



Youth Employability Competences

Advisory Youth Board Member



Background

Ana is a member of the advisory youth board organised and facilitated by Ballymun Job Centre who are based in an economically and socially deprived area on the outskirts of Dublin, Ireland. She is originally from Romania but moved to Dublin in 2013. Ana trained in psychology but her qualification is not recognised in Ireland. She worked in McDonalds for a number of years before taking part in Ballymun Job Centre's JP Morgan funded INVEST programme which is a nine month course focusing on an introduction to the world of tech with a work experience element. Ana is actively looking for work in IT or administration and is finding it difficult due to her lack of work experience in this area and also having fewer options as many businesses have not yet brought staff back on site due to the pandemic.

Interview

1. What have you learned about yourself from participating in the Advisory Group? What did you like best about the module that you assisted to develop?

One of the things I learned was that I can participate with useful information based on my experience over the years. There are infinite examples that one can relate when it comes to someone else's story. This was also what I liked best, the fact that we may come from different backgrounds, but the essence is the same, and as human beings, we are all dealing with the same issues in one way or another.

2. What motivates you to continue to be an active participant on the advisory panel? What do you see as the value in being involved in the advisory panel?

My motivation comes from the fact that we might be able to change the relationship between employers and employees. There is a gap that needs to be filled and I believe a lot of it comes from misunderstanding each other's needs. The value stems from making the process more transparent and understanding that there are no perfect candidates, and people should be given a chance.

3. What barriers or challenges if any did you experience by being involved in the Advisory Group and how were these overcome?

The biggest one was finding the courage to speak about the real issues, but when you see so many other people having the same obstacles, it all becomes relatable and you realise you are not alone. Being honest and bringing such matters to attention have had a great impact in overcoming such challenges.

4. Can you tell us how you have applied the learning from any of the modules developed in terms of your own: Motivation, Job Seeking, Career Choices, Skills Development, Further Training, Life Choices, Personal Development

By identifying and understanding my needs, likes and dislikes, putting myself in imaginary situations and monitoring my thoughts. Standing my ground and being true to myself through the process, by refusing to be something I'm not just for the sake of acceptance or results. At the end of the day one must feel comfortable with oneself and the choices one makes. I believe it's better to fail and try again by being yourself, rather than succeed based on a lie. After all, the only person you're hurting is yourself.



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5. Have you noticed any positive feedback from what you have learned, for example, during an internship or at a job interview?

Eventually, yes. But when working for others, they have a certain standard they want one to uphold, and most of the time this comes from unrealistic expectations the employer places upon a candidate. That is why I believe it's important to be honest and speak up when the reality doesn't match the fantasy. Standing one's ground and speaking up when something doesn't work shows respect both towards oneself and one's employer.

6. What do you hope to achieve by continuing to participate in the Advisory Group?

I am hoping that young people who are entering employment can identify easily unrealistic expectations placed upon themselves, gain the confidence they need to ask questions and keep their integrity, and at the same time I am hoping that employers will realise that some of their requests are outrageous, that sometimes too much pressure does not mean growth and that an algorithm does not know better than meeting the person face to face.

Conclusions

From being a member of the advisory board, Ana appears to have grown her belief in herself and that her life experiences are valuable. This has supported and developed her motivation to contribute and given her confidence to speak out about how she feels. Her case study highlights an important aspect of the YEC project, bringing young people and employers together to work co-operatively and hopefully to then better understand each other. Anna has spoken passionately about her feelings in relation to employer / young people relationships and there is a sense that she feels heard in this. In the board meetings she also has the benefit of hearing the employers' point of view.

