience.
6. Organize and make a portfolio that contains an updated resume, reference page, certifications, awards earned, training completed, and recommendation letters.
7. Prepare themselves with confident, career-focused answers to use during a job interview.
8. Use the discussion forums in Moodle to share their learning experience, and researches; and to post comments, and feedback.
9. Use social media, particularly LinkedIn, for self branding, networking, job searching, and company researching.

Evaluations on the NETS-S Standard and METS-S Standard:

1. The activities performed in the instruction design plan fall under the following **NETS–S CATEGORIES:**
   - Communication and Collaboration (use of social media for networking, Moodle for discussion posts, and updates)
   - Digital Citizenship (accountability on information provided online – work history, work skills, pictures)
   - Research and Information Fluency (research and evaluate valid job postings, and potential future employers)
   - Technology Operations and Concepts (understand and use technology concepts, systems, and operations, select and use applications effectively and productively)

2. I also have realized that many of our students may not have met the standards listed on the most recent Michigan Educational Technology Standards for Students (METS-S) 2009 before they enrolled in our programs. It may be due to being in the workforce and away from formal schooling for years, or because they are from the different generation mix.   After looking over the METS-S 2009 checklist, I am encouraged that these adults, who have chosen to return to the classroom, can be channeled back to 21st century technology. The activity meets the following specific standards:

   - **Communication and Collaboration**
   Grade Level 6-8:
     - use digital resources (e.g. discussion groups, social media) to collaborate with peers, experts, and other audiences
     - identify effective uses of technology to support communication with peers, family, or school personnel

   Grade Level 9-12:
     - use technology tools for managing and communicating personal information

   - **Digital Citizenship**
   Grade Level 6-8:
     - discuss the long term ramifications (digital footprint) of participating in questionable online activities (e.g. posting photos of risqué poses in LinkedIn, online resumes, e-portfolio)
     - describe the potential risks and dangers associated with online communications

Grade Level 9-12:
-   discuss and demonstrate proper netiquette in online communications

- **Research and Information Fluency**

Grade Level 6-8:
-   evaluate information from online resources for accuracy and bias

Grade Level 9-12.
-   identify, evaluate, and select appropriate online sources to answer content related questions for job interviews
-   distinguish between fact, opinion, point of view, and inference
-   evaluate information found in selected online sources on the basis of accuracy and validity
-   evaluate resources for stereotyping, prejudice, and misrepresentation
-   understand that using information from a single internet source might result in the reporting of erroneous facts and that multiple sources must always be researched

4. A SET OF ESSENTIAL CONTENT

- Self-discovery
  - Finding out what are the possible career positions which the students would like to pursue
  - Identifying different skills that students have acquired from their previous jobs and learning how to transfer these skills to the new career that they are pursuing.

- Technology Skills
  - Learning the computer and internet basics
    - emailing and attaching files to an email
    - researching about a company's information
    - evaluating a website, a job opening, job description and requirements
  - Using productivity tools
    - creating a resume, cover letter, thank you letter, and references
    - converting files to different file formats
  - Using Moodle – discussion topics:
    - Proper way of answering frequently asked interview questions
    - How to play to your strengths including technology skills as a mature job seeker
    - Good questions to ask to an interviewer
  - Learning Social Media – LinkedIn
    - creating a profile, and online resume
    - researching about a company
    - job searching
    - requesting for a recommendation from previous employer or teacher

- Interpersonal and business skills
  - Emotional Intelligence
  - Listening skills, Customer service
  - Time management
  - Dealing with Change
  - Attitude being Contagious

- Interviewing skills
  - Mock Interview
  - Proper handshake

5. AN EVALUATION CONSISTING OF A TEST OR OBSERVATION

Assessments/Activity	Grade Percentage (100%)
• The employment documents (resume, cover letter, thank you letter) will be graded three times. It will be submitted three times (1st draft , 2nd draft, and final copy)	25%
• Student participation in discussion forums through Moodle, and in LinkedIn	15%
• Interviewing skills assessed through a mock interview evaluation, also includes proper attire, and handshake	25%
• Assessments to test technology skills (if student received a Microsoft Office Specialist Certification in Word - add 10%)	15%
• Interpersonal/Business skills (Role playing)	20%

6. A METHOD TO HELP PARTICIPANTS LEARN

Yelon mentioned the following components to make the instructional design effective:	The instructional plan is designed to have real-world activities which will promote practical learning and apply Yelon's secret Chart Methods. Teacher should:
• Teach practical concepts to students	• Demonstrate research techniques to find jobs not just through help-wanted ads in newspapers but also by going online. Online research skills involve going to trusted websites and evaluating the information provided in the site. • Create an online form for job applications so students can practice and learn how to fill-out online applications.
• Involve students in the learning process	• Encourage student job shadowing and/or job volunteering at different companies to get to more understanding and exposures to the real work environment.
• Hands-on learning in computer lab	• Expose students to various technology tools such as computer basics, internet and email use, and other skills needed in the a workplace (basic to intermediate level) like word processing, creating spreadsheets and simple presentations.
• Assign assessments/projects/ and examples for hands-on learning	• Assign projects in the computer lab that are related to the instructional plan. Use a word processor to create a resume, cover letter, and thank you letter. Apply those skills by creating a slide presentation. Create a monthly budget.
• Have an activity to understand an actual scenario	• Schedule a mock interview for all students. Invite contacts from the HR department from local companies who may be willing to conduct the interviews and provide feedback.

	• Watch videos or do role playing to create customer service and business skills scenarios.
• Use of Moodle discussion forum	• Before the mock interview, create a discussion posts for students to talk about frequently ask interview questions. Students should post career-focused answers and rehearse them in front of a mirror.

MOTIVATION

- **MEANINGFULNESS**
  - Volunteering or job shadowing can be very meaningful to a student:
    - to give him a chance to "try on" a new career
    - to fill a gap on his resume
    - to keep the student engaged and positive
    - to be able to see internal job postings (for volunteers), and
    - to provide networking opportunities
  - Creating a portfolio which contains all employment documents like a resume and achievements promotes organization skill
  - Having the realization and confidence that he has developed skills from his previous jobs that can be transferable to the career he is aiming for.
  - During the interview, he has powerful words he can use to support himself as a mature job seeker:
    - He has both the depth and the breadth of experience.
    - It's all about the challenge, and he is willing to take it.
    - He has been tested in his previous job to be loyal and with strong work ethic.
    - He now has fewer personal distractions to affect work.
    - He is a "seasoned" worker and has a bag of tricks to use to solve problems.
    - He takes charge of his life and never considers himself a victim of an economic downturn.
    - He can offer his service for a trial period.
    - The trend now is not about seniority, it's all about skills – and he has it.

- **PLEASANT CONSEQUENCES**
  - Self-confidence to do job searching independently
  - The feeling of self-sufficiency, and the opportunity for career change
  - The knowing of possibilities of having more career options after learning more skills

- **NOVELTY**
  - Dressing for success and giving students ideas on what to wear during a job interview. Students should be wearing the proper attire during the mock interview.
  - Role playing on the different kinds of handshakes
  - Classroom discussion on how to handle illegal interview questions
  - Once a student is comfortable with MS Office applications, he can get a chance to take an exam to earn the Microsoft Office Specialization (MOS) certification, a credential that is globally recognized to validate his knowledge, skills and abilities relating to the Microsoft Office systems. MOS heightens career achievement and workforce productivity.

SOCIALIZATION

- Social networking can be a good tool for students. Use LinkedIn to create an online resume, connect with previous colleagues, search for job opening, research and know about the company before the interview, get support from connections, join groups with the same interests, and for self-branding and networking.
- Joining discussion posts in Moodle keeps students involved and enables them to share their ideas,

experiences, and information. It is a way of learning that keeps them engaged in socializing but still focusing on professional effectiveness.

AUDIENCE

- **AGE** - geared to unemployed people from age 18 to older job seekers who are not yet prepared for retirement and are willing to explore other career paths
- **SKILL LEVEL**
    - Word processing skills, ability to edit and format documents
    - Interview skills
    - Interpersonal skills
    - Internet research skills for job searching
    - Networking
- **PREREQUISITE KNOWLEDGE**
    - basic reading, writing, math skills
    - basic computer and internet knowledge is desired but not necessary
    - openness to a career change

TECHNOLOGY NEEDS

- **SOFTWARE**
    - Internet access
    - LinkedIn for social networking
    - Email account
    - Productivity tools (MS Office, Google Docs, Zoho apps, OpenOffice)
    - Moodle

- **HARDWARE**
    - computer
    - printer