

LEGITIMATE OPPORTUNITIES TO WORK FROM HOME



Final Report

Goal: Produce high quality, well researched and professionally presented webinars for career professionals and others interested in engaging a virtual workforce so that the clients we serve can access legitimate work from home opportunities.

Proudly funded and supported by CERIC and The Employment and Education Centre.

Legitimate Opportunities to Work from Home

Contents

CONTACT PAGE	2
Organizational profile	2
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY	3
OVERVIEW	4
OUTPUTS	5
MARKETING/DISSEMINATION	7
EVALUATION / OUTCOMES	10
KEY FINDINGS / INSIGHTS	11

CONTACT PAGE

Sue Watts, Executive Director
The Employment and Education Centre
105 Strowger Blvd.
Brockville, ON
K6V 5V2

(613) 498-2111
Susan@eecentre.com

Anne-Marie Rolfe, Consultant
163 Heron Drive,
Stratford, PEI
C1B 0L5

(902) 314-3738
amr@noodle-it.com

Anne-Marie Rolfe was the project lead and used her developed skills in project management, research, instructional design and marketing to envision and execute on the project. You can find out more about her [here](#). Anne-Marie was confident in the subject matter as she works from home.

Organizational profile

The Employment and Education Centre (EEC) is a charitable, non-profit agency that has been serving Brockville, Leeds and Grenville area since February 1, 1985. Our client focus includes youth, at-risk youth, unemployed, underemployed and those in career transition. We are located in a rural area with a population of 96,606 (Census, 2001) spread over 3350km². Brockville has the largest population base, 21,375 (Census, 2001) and is within 100 kms of both Kingston and Ottawa, Ontario. www.eecentre.com / www.eecentre.com/wfh.php

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Legitimate Opportunities to Work from Home Project (WFH Project) started with a simple vision, to research and validate legitimate opportunities to work from home and then offer this knowledge to Employment Agency staff across Canada via webinar.

The idea for the project grew out of repeated client requests for opportunities to work from home. Clients at the Employment and Education Centre in Brockville, On, presented with a number of barriers, not the least of which was the down turn in the job market locally. In response to these requests, Anne-Marie Rolfe was tasked with researching, validating and then offering this information directly to clients.

The first workshop for clients reached its 50 person limit within a week. A second workshop was then planned for later that same day. Over 100 job seekers attended these two workshops. This kind of turn out continued every time the workshop was offered. Job seekers wanted this information and we had done the research and validation to offer it.

Knowing that other employment agencies were probably being asked the same thing by clients and not having a reliable source of information to turn to the Project idea began. CERIC was the natural choice for a partner in this venture as their mission to advance education and research in career counselling and career development.

The goal was straightforward: *Produce high quality, well researched and professionally presented webinars for career professionals and others interested in engaging a virtual workforce so that the clients we serve can access legitimate work from home opportunities.*

CERIC provided \$46,000 in start-up capital to support this project. This was considered seed funding as the project was envisioned to be self-sustaining by the end of year three. Objectives with measurements were laid out with monthly, quarterly and annual tracking included.

The instructional design process saw the research molded into a high quality, well laid out, professionally presented four part webinar series that included all client support materials. Everything that an employment agency would need to deliver a Work from Home workshop for clients was included. Gototraining.com was selected as the webinar platform. Pricing of the webinars was researched and compared with other materials of equal value. Pricing was set at \$249 for the series. CERIC was a valuable partner in this process, sharing their knowledge and expertise freely. With that the marketing to employment agencies began in earnest. CERIC provided marketing support and early response to the webinar series was brisk, but interest waned and anticipated targets fell by the wayside.

At present the project stands at only 16% of anticipated number of career professionals trained as Work from Home Champions. In real numbers this means, we anticipated 400 we stand at 64. What follows is an honest look at what worked, what didn't work and what might be done differently next time.

OVERVIEW

The work from home project achieved a variety of direct results including:

- **70** legitimate opportunities to work from home researched and validated
- ContactPoint.ca now has **27** blog posts on the topic of Work from Home
<http://contactpoint.ca/category/blogger-central/anne-marie-rolfe/>
- Client Handout: Workshop – Version 08 14 (PDF and Word versions) – over **20 pages** of links and information related to legitimate opportunities to work from home.
- Webinar series workbook – Version 08 14 (PDF and Word versions) – **70 page** workbook/training materials to support the learners.
- Workshop – Work from Home **PowerPoints** – Version 08 14 – to support the facilitator in delivering the workshop.
- **Webinar recordings** – each of the 4 webinar sessions is recorded and available for playback.
- 30 minute **introductory webinar**, includes PowerPoints that can be sent participants.
- Project Webpage: Includes 30 minute recording, interactive map with **links to Work from Home Champions**, testimonials and project sponsors.
www.eecentre.com/wfh.php
- Social Media - **LinkedIn Project page** – excellent links and resources
<https://www.linkedin.com/company/legitimate-opportunities-to-work-from-home-project?trk=biz-companies-cym>
- **64** career professionals trained in Legitimate Opportunities to Work from Home (Work from Home Champions)

It also faced a number of challenges including:

- **It's a scam, we are a scam.** Overcoming the damage done by the multitude of scams and scammers has been an unexpected challenge. Marketing information was often blocked, deleted, or rebutted with negative commentary aimed at the sender.
- **No time, no money.** One of the reasons cited routinely for not being able to invest in the webinar series was the lack of time on the part of the Employment Counsellors, Workshop Facilitators and other staff. The other reason cited was that budgets had been cut and therefore agencies were forced to put professional development on hold.
- **Lack of digital literacy and digital fluency.** Being a Work from Home Champion does involve an average to advanced level of both digital literacy and fluency. The ability to know which digital tools to use (literacy) and then how to use them (fluency), and being confident in those skills was not top of mind for career professionals. Moving from a basic internet search into a more active research, investigation and validation model was a new mind set/skill set for many of those who took the training.

- **Competing demands for time and attention.** Many of the agencies that are in the target market are responsive to the needs of both their Federal and Provincial funding partners as well as Industry. The Canada Jobs Grant is a recent example of a program that requires the time and attention of agency staff to learn, execute and fulfill. Industry needs such as skilled trades have dominated the headlines this past year. These various demands direct where staff time and attention goes in agencies. The work from home initiative was not top of mind. Agencies shared that there just simply is not enough time to learn WFH, deliver it and coach clients in it.

OUTPUTS

Objective: Train career professionals so that they build their knowledge, skills and confidence in legitimate work from home opportunities so that they can empower their clients to access these jobs. Provide them the tools such as PowerPoint slides and handouts that they can use immediately to replicate our results.

Measurement: 900 career professionals have taken one or more of the webinars over a three year period and offered at least 4 workshops at their location. **Tracking:** Monthly

Results: Based on our planning, we projected 400 career professionals trained by this time. As of October 29th, 2014, we have **64** career professionals trained in Legitimate Opportunities to Work from Home (Work from Home Champions). We are at only 16% of target.

No information on how many workshops have been delivered by Work from Home Champions, as they did not come together as a community of inquiry.

Objective: Research, investigate and validate legitimate companies that hire employees and independent contractors who work from home. Share this knowledge with the career professionals who have accessed the training.

Measurement: Links and referral information to 180 legitimate companies who engage a virtual workforce. **Tracking:** Monthly

Results: 70 legitimate companies who engage a virtual workforce have been researched, validated and are included in the handout provided to job seekers.

The main areas researched and validated to date are:

- Telephone based work = 5 employers and contractors
- Transcription Services = 7 contract opportunities
- Translation Services = 5 contract opportunities

Legitimate Opportunities to Work from Home

- Virtual Assistants = 2 contract opportunities, 1 job board and 5 resources
- Crowdsourcing = 4 contract opportunities
- Careers in e-learning = 10 contract opportunities + 3 resources
- Consulting and Contracting = 6 contracting opportunities
- Content Creation = 6 freelancer opportunities + 2 resources
- Use of Job Boards = 2 WFH specific + 1 general and how to use
- Online Surveys = 9 legitimate ones
- Mystery Shopping = 1 opportunity + 1 resource

Objective: Harness the collective resources of the career professionals trained and engage in the building of a body of knowledge related to working from home.

Measurement: Active posts to the ContactPoint wiki, 10% growth year over year in the LinkedIn Group, and untold success stories of clients. **Tracking:** Monthly

Results: No active posts to the ContactPoint Wiki. Writing for a wiki is far more complex than first realized. Efforts were channeled in to ContactPoint Blog posts. Contributed 27 blog posts to ContactPoint.

LinkedIn - Work from Home Champions (WFH) was a private group for those trained. The WFH Champions did not engage or come together as a community of inquiry. No stories of client successes shared.

LinkedIn – Legitimate Opportunities to Work from Home Project page has 87 followers.

LinkedIn – Anne-Marie Rolfe established a network of 2496 followers by specifically targeting, inviting and sending a personal note to career professionals in Canada and the United States.

Objective: Build a sustainable project so that the training, research, and networking continue beyond the three years of this proposal. Sustainability allows us to remain open to the possibilities that will no doubt present themselves as we move forward.

Measurement: All budgetary goals met. **Tracking:** Milestones and Quarterly.

Results: At only 16% of target the project too far behind target to build sustainability.

Objective: Engage in continuous improvement so that the support materials we produce, the links we access, and the webinars we offer are of the highest quality and contain the freshest information. This is a dynamic area of inquiry. Remaining relevant and current is essential.

Measurement: All materials will be produced electronically and updated quarterly. **Tracking:** Quarterly

Results: All links in all materials checked quarterly. Last set of revisions done August 2014.

MARKETING/DISSEMINATION

Marketing for the project was extensive and made use of online methods to share the expertise that had been developed and attract career professionals to the paid webinar series.

The logic behind using online media methods, was that those who want to work with client on building work from home skills, need to have a familiarity and comfort navigating the online world.

The strategy was multi-faceted and allowed for information to be accessed and shared in a variety of online formats.

Word of mouth referrals were also highly encouraged from those who had successfully completed the training.

CERIC provided invaluable marketing support throughout the project. Including setting up and promoting free introductory 30 minute introductory webinars, advertisements in *Careering Magazine*, support for a booth at *Cannexus 2014*, marketing materials at their own booths at other events, referrals to possible co-branding partners and the posting and promotion of the 27 blog posts on the *Contactpoint.ca* site. CERIC staff shared their expertise when it came to strategy, branding, and pricing.

LinkedIn was the social media method of choice when it came to networking. Reached out to over 2000 career professionals via LinkedIn. Sent invitations to connect, and then when they accepted, sent out a personalized message to each and every connection, letting them know about the project, the partners and the webinar series.

What is interesting to note is that this work on LinkedIn had to be done under an individual account. In order to access all the functionality that LinkedIn offers, it needs to be done by an individual instead of an organization or group. So as I used my Anne-Marie Rolfe account for this work not that it was *regularly* marked as BLOCKED as groups thought the work was SPAM or a SCAM.

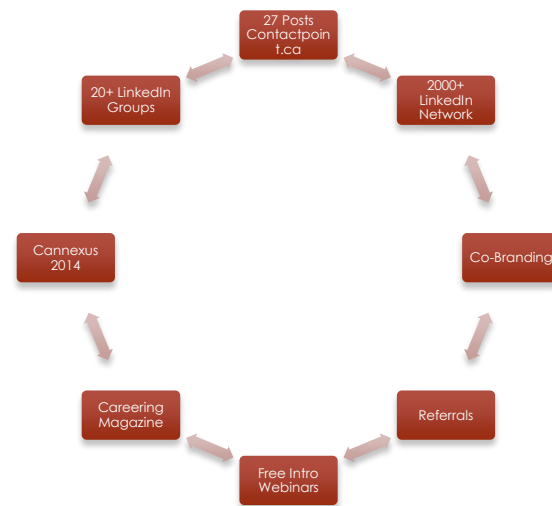


FIGURE 1 MARKETING MIX FOR WFH PROJECT

Legitimate Opportunities to Work from Home

Regularly posted to over 20 LinkedIn Groups such as the following:

- National Career Development Association
- Employment Ontario Service Providers
- Career Professionals Network
- Career Coaches and Career Counsellors
- Employment Ontario Talent Pool
- Canadian Society for Social Development
- Association of Career Professionals
- Canadian Association of Career Educators and Employers
- CERIC Career Developer Network
- Career Development Professionals
- Career Professionals of Canada
- Career Services Professionals
- FirstWork
- Flexjobs group
- Job Developers Resource Network
- Social media for employment and career professionals
- Resume Writers and Career Coaches
- Vocational Rehabilitation Association of Canada
- 1 Million for Work Flexibility
- Telework Advocacy
- Remote Staff

Reached out to Associations with those who might have an interest in co-branding a webinar series. Unable to get any interest or set up co-branded webinars. Examples include: Rehab professionals, Richard Knowdell, Canadian Career Professionals, First Work and more. Again, this would not have been possible without the support of CERIC, as they provided list of associations to connect with.

Anne-Marie Rolfe, drove the marketing machine, routinely reaching out and sharing the expertise that she had gained through her research with career professionals. Web based radio interviews, introductory webinars for specific groups and Google Hangouts as well as all of the above were all part of her ongoing efforts to attract people to the webinar series.

This expertise and knowledge base is still accessible at no cost. [LinkedIn Project page](#) has excellent links and resources as does the [ContactPoint.ca blog posts](#).

Snap shot of marketing activities.

Marketing efforts have been well received to date and have resulted in registrations for the webinar series. Marketing and networking continue.

@April 10 – Sherri, Sue and AMR's contacts

@April 26 – Shared with the Eastern Ontario Network of Employment Service Agencies

@May 14 – CERIC promotes in CareerWise

@May 29 – AMR's LinkedIn connections increased from 177 to 383 (206 increase)

@May 29 – L-WFH added to LinkedIn Profile and tagged Riz, Sharon and Sue

@June – L-WFH webpage added to EEC site (www.eecentre.com/wfh.php)

@June - regular additions to L – WFH Scoop.it <http://www.scoop.it/t/legitimate-wfh-opportunities>

@June 4- Proof sent to me for ad in the Careering Magazine

@July 8 – Webinar Series profiled on the front page of OneStep e-newsletter

@July 11 – AMR's LinkedIn connections at 497 (114 increase)

@July – Inquiry from College Boreal re: Do WFH Certification at Conference Spring 2014?

@July 30 – Guest on Job Talk Radio with Dennis Larabe (8000 listeners)

@Aug 13 – Guest on Webinar with Canadian Society for Social Development

@Oct – Door prizes at FirstWork Conference – 2 passes to the webinar series

@Oct – Networked at the conference

@Dec – Made connection with <http://www.ilodge.com/> they are starting to look at the Canadian Market – followed up in January – Connected to EEC for possible placements

@Jan – met with Career Development Services (PEI) staff face to face

@Jan –booth at Cannexus – networked networked networked

@Jan in Cannexus 10th anniversary edition conference package

@January – Draw for webinars at Cannexus – followed up on the 40 leads

@Jan – Created a WFH Champions newsletter for distribution to those already trained

@Feb – Connected with Jason Fried of <http://37signals.com/remote/>

Author of a book on remote work and owner of www.weworkremotely.com job board to explore possible synergy

@Feb – face to face meeting with PEI Council of People with Disabilities

@March – focus on building LinkedIn network

@April 2014 – attended the Career Development Association of PEI Annual Conference

@April 2014 – network with Dr. Don Glendenning, Founder of Holland College

@April 2014 – meeting of 21 Career Professionals here on PEI. Able to gather information.

WEBINAR PLATFORM

There were a number of factors to take into consideration in deciding upon a webinar platform including, accessibility, ease of use and cost. Gotomeeting is a tool that many career professionals have had access to as it is the platform used by CERIC to host webinars. Gototraining works on the same platform, with the only restriction being the limit of 25 people per webinar. Add to this that Gotomeeting/Gototraining partners with Tech Soup Canada to provide a substantial discount to its software for non-profit use and the decision was easy.

The account was created and administered by Anne-Marie Rolfe on behalf of the EEC. A paypal account was created by the EEC so that payments could be processed on line. The option for an agency to be invoiced was also included. Upon registration and processing of payment webinar attendees had full access to all materials including recordings of the webinars.

Gototraining.com prove to a reliable service allowing attendees to access the material via the web. Attendees had the option to phone in or save long distance charges by using a headset and microphone to connect via computer. The system generated automatic email reminders of the webinars and a follow up evaluation survey.

EVALUATION / OUTCOMES

The table below outlines the evaluation and outcomes. It asks and answers: *Explain how you will know whether the project has achieved success.*

The following were our key indicators of success:	These are the outcomes:
Positive feedback from participants	Consistent positive feedback on evaluations from webinar participants.
Referrals from participants	Not in any measurable quantity.
Marketing efforts result in webinars	Marketing efforts far outweigh the results. Very poor return on marketing activities.
Positive stories from clients	Never heard feedback from WFH Champions in terms of client success.
Growing database of legitimate employers	Yes. 70 currently identified and validated. There are more out there just waiting to be researched.
Employers seeking us out	Employers were starting to take notice.
Positive cash flow	Based on our planning, we projected 400 career professionals trained by this time. As of October 29th, 2014, we have 64 career professionals trained in Legitimate Opportunities to Work from Home (Work from

	Home Champions). We are at only 16% of target.
Project becomes self-sustaining	No.

The project was on track in all but one, very important area, positive cash flow. Despite all efforts there simply were not enough career professionals taking the webinar. Anne-Marie Rolfe met with Sue Watts, Riz Ibrahim, and Sharon Ferris to discuss the results as well as to strategize on ways to get more participants. Changes to the branding and marketing material were made as well as more direct work to co-brand the webinars but nothing was successful.

Here are some of the comments from participant evaluations:

How to look for scams. Very helpful in learning how to 'read' the online ad. Where to report the scams - empowering to clients to know how they can make a difference so others don't get scammed.

The format is great, first time for me using this, Anne-Marie great at facilitating and leading this set up.

Anne-Marie. Very energetic and knowledgeable. Also the course material is very extensive and professional.

How to be critical when looking at WFH opps online. Not to be afraid of them all because there certainly are legit ones. How to be empowered with knowledge on how to first check and then report. And of course - facilitating this learning in others.

There are legit work from home opportunities. One must develop the skills required to discover scams. An open mind combined with healthy skepticism can produce positive outcomes.

The above reflect that those who took the webinar series and became Work from Home Champions found the information to be of high quality, professionally presented and of value to their clients. Unfortunately we just could not get enough career professionals to register.

Those trained as Work from Home Champions are a mixture of government funded employment centres, college employment centres and university employment centres, with a handful of private career coaches mixed in. The majority are in Ontario (52) followed by British Columbia at 5, Quebec at 2, Nova Scotia at 1 and Prince Edward Island at 1. There is an interactive map available here: <http://www.eecentre.com/wfh.php>.

KEY FINDINGS / INSIGHTS

In looking for answers as to why the project did not flourish, what follows are the key insights and learnings.

It's a scam! Feedback suggests that our marketing materials are perceived much like the 'scams' that exist. The email below was from someone curious enough to write back, however it suggests that many more are simply deleting the information.

"Hi Anne-Marie - Please allow me to start off by admitting to significant confusion. I visited your blog site, and what I read there reminds me of e-mails I normally consign directly to the trash file. The fact it is posted in Contact Point, and in conjunction with CERIC, has given me pause."

While Career Practitioners may be deleting the information clients are still actively searching this kind of information. The clients were the first motivators on this project, as they came in asking, "Are there legitimate opportunities to work from home?" They still ask and are eager for support as they explore this possible avenue.

Similar feedback was found via a feedback session with Service Providers in Eastern Ontario. Sue Watts had the opportunity to investigate the lack of response to this training opportunity and was provided with feedback related to scams, lack of time, money and human resources to bring this information to clients.

No time, no money: More recent feedback from a group of Career Professionals here on PEI suggests that they simply do not have the professional development (PD) budgets nor the time to do the training in house. In surveying 20 career professionals here on the Island, all reported that their PD budgets have been cut drastically. At present they report having only enough funding to send one staff person, to one national conference per year. While PEI does not represent the country it may provide insights into the lack of registrations for what is a PD opportunity.

Lack of digital literacy and digital fluency. As well, they report not having the time to learn and then teach this material to clients. For some it is an issue of digital skills / literacy. Learning the complexities of the internet, validating the information etc. simply does not fit into their schedules. They have busy schedules with conflicting demands.

Conflicting demands and priorities. As stated in the executive summary, agencies and their staff are pushed to the limit for their time and attention fulfilling the demands of their Federal and Provincial Funding partners and Industry. Staying ahead of changes in programs, operating in a competitive atmosphere, uncertainty about continued funding, all of the variables added up to too much on the mind of the career professional we were looking to serve.

The lessons learned have been done through trial and error. In offering a helping hand to those planning something similar it would be attend to your subject matter with care. Ultimately the project, with the intent of educating career professionals on LEGITIMATE work from home opportunities, became painted with the same brush as the scams.

In conclusion, the project lives on in the research and links that have been compiled and are still accessible on the [LinkedIn Project page](#) as well as the Client Handout and Webinar materials.