

Q: Okay. So welcome, xxxx. This is an interview with xxxx

Q: xxxx from xxxx on 28 October for the IL Employability Research Project. So the first question looks - comprising the work with your organisation - - -

P1: Mmm hmm.

Q: - - - and, sort of, your role - - -

P1: Yeah.

Q: - - - within it.

P1: xxxx is a peak representative body for community organisations across greater western Sydney and it's to strengthen the work of community organisations who work directly with communities across the region. What that work means in practice is we run training, we synthesise information that comes from government and communicate that out to the sector as needed. We also work with organisations to - yeah, I guess improve the way that they're working with communities which could be facilitating collaborations, running planning strategic sessions with organisations and groups of organisations like inter-agencies. Yeah.

Q: Sorry, your role in - - -

P1: My role? That the - my role is xxxx Manager in the organisation, to that's to look at areas where the organisation needs to move in terms of strategy and also sustainability, so part of it is looking at new funding streams for the organisation and the other part is, sort of, looking at what new opportunities there are. So for example, a lot of my work is around linking with businesses

because we're in a very changing landscape with the sector and organisations need to look at, you know, supplementary income streams beyond government funding, 'cause that's very much changing.

Q: That's excellent, okay.

P1: So, yep.

Q: That's fine, that's good.

P1: Mmm hmm.

Q: So the - under number two there's kind of a whole - - -

P1: Mmm hmm. Yep.

Q: - - - stream of things around information literacy or information skills - - -

P1: Mmm hmm.

Q: - - - and, you know, the different parts of that. So the first one is what activity you require employees to do research or find information in this workplace?

P1: I suppose everything we do, really, we need to, you know - like, if it's around a changing government policy, you know, it's finding more information about that. It's about - well, say in my case about linking with businesses and it's been all type of what are sort of trends in terms of what, you know, corporate social responsibility and what are the opportunities, so sort of trying to look

for information that makes you understand a particular area, if that makes sense. Mmm hmm.

Q: Okay. Cool. So what types of information do employees use in your workplace? Give examples.

P1: That's a very broad question, what are trying to get at?

Q: I'm not sure. This came up - - -

P1: It's like, you know.

Q: (3.33)

P1: It's all about information, so what - - -

Q: You know, sometimes we talk about, you know, the sources but we go into that, sort of, later. I guess it is sources of information or where would the information come from, you know, if someone was given a brief to - - -

P1: They'd probably Google first. They'd probably look at what we've got internally. We get a lot of stuff sent still by snail mail but we, you know, the internet, Twitter. Twitter's a way that I keep in contact with - - -

Q: I noticed you had a Twitter account.

P1: Yeah. Like, what - you know, what sort of burning issue at the moment but in terms of getting information, it's - yeah, I suppose the internet.

Q: Social media.

P1: Yeah.

Q: Okay. So what - - -

P1: We did have one worker who worked on a project who did use a library, but that's really quite rare.

Q: A library.

P1: Yeah. A physical library, like - - -

Q: You haven't got one here?

P1: No.

Q: No.

P1: Well we've got, you know, books and stuff. Yeah, in terms of - - -

Q: The public library.

P1: Public library. Yeah. But that's quite rare. Most people just use the internet. Mmm.

Q: That's good to know.

P1: Yeah. Just thought I'd put a plug in there.

Q: What resources or tools do employees use in the workplace to gather information? I guess that's specific tool-related, you know, separately in terms of data bases or spreadsheets or, you know, whether it's software (5.11) something more specific tools of collating sort of stuff.

P1: I mean, there is something that's set up by the government called HS Net. I don't think people use it that well. It's not that - you know. It's still - which is a, I guess, a database about human services across the state, but it's - I mean, I don't use it. I find it - like, we get - we're on so many emails, subscription lists - I mean, a lot of my up-to-date information comes, because I subscribe to a whole range of different lists, so I get stuff in my email box dropped all the time about things that are happening.

Q: I guess some prompts - - -

P1: Yeah.

Q: - - - rather than seeking it. I mean, in the old days it was called directory, it's like directory organisation probably, (6.09)

P1: You mean, we maintain a directory of inter-agencies across the region. Mmm.

Q: So what sort of skills or level of skills to do this type of research in the workplace?

P1: We need to be able to use a computer, you'll need to be literate I suppose. Is that what you - - -

Q: That's the broader skills. Yeah. And more the, sort of, what sort of skills you think, you know, if someone had a research project here to do. What sort of skills do you think they need or should need?

P1: They need analytical skills. They need to be able to understand the research question and - yeah, work out what - what they need to - - -

Q: Those sort of things like writing questions properly.

P1: Yeah.

Q: Any particular situation you've have to gather or use information. You've mentioned - - -

P1: Well, it's just some of the workplace issue. Like, say if there's some sort of staffing issue, you know, what we would do is we would probably go to - again the Google search of relevant websites, we're a member of Jobs Australia, so we would contact them and get information from them. I mean, it just depends on the specific issue. I mean, you say workplace issue. Is that what the question is about?

Q: I think so, yeah. I mean, you alluded to some before too in terms of - yeah, first government policy, policy things to check.

P1: Yeah.

Q: (8.07). We've probably covered the next one, so just storing and managing information.

P1: Yeah. We're moving more and more to just, like, we've got a server here but we're looking at moving to a Cloud-based system so at the moment (xxxx) files are kept on the server on a shared drive and on their own drive. That's probably the main thing we're really - actually just got rid of a whole lot of hard copies and information and scanned documents in. We're sort of really moving to online and what we do - we're transitioning at the moment. In terms of managing information, like, managing our data, managing our contacts, we're just in the process of - we're going to move to NationBuilder and move to our website and so we'll have a - 'cause we run a lot of events and training and have a lot of data that comes in from those - from training and events as well as our membership because we're a membership-based organisation, so what we're moving to is an integrated system using NationBuilder software, so.

Q: Okay. That's good, that. And (9.26) obviously wouldn't – or anyone coming in to work here wouldn't necessarily know about that software, would they, or?

P1: No, but, I mean - - -

Q: Training (9.34)

P1: Yeah, I mean we haven't done it yet but from what I understand it's got a really easy interface so, you know, you wouldn't have to know the back end. It's about just, you know, the interface and anyone, again, with reasonable IT skills would easily be able to use it. Yeah.

Q: So how do you assess the quality of the information you or your employees gather? Do you, kind of, assess the quality at any point?

P1: It depends on what. Sorry, I'm not good at really broad questions like this. Like, you know, like there's some things, no, you wouldn't bother but with some things - well say that, you know, the example I gave before if there was a specific workplace issue, we'd go to a number of sources and - yeah, you might cross-check something if there was a high risk in terms of not having the correct information, so it really is dependent on about how. I mean, we - most of our staff are, I guess, work at a particular level and our award which is - that's an independent workers so it's not like we go in and monitor things. Yeah, make sense?

Q: Yeah perfect, yeah that's good. I mean, all these steps are, sort of, about, you know, information skills - - -

P1: Mmm hmm.

Q: - - - as a sort of stagey thing - - -

P1: Yeah.

Q: - - - and more recently, ethical issues have become a part of that learning about information.

P1: Yeah.

Q: In terms of privacy, copyright - - -

P1: Mmm.

Q: - - - and confidentiality - - -

P1: Yes.

Q: --- students try and things they're often taught, you know ---

P1: Mmm hmm.

Q: --- referencing sources ---

P1: Yeah, absolutely.

Q: --- and that sort of thing. Does that come up ---

P1: Yeah.

Q: --- in this workplace?

P1: Yeah. I mean, we're really - anything that we would use we would reference (11.27) and, I mean, that's just part of what we do in terms of working professionally.

Q: Yeah. In terms of working with members you have to - confidential is part of that platform.

P1: Yeah. Like, we don't give away mailing lists, like, if anyone - if there's a request to sort of have information distributed, we don't - you know, we don't give those details out. We will instead do it on behalf of someone because of confidentiality. Absolutely. Yeah.

Q: Okay. Great. I mean, I've thrown the term information literacy.

P1: Never heard of it.

Q: (12.04) that's the question.

P1: Is that what you said?

Q: And that's what we've found and doing all the research about information skills in the business arena, it's kind of not a common term (12.18)

P1: Mmm hmm. Yeah.

Q: But it's - I mean, it's to do with our research skills, information skills. It's about - and that - I mean, it's kind of explained what it is in the next bit - - -

P1: Okay.

Q: - - - of the form, with the xxxx graduates - one of those graduate attributes - - -

P1: Mmm hmm. Yeah.

Q: - - - they have to achieve, assessing, evaluating, using - - -

P1: Mmm hmm. ADS I think that's really critical. It's - yeah, good skill to have because I think, you know, I sort of mentioned to you, we've got some fabulous students here at the moment, xxxx University students, who have been actually offered and do casual work for us. But in the past, you know, we've also had students from both xxxx and other universities - places haven't been that successful and that's been around sort of students not necessarily having the ability to sort of go off and - in order to - I guess to be information literate as defined by that, there's, you know, you have to be independent and

have initiative in order to do that and I guess that's been my observation is not - not everyone always comes equipped with that capacity to work independently and take initiative and - yeah.

Q: Very much. Yeah, sort of - - -

P1: Yeah.

Q: And learning skills.

P1: Absolutely. Well that's really essential, that's sort of - 'cause - yeah. As you know that's - you put a lot of time in when you've got new employees so if people, you know, are already at a, sort of, level then that minimises, sort of, the resourcing you have to do in terms of managing.

Q: You can usually tell pretty quick I guess. And so - I'm not sure if you're involved in the recruiting process - - -

P1: Yes.

Q: - - - but would you consider information skills when - - -

P1: I mean, we wouldn't define it as that but in terms of that, sort of, you know, being able to work - you know, I guess what - in question 4 how you've defined information literacy, yes, we would, sort of, be looking at that when interviewing people, that ability to - really initiative is a really key thing with recruiting and that ability to - yeah, just get it (14.42)

Q: Efficient.

P1: Yes. So I think, yes, we do even though we don't necessarily define it in that way but certainly, you know, part of the work here is about, sort of, being able to, sort of, yeah, be a critical thinker and be able to analyse issues and analyse information, so that's really, they're sort of key core competencies.

Q: Definitely. And that's escalated quite a bit - - -

P1: Yeah.

Q: - - - synthesise the information - - -

P1: Yep.

Q: - - - not just locating it - - -

P1: Absolutely.

Q: - - - doing something with it.

P1: Absolutely. Yeah.

Q: Comparing it to what's going on - - -

P1: Yeah. Yeah. And really, sort of, understanding that information, so - mmm.

Q: And help us to bring it back to - - -

P1: Yeah.

Q: - - - the workplace. Yeah. Okay, quickly moving on. I mean, trying to cover that, do you find that in general graduates are well-prepared?

P1: Some - I mean, I think that - I mean at the end of the day it often comes down to the individuals and their particular skill level. Some are, some aren't.

Q: There's one part of set of skills, isn't it?

P1: Yeah. So yes, you can certainly teach those skills but if that sort of person is, you know, in a broader sense lacking initiative or there's not a good - what I sort of didn't mention - I don't know whether (16.14) sort of be a good listener and being able to - part of this processes is being aware and not just assuming stuff, so I guess I've noticed sometimes students will come in and they'll be - I don't know whether it's because there's - yeah, I don't know - I won't speculate but they will make assumptions around things rather than just - - -

Q: Find out.

P1: - - - find out and ask more questions and - yeah.

Q: So that critical thinking.

P1: Yeah.

Q: Okay, sure. What are the most important skills or competencies (16.54) students graduating from university should have mastered? We've kind of covered - - -

P1: Yeah, I think it's that sort of initiative in being able to be an independent - you know, being independent. Yeah, but there's also that thing about being part

of the team. It's both - and how you work with people so I suppose, you know, in university that means where you get opportunities to collaborate as just - you know, as important as being able to work independently. Like, they're sort of skills you need, so that sort of flexibility I suppose being able to work on your own when you need to but then also being able to work with people and understand, you know, the dynamic, I suppose, of working with people.

Q: (17.42)

P1: Yeah. So that's equally as important.

Q: With that new degree that's come in that's very much on the agenda - - -

P1: Yeah.

Q: - - - as - something said the other day by our Deputy Dean there that our students will be going and working in business and very few of them will be working in isolation there.

P1: Mmm. Yeah.

Q: Skills that they need to - - -

P1: Absolutely. Being good listeners is really important as well, critically listen. Mmm.

Q: And, I mean, is there any broader skills? Do you find university graduates are well-prepared in terms – or in skills – do you find university graduates are well-prepared?

P1: I think the ones that - like, I'm just sort of thinking back - probably the ones that have had a bit more just general work experience are possibly better prepared, even if it's just working at, you know, having worked at the local supermarket or whatever. Do you know what I mean? If people come already knowing what - - -

Q: Real world stuff.

P1: - - - what it is to work in an environment, whether it's, you know, as I said it's sort of an unskilled job or a skilled job, if they understand the sort of, you know, I guess the power dynamics that happen within organisations and if they're sort of prepared with that, then they're better-prepared for their professional job I think, rather than, you know, we have had cases of people coming in where they haven't had that sort of life experience and you can tell, like, in terms of just not really understanding how - - -

Q: Why, or - - -

P1: - - - there's - yeah sort of (19.27) and then those assumptions come in because their experience has been based on what happens over at the university in the classroom situation, which is different, so then there's a disconnect there.

Q: Yeah. And that's a big issue in the sector now in terms of work integrated learning - - -

P1: Mmm. Yeah.

Q: - - - you know, but in terms of experience - - -

P1: Yeah.

Q: --- (19.49) a lot of new degrees and have a lot more of that (19.54) ---

P1: Yeah.

Q: --- to do.

P1: Mmm.

Q: Okay. The last one is what else could or should the University of Western Sydney students do to prepare graduates or what should we be doing to work more with this?

P1: Well, I mean, I think in a way you can - you've got my details through xxxx through the project we're doing with xxxx (20.21) just about - well, and also it is really about giving, you know, students an opportunity to work in a real life situation. I do the evaluations and that's why I talk to the students as well, which was really interesting to sort of hear about how they - for them it was sort of seeing, you know - I think, I suppose the closest thing would be, sort of, management consultant in terms of the sort of tasks that they're doing with the xxxx project. You know, the feedback was it was, you know, everything to date had been theoretical in terms of the, you know, the classroom and the university so to actually have the opportunity where they, you know, were out with a business advisor, working with a client, was really the first pilot - the feedback was really positive from the students. The sort of things that they were saying that they needed more assistance on was, sort of, maybe understanding some of those business processes prior to - like say for example, what is a business plan? So maybe having - and we've talked about that in terms of the project model that the induction phase about, you know,

that could be something that goes into the induction about a basic - some of the sort of basic things that they'll be - that they need to know, not that they have to know how to do a business plan but what is a business plan, what are the key components so that at least they've got a grasp of that before they go out and meet a client.

Q: That's a great point 'cause that's kind of, you know, you want to get some practical things out of this too and possibly - and resources on web pages around which - - -

P1: Yeah.

Q: - - - will help students transitioning - - -

P1: Yeah. Mmm.

Q: - - - around, you know, whether (21.56) they're not - don't know how to even research the company they've got an interview for properly and - - -

P1: Yeah.

Q: - - - that's something we could help - - -

P1: Yeah.

Q: - - - and we've had access to company profiles - - -

P1: Yeah.

Q: - - - or databases full of - - -

P1: Mmm.

Q: - - - stuff around the environment, and environmental industry reports - - -

P1: Mmm.

Q: - - - (22.18) glad that you pointed out (22.20) business plan, how to do a business plan or something which would - - -

P1: Yeah. Just - - -

Q: - - - (22.24)

P1: - - - what are the components of it and we're not going to be able to teach that in an induction, but it needs to - an introduction to what it is and what it might look like. I mean, those sort of really practical things I think are going to add value to the project that I'm working on with Western Sydney Uni (22.40)

Q: Possibly we could have some input into that.

P1: Mmm.

Q: (22.45)

P1: Yeah.

Q: We've got tonnes of stuff on business plans - - -

P1: That would be fantastic. I mean, we're sort of into stage two but I think next year when we, sort of, our intention is to sort of open it up. We're at a stage where we can - this has just all been a bit - selecting, word of mouth in pilot phase just to sort of test the model, but next year the intention is to send - well actually we'd be sending an email out later this year for - to start next year so, yeah, that would be good.

Q: Okay.

P1: Mmm.

Q: (23.14) talk about that. Okay. Thanks xxxx, that's pretty much it.

P1: Okay.

Q: Unless there's something else you'd like to add.

P1: No.

Q: No. All right. Thanks for your time.

P1: Yeah, my pleasure.

Q: It's very much appreciated and some good points there I think. We'll let you know how it progresses.

P1: Yeah. That will be interesting. Yeah. That's great, yeah, it's really - really important stuff and certainly when I did my degree, none of this - none of this was happening, so it's really good that, you know, the university and I'm sure

other universities that are really, sort of, thinking about creating that link while students are still there to - - -

Q: Yeah, it's trying to. Yeah. But the landscape is changing so rapidly - - -

P1: Yeah.

Q: - - - in the big world.

P1: Absolutely.

Q: The material is out there and just people assume that, you know, what they need to do is use books down in the library and stuff, you know, because it's all there but - - -

P1: Yeah.

Q: - - - there's still that whole, you know, skill (24.10) stage of still - - -

P1: Yeah.

Q: - - - (24.12) processing information (24.15) - - -

P1: Mmm. Yeah.

Q: - - - re-doing the search and it's not just - - -

P1: Yeah.

Q: - - - tapping on Google and finding - - -

P1: Yeah.

Q: --- things straight away.

P1: Mmm. The other thing I didn't mention are writing skills, sorry, 'cause I've noticed a real - I mean, again, it's an individual thing but I've noticed some are much better than others and that's one that, you know. If students have really good writing skills that just puts them ahead of the pack 'cause a lot of people don't even - even if they've been working for a long time, so (24.45)

Q: Good point, 'cause I was just bringing that up the other day ---

P1: Yeah.

Q: - - - there was a publisher (24.51) Tweeted about that book of business writing they put out - - -

P1: Yeah.

Q: --- and I said, "Well this is 2009."

P1: Mmm.

Q: (24.57)

P1: Yeah.

Q: They actually Tweeted back just yesterday saying well yes February 2000 - 2016 (25.02)

P1: Right.

Q: That would be good.

P1: Yeah. And writing in different context as well - others, you know, different - you have to change the way you write depending on the audience and that sort of stuff and I haven't - I mean, I've - I would say that generally the writing skills of some are being not as strong as other skills.

Q: Yeah, yeah.

P1: Mmm.

Q: Well that's yeah, a holistic sort of - - -

P1: Yeah.

Q: - - -thing, which they do try and direct for support there.

P1: Mmm.

Q: Academic writing support (25.36)

P1: Yeah. I think it's about how you translate that because I think academic writing is quite different to - - -

Q: (25.44)

P1: Absolutely. And I have noticed that with - you know, I've had to do a lot of re-writing to sort of make it, you know, sharper more to the point. There's a lot of, sort of, this sort of stuff if that makes sense. I mean - yeah.

Q: Well, we're all learning. Yeah.

P1: Yeah. Sorry, I just mentioned that but I'm now thinking about that that's actually a really important one as well.

Q: Definitely. And we have a resource for clarity English and it's about, you know, English writing - - -

P1: Yeah.

Q: - - - there was a business module in there.

P1: Yeah.

Q: How to write, you know, professional emails, business reports and the whole - - -

P1: But I think writing even in plain English is becoming more and more important. That's an ability to, you know, communicate across a whole range of audiences, so the way you do that is by having really clear, easy to understand language rather than relying on jargon and - - -

Q: Understanding who your audience is and - - -

P1: Yeah.

Q: - - - (26.38)

P1: Mmm.

Q: **That's a good point.**

P1: Yeah. No, if you could put that down, writing is another big one.

Q: **Will do.**

P1: Yeah.

Q: **All right. Thanks again for your time.**

P1: Yeah. No, pleasure.

Q: (26.48)

P1: And yeah, I'd be interested to hear how the project goes.

Q: **Definitely.**

P1: Mmm. Yeah. No, fantastic. I think the more – and that's come out of the evaluation, the more support that those students can get the better. Mmm. Definitely. Have you got more interviews today?

Q: **I did one this morning with - - -**

END OF RECORDING: (27.39)