

DER Systems Review Project
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June 15, 2010

This is a report to present an assessment of the Job Placement Unit (JPU) at the Department of Employment Relations (DER) based on a series of discussions with management and staff in the JPU.

It should be noted in advance that some creep in scope into the domain of Immigration matters was inevitable given the inconsistent, but at times critical, role of DER in that process. I have tried to restrict comments on the Immigration system to only those parts of relevance to the JPU and its broad mission.

Timeline and Format of Discussions

Over the course of the last several weeks, a series of individual interviews was conducted with members of the JPU team. Interviews lasted between 1.5 and 3 hours and were conducted for the most part in accordance with the questionnaires submitted in the terms of reference for the project.

Two meetings were held with Jennifer Smith (Acting Director; formerly Head of JPU) and Yoshneck Mutomba (Assistant Director) jointly as the two most senior members of staff in the Department of Employment Relations (although Yoshneck does not issue instructions to staff in the Job Placement Unit).

Format of this report

It quickly became apparent that there are many problems that need to be addressed within the JPU. After some general consideration of strategic issues and the control environment, I have taken the approach of discussing specific issues in a standard format describing observation of issues, consequences and risks to which the issue identified gives rise, and specific recommendations for addressing the issue with cross references to other issues where appropriate.

A note on terminology

It should be noted that JPU nomenclature is somewhat confusing for the uninitiated. Here is an explanation of some common terms used within the JPU.

- "Clients" refers to registered individuals (i.e. "candidates" or "job-seekers")
- "Customer" appears to refer to both registered job-seekers and employers
- Companies and others registering job vacancies are referred to as "Employers"
- "Referrals" are candidates who have been referred to employers for particular jobs
- JPO means Job Placement Officer (staff-members primarily referring Caymanian job-seekers to employers).
- CLO means Client Liaison Officer (a role junior to JPO).

Executive Summary

Strategic and operational issues at the JPU are manifold.

Anecdotally, there appears to be a uniformly negative perception of the unit among Government departments, the private sector and the general public. Although some of this can be attributed to an expectation gap, the majority of it can be traced to the issues underlying the major recommendations of this report.

At the same time, the unit is increasingly in the spotlight due to the worsening economic conditions that have resulted in higher unemployment and a lack of opportunity for the youth of the Cayman Islands. While laudable initiatives are underway to address the lack of training and improve education, these may take some time to pay dividends. In the meantime, Cayman's unemployed population depends on the effectiveness of the JPU to assist them in their search for work.

The role of the JPU in relation to the existing immigration process is inconsistent, informal, and ultimately unsatisfactory for all stakeholders. The result has been confusion and frustration in the JPU, immigration, general public and private sector. The specific recommendations in this report would improve consistency, speed, predictability, and results for all concerned. However, due to the inter-relatedness of the recommendations, Government should be wary of implementing new regulatory requirements without the corresponding system improvements needed.

Use of information technology leaves much to be desired. The DER website is lacking in information and functionality. Some internal systems are excessively manual in nature, others over-reliant on automation. Basic, critical data is unreliable. Management information is sorely lacking. Upgrading the IT resources in line with the recommendations in this report would make the unit more efficient *and* improve outcomes for employers and job-seekers alike by automating manual processes, improving workflows and providing critical management information.

In spite of its relatively high profile and critical role in the community, the unit has not so much lost the PR battle as failed to field an army. To date there has been no coordinated effort to communicate with the general public or the private sector resulting in widespread confusion as to the unit's role and disillusionment with its efficacy. Key to the reform effort will be improved communication with stakeholders via the website, press, literature, social media and direct mailing.

In addition to a marked lack of dialogue and cooperation between the JPU and the private sector in general, the unit lacks sanctions for leverage over employers and a formal mechanism to provide employers with any quid pro quo for their cooperation. In other words, in its fight against unemployment, the unit has neither carrots nor sticks.

The specific recommendations that follow have been arranged in three sections, each of which begins with the major recommendations relating thereto:

- Regulation and strategy
- Systems and controls
- Resources

The department may have lost its way, but it can get back on track. The most important thing in any organisation is the people. On the whole there is no major issue with the quality of personnel in the JPU.

As the JPU is something of a lynch pin between the islands' private sector, Government and general public, the significance of the unit - politically, economically and socially – cannot be overstated. Therefore, the relatively modest investment of time and public funds required to reform the unit is likely to be considered, by all stakeholder groups, money well spent.

Summary of recommendations**Major Recommendations****1. Improve high level oversight**

Ministerial oversight should be delegated either to a single senior civil servant or, preferably, an independent board. Meetings should be held on a monthly basis until results improve significantly. Top-down numerical targets should be put in place and IT improved to facilitate the production of supporting management information automatically.

2. Improve use of IT

A design agency should be retained to develop an informative and functional website. The database should be upgraded to allow storage and searching of job-seeker resumes and should be integrated with the website. The new website should allow employers to register jobs and Caymanian job-seekers to register, and to browse and apply for jobs online.

3. Streamline and formalise the role of the unit in the immigration process

The role of the unit should be formalised and made clear to the private sector and general public. Every single job should be registered with the department prior to a work permit application.

4. Make effective use of public relations

The department should engage a dedicated public relations resource who can initiate and maintain media campaigns to raise awareness and cooperation among the general public and private sector.

5. Develop programs to incentivise private sector employers to hire and train unemployed Caymanians

Programs should be developed in partnership with the private sector that can provide a standard framework for directly addressing long-term unemployment and underemployment.

Section 1

Strategic issues

Based on interviews with management, several strategic issues were identified:

- A need for standardised, routine (i.e. weekly/monthly) management reporting framework (including top-down numerical targets)
- A need for a more structured control environment to ensure compliance with critical success factors (especially in relation to serving employers who depend on the unit's role in the immigration process)
- A need for at least a basic public relations strategy to:
 - Raise profile among job-seekers
 - Maintain contact with active job-seekers
 - Disseminate helpful information to job-seekers and employers
 - Reinforce employers' obligation to consider Caymanians and to refer vacancies to DER
 - Diffuse negative publicity
- Aside from PR there is a general need to work more closely with employers, to establish and maintain some kind of constructive working relationship
- A need for improvements to internal systems in four key respects:
 - Productivity controls (i.e. work rate and effectiveness of staff)
 - Automation of data entry/improved access for employers and candidates
 - Prioritisation of job-seeker cases to allow the limited resources to be used to greater effect
 - Collection and maintenance of data (job-seekers, employers and vacancies)
- A need for more structured soft skills training for job-seekers (on topics such as job-seeking strategies, resume preparation, interview skills, personal presentation and so on)
- A need for counselling resources
 - Personal/psychological
 - Financial
- A need for more formal protocols for:
 - Liaison/cooperation with Immigration/Social Services
 - Classification of job-seekers (not in terms of skills etc, but of job-seeking and employment status – active, inactive, employed, unemployed etc.)
- Enhanced legislative/regulatory support for the DER mandate (for example compulsory referral prior to work permit approval by Immigration)
- Lack of technical knowledge in relation to technical employment areas

Recommendations**1. High-level oversight****Observation**

It was apparent from our discussion with management that high-level oversight and strategic direction has been somewhat lacking historically.

There was no formal timetable of meetings with the Ministry or other body to provide oversight and strategic guidance on a periodic basis.

Although we were informed that reports were provided to the Ministry on a monthly basis, there was no indication of a formal feedback process.

Although ad hoc statistics reports are prepared, there is no standard timetable for statistical reporting and analysis.

Consequences/Risks

- Management lacks strategic direction and accountability for poor results.
- Management may fail to identify opportunities to improve departmental results or save costs.
- Management may fail to identify and interpret problematic statistical trends.

Major Recommendation 1

As part of the transition from the current DER to the proposed HCDA, the government should appoint an independent board of trustees or directors ("the board") to oversee the strategic and operational management of the Job Placement Unit. The board should include members of the Ministry and the Department of Immigration as well as members of the private sector.

Failing that, the Ministry should appoint a single senior person, or a small group, to oversee the department and provide strategic guidance.

Meetings should be fully minuted for future reference and for the benefit of the public and/or the Ministry. Action points and those responsible should be clearly identified.

Meetings should be held on a monthly basis until the operation of the JPU has improved to an acceptable level, at which time the frequency could be reduced to bi-monthly or quarterly.

Meetings should be conducted according to a standard agenda including a review of relevant statistics and the status of outstanding action points from previous meetings.

JPU management should be required to report certain key statistics to the board and/or Ministry on a monthly basis (with comparatives to target and prior periods) including:

- Registered job-seekers analysed by status:
 - Unemployed
 - By skill level
 - By industry
 - By age
 - By gender
 - By length of time unemployed
 - Employed
 - Inactive
 - Incommunicado
 - Under sanction (i.e. involuntarily suspended, see recommendation 16)
- Number of vacancies registered
 - By industry
 - By salary
 - By number of job-seeker referrals
- Number of interviews arranged
 - Attended
 - Not attended
- Outcome of interviews
 - Pending (i.e. not completed by reporting deadline)
 - Successful (i.e. placement made)
 - Unsuccessful
 - Reason (insufficient qualification; failed interview; failed reference/background check etc)
- JPO productivity, for each JPO:
 - Interviews arranged
 - Placements made
 - Job-seekers sanctioned (i.e. removed from active job-seeker roll for some other reason)
- Any other metrics reasonably requested by the board

2. Requirement to register jobs with JPU

Observation

There is currently no formal requirement for employers to register jobs with the JPU. Employers are often effectively forced to register jobs only after a work permit application has already been submitted and subsequently deferred by the Board (apparently on the ground provided by section 4.1 of the Immigration Regulations requiring companies to make their “best endeavours” to identify a Caymanian candidate¹).

As a result, only a small fraction of jobs (for which work permit applications are made) are registered. Statistics obtained from the department revealed that only 2,500 jobs were referred in the year to June compared to some 27,000 work permits currently in issue (although it is unclear how many of these are renewed annually).

Furthermore, there is no requirement to register each *actual* job, only one of each job title, no more than once every three months (as a “waiver letter” can be used multiple times within the three months subsequent to its issuance).

Consequences/Risks

- A work permit may be issued for a job for which an available Caymanian person is suitably qualified (and furthermore registered at the JPU).
- In the case that no suitably qualified Caymanian is ultimately identified, the issuance of a work permit may be needlessly delayed by two weeks or more, causing frustration if not financial harm to employers.
- Employers may become financially and “emotionally” invested in an expatriate candidate (the prospective work permit holder) and become more likely to use unscrupulous tactics to avoid hiring Caymanians.

Major Recommendation 2 a

The regulatory environment should be changed to formalise the role of the JPU in the Immigration process. This role should be made clear to employers (and job-seekers). This would provide both the JPU and the private sector with much-needed consistency and predictability of outcome.

Employers should be obligated to register jobs with the JPU at the same time as advertising in the local press.²

¹ It should be noted that I consider this a dubious argument on the part of Immigration. If a company cannot be considered to have made their “best endeavours” without registering the job at DER, why is any work permit ever approved without the employer having done so? The fact is that the vast majority of permits are evidently issued without reference to DER.

² Unless a waiver of this requirement has been issued at the discretion of the board/CIO (i.e. akin to the ad hoc waiver of requirement to advertise a vacancy by authority of Immigration Regulation 4.2).

Employers should be required to obtain a unique reference number from DER that it would be required to be show on each advertisement.

Such a requirement would:

- a) Ensure *every* available job was registered with DER, ensuring job-seekers have access to the widest possible range of available jobs.
- b) Ensure that registered job-seekers had a fair opportunity to compete for jobs *during* the regular hiring process (rather than after its conclusion per the current system)
- c) *Reduce* the delay for employers (i.e. as the wait time for DER referrals/waiver would be concurrent with the advertising period).
- d) Improve consistency and predictability in the Immigration process

Because this would result in a dramatically increased number of jobs being handled by the JPU, it would only be viable if introduced in conjunction with recommendations 6 (allow employers to register jobs online) and 7 (automatically issue waivers if no Caymanian has been referred) below.

This would also combine very well with listing all jobs online for Caymanians to access (see recommendation 6).

Recommendation 2 b

The JPU should require employers to register each individual job prior to a work permit application, rather than simply one generic job. In other words a *unique* waiver should be issued in relation to each prospective work permit application rather than one that can be used for multiple permit applications.

This should be independent of the requirement to publicly advertise job vacancies, which should remain unchanged.

There would need to be some control over positions being registered frivolously, or in duplicate. This could be achieved by either charging for all positions, or only those that were not ultimately filled by a Caymanian.

3. Protocol with Immigration

Observation

There is no effective protocol for exchange of information between the JPU and the Immigration department.

JPO's commented that work permits are at times issued in spite of representations from the unit that suitably qualified Caymanians *are* available (although they could not be sure because there is no opportunity for follow-up by DER on the outcome of particular vacancies).

Furthermore, there were occasions where employers were not cooperating with the unit, but DER felt powerless to prevent a work permit being issued even when they felt Caymanians were available. In other words, the JPU lacks authority to sanction employers when they do not cooperate or when they deliberately circumvent DER procedures.

There has never been any effort by the JPU to pro-actively obtain information from the Immigration Department which might help them assist job-seekers. For example, a job-seeker may present themselves seeking a fork lift truck driving job on a minimum of US\$15 per hour. The department of Immigration could tell the JPU how many such jobs existed on the island that were not already held by Caymanians. If no such jobs existed the job-seeker would have no choice but to lower their salary expectations or consider other jobs. If a work permit for such a job was due for renewal in the near future, the JPO could pro-actively approach the employer to consider the Caymanian for the role. If no work permits were due for renewal in the near future the job-seeker would be able to make an informed decision as to whether to wait or seek alternative employment in the meantime or long term.

From the Immigration side, representations were made during a meeting (the notes of which are appended to this report) that Immigration was not satisfied with the support it received from the JPU, particularly in relation to the quality of information in the database.³

However, it is unclear to me, following protracted discussion with the Acting Director, what the intended usage of the database is during immigration board meetings. Is the intention to check the work of the JPU; to bypass or expedite the work of the JPU; or to find out if any suitable candidates have registered since a waiver letter had been issued? Each of these possibilities is discussed below.

If the intention is to check the work of the JPU, this would seem to be an inefficient use of the board's time. If immigration was concerned about particular cases or processes at the JPU it could request some kind of audit, or call the JPO to discuss the case, or correspond with the HOD to discuss the concern.

If the intention is to check for candidates referred since a waiver letter was issued this would be grossly unfair to employers who had followed the prescribed system and registered the job in

³ Indeed comments to this effect were made publicly during the Chamber of Commerce "Be Informed" Immigration Forum held at the Westin on May 27, 2010.

good faith (since presumably the permit could be deferred if a Caymanian had registered after the job had expired in the JPU system).

Attempting to bypass or expedite the JPU process would seem to me to be a false economy. If candidates are identified by inquiry in the database, the permit will more than likely be deferred or declined, causing much more aggravation to employers than the original two-week referral would have, as well as reconsideration by the board in all likelihood. Identification of suitable candidates is difficult enough for JPO's who are familiar with the system (due to: the over-reliance on CISCO coding for candidate/job matching; unreliable contact details; and unreliable employment status) let alone board members attempting to do so on the fly.

Consequences/Risks

- Time may be wasted at Immigration and/or DER
- Caymanians may miss out on available employment opportunities for which they are suitably qualified
- Caymanians may "hold out" for positions that are not available in any case
- Immigration may decline or defer a work permit for which no suitably qualified Caymanians are registered

Recommendation 3 a

Formal protocols should be established for the exchange of information between Immigration and the JPU.

The allocation of unique reference numbers may help alleviate some of the issues as there would be a means to compare DER and Immigration records for a particular job.

Waivers should be issued automatically for any position for which no Caymanian has been put forward within the two-week timeframe (see recommendation 7) and the position should be "closed out" on the JPU system.⁴

Obviously if the JPU has referred a Caymanian job-seeker who is ultimately hired there will be no need for a waiver letter.

In between the two straightforward cases above there are a range of possible outcomes that will require more judgment on the part of the JPO and correspondence with both the employer and the Immigration department.

No waiver should be issued for job vacancies for which candidates have been put forward and not resolved (by the employer and/or DER). Per recommendation 2 above, immigration should require employers to register all vacancies at DER at the same time as advertising them.

⁴ Arguably if no Caymanian has applied for the job directly or been referred by the JPU, the permit should be expedited.

There are several potentially awkward situations arising that will require judgment, discretion, communication and diplomacy on the part of the JPO/JPU management. For each situation a formal policy should be laid down and control environment put in place to ensure policies are adhered to and cases resolved expeditiously. The reason is that whenever the employer is put in the position of waiting for the JPU to act, there must be some control on the efficiency of processing. Otherwise the unit is certain to be criticised (rightly or wrongly). Employers will generally not mind waiting a certain length of time, but in the interests of good public relations (and customer service) they should know ahead of time how long they are required to wait and why.

The process required in each case will depend on the degree to which other recommendations in this report have been adopted.

For example, candidates may be referred for a position that cannot be contacted by the employer. What is the minimum effort required on the part of the employer? What procedures must be undertaken at the JPU to confirm the candidate is not contactable? At what point does the JPO agree the referral should be "closed out" (i.e. agree that the candidate has been legitimately rejected)?

Alternatively, candidates may be referred for a position that the employer does not consider suitable. Presumably the JPU will not merely take the employer's word for it. What will be the procedure for confirming/disputing the employer's assessment of each candidate? Again, good judgment and open communication between the JPO and the employer will be critical to avoid strained relations (and ultimately to achieve the best outcome for job-seekers).

The case of an employer that rejects a candidate whom the JPU considers suitable will be the most contentious. At present there is no real means to resolve such a disagreement beyond representations to the Immigration department (although there is no indication whether or not these are acted upon by the department or the boards). There should be strict protocol and, in some cases, the involvement of a senior manager within the unit, in such cases.

First, the JPO should discuss the situation with the employer and clearly understand/consider the employers' basis for rejecting the candidate. If necessary the JPO should consult the appointed industry expert (See recommendation 21b).

Second, a meeting should be arranged between senior representatives of both the JPU and the employer. JPU should attempt to negotiate an alternative outcome such as an offer on a lower salary (which would fairly reflect any perceived shortcoming), a short-term work placement or internship for the Caymanian job-seeker (or indeed another Caymanian job-seeker). This would be akin to a "plea-bargain" whereby the JPU would agree not to challenge the permit so long as the employer agreed to provide another role for a Caymanian (which should clearly be arranged prior to the issuance of a waiver).

If the situation cannot be resolved to everyone's satisfaction, JPU should inform the employer of their intention to recommend the permit be declined and to make detailed written representation to the Immigration department (and, crucially, the employer) setting out their reasons for the recommendation. The JPU may even consider obtaining written advice of an

industry expert (see recommendation 21b) or retained recruitment specialist who can act as a form of “expert witness” backing up their recommendation.

A protocol should be established requiring a response from Immigration to such representations (i.e. any communication that is not a waiver letter) so that DER has an opportunity to:

- a) learn from experience
- b) address concerns over the outcome with the Immigration department
- c) take up any concerns with the Ministry, or Cabinet if the HOD believes further action is warranted.

The employer should also be given the opportunity to make representations to support their position that the candidate is unsuitable, including representations from third parties if necessary.

Recommendation 3 b

An agreement should be reached with Immigration whereby certain information relating to current and upcoming positions can be shared with the JPU. An employee at the Immigration Department should be appointed to liaise with the JPU to that end.

4. Protocol with other government departments

Observation

Although there is a somewhat formal introduction procedure, there is a lack of formal protocol for ongoing communication with other government departments such as social services.

No reconciliation is performed between social services data and DER data. Neither is any between the other "outreach" organisations such as the Prison, the "boys' homes", the young parent program, Caribbean Haven etc.

There is no formal requirement for JPO's to report progress on particular candidates.

As noted elsewhere, there is no formal diagnostic framework in place to identify and plan to address issues that may be preventing a return to full time employment. No action plans are produced for job-seekers referred by other government departments (or any other job-seeker for that matter).

Consequences/Risks

- Job-seekers in need of special assistance may "slip through the cracks"
 - Could increase chance of resultant social problems such as crime, destitution and vagrancy
- Opportunities for intervention may be missed

Recommendation 4

A formal protocol should be established requiring monthly reconciliation of data between government departments and cooperating entities.

Alternatively, or in addition, a feature could be added to the database whereby other entities could have access to the JPU database to review the status of registered job-seekers referred by them.

This would minimise time in preparing reports and help ensure individuals in need of assistance did not "slip through the cracks".

A formal diagnostic framework should be developed (based on that outlined in recommendation 9c) specifically for use with job-seekers referred by other government departments which can facilitate inter-agency cooperation to address underlying issues, with a prescriptive action plan developed in every case.

5. Mandate in relation to employed candidates

Observation

The mandate/responsibility of the unit in relation to *employed* Caymanians is unclear.

Consequences/Risks

- Resources may be misdirected at less needy individuals who ought to be able to represent themselves adequately in the job market and who will take time, resources and attention away from more deserving cases.
- Employed individuals may increase the numbers of “registered job-seekers” giving the public an impression of a larger unemployment problem.
- Employed Caymanians may be dissatisfied at the level of service or results obtained (i.e. due to an expectation gap) from the unit undermining goodwill among the public.

Recommendation 5

It is tempting to recommend that the unit direct the full weight of its resources solely towards the problem of unemployment. However, this would make it difficult to encourage job-seekers to accept jobs paying less than they would ideally want (i.e. while continuing to apply for preferable jobs).

In addition, employment status may not be a good indication of need. There may be *unemployed* accountants with savings who can easily find a job and employed unskilled workers *in employment* below the headline.

Although employment status should clearly be factored into the determination of a job-seeker’s priority (per recommendation 9c), the JPU clearly does not have sufficient resources to offer an equal service to Cayman’s employed workforce as to its unemployed individuals, particularly given the current economic conditions.

Therefore there must be some level of discrimination in service level (that is currently lacking in any formalised way). This is related to the issue that the focus of the department is on dealing with *jobs* rather than *job-seekers*.

First, I would recommend that *employed* persons generally be supported by an online job-browsing and application system that would direct applications to employers without the need for any level of manual intervention. This would also dovetail with a glaring inadequacy of the current work permit application system whereby employers are required to self-report any Caymanian applications.

Under such a system, employers ought to deal with applications and update the status on the website themselves. However, the system should automatically alert the Caymanian candidate (by email and/or message to their account) to a change in their application status (for example, from “pending” to “rejected”) along with comments from the employer as to why. This would act as a control to ensure the candidate was properly considered for the role.

There should be a system whereby a candidate may appeal a decision by the employer (either to decline to interview or to make an offer). However, this could be prone to abuse by candidates frivolously appealing adverse decisions. There would be various ways to prevent this. For example, there could be a token charge for such an appeal (say CI\$10). This would be enough to prevent the *most* frivolous.

Should *employed* Caymanians wish to receive more active DER assistance, this should only be provided for cases of genuine need, for example for job-seekers with poor literacy standards who were unable to apply for jobs without assistance, or job-seekers on extremely low pay (say less than CI\$10 per hour).

Ultimately JPO's and JPU management should be able to exercise discretion in assisting Caymanians in genuine need of assistance, but should also be conscious of the need to allocate resources to those in greatest need.

Section 2

Systems and Controls

Just as in any private sector recruitment firm, there are two main processes intersecting at the JPU consisting various sub-processes as follows:

- Candidate Processing
 - Registration
 - Assessment/Interview
 - Referral to employers
 - Record keeping (i.e. record maintenance)
- Job Vacancy Processing
 - Registration of company
 - Registration of job vacancy
 - Record Keeping
 - Referral of candidates
 - Response from employers
 - Response from JPU (required to support WP application)

My first observation was that elements of both processes were excessively manual in nature. For example, candidates must complete a hard copy registration form in the first instance that provides personal information on the job-seeker. This document is given to a Customer Liaison Officer (CLO) for data entry to the database. There is no means by which to register electronically (either via internet or in the JPU itself). Allowing candidates to register themselves online (or on a terminal provided in the JPU) would eliminate a significant amount of work in data entry. There are currently around 30 new job-seeker registrations per month. If half of the employees registering could do so online, it would save the JPU 3.75 hours per month, as well as reducing manual errors in the system.⁵

The same is true for job vacancies. The JPU deals with around 300 vacancies per month, the details of which must be manually entered by CLO's. If it takes 15 minutes to enter the data from every job registration form (a conservative estimate), the unit could save at least 75 man-hours per month (two man-weeks or 0.5 FTE's) from online vacancy registration (as well as cutting down on human error *and* introducing a critical data point for internal control purposes - the actual time and date of vacancy registration - which is currently lacking).

Further analysis and associated recommendations in relation to the control environment are presented in the specific recommendations that follow.

⁵ Estimates of the proportion of computer literate varied between JPO's. Most young people can be presumed to have email addresses and be computer literate (say, under 30's). Above that perhaps 50% are computer literate.

Recommendations

6. Use of information technology

Observation

The JPU does not make good use of Information Technology to streamline and automate the processing of job-seekers and vacancies.

For example:

- The JPU website is a shambles, outdated in design and content, lacking in useful/accurate information and functionality
- No ability to browse available jobs online
- No ability to register online as a job seeker or employer
- No ability to register job vacancies
- No ability to update employment status or contact details online
- No ability to register “perennial” or generic jobs (such as supermarket cashier)
- Limited ability to monitor staff productivity

Such functionality would create significant efficiencies for job-seekers, employers and JPU staff members.

Consequences/Risks

- Inefficiency in excessively manual processes
 - Wasting of staff time
 - Wasting employers’ time
- Lack of timely/accurate data on job-seekers, employers and job vacancies.
- Lack of access among job-seekers to departmental resources
- Lack of management information on JPU activity and productivity
- Job-seekers may not be matched with suitable job-seekers
- Excessive reliance on JPO’s and the database system in matching jobs with job-seekers (i.e. if jobs were available online, job-seekers would match themselves).
- Inability to assist low-need users (i.e. employed Caymanians) without significant use of departmental resources
- Ultimately, sub-optimal outcomes

Recommendation 6

The JPU should consider either investing in an off-the-shelf recruitment database or upgrading the existing JPU system as a matter of top priority.

The new system should have:

- Website integration for:

- Job-seeker registration
 - Online job search (i.e. all live jobs accessible online)
 - Online employer registration
 - Online job registration
- Productivity/management reporting tools
- Electronic storage of resumes and other job-seeker documents
- Tools for candidate/vacancy matching and semi-automatic resume searching (i.e. based on keywords)
- Templates for standard document production (referral letters, waiver letters, and so on)

There are many “off-the-shelf” systems available which would provide such functionalities such as the 3hats database used by CML. Such a system can be adapted by the developers to just about any specification depending on the customer’s requirements.

The cost for such a system would likely be around US\$10-20,000 for implementation (including website integration and automated data import from existing database) and around US\$1-2,000 per month on an ongoing basis.

Alternatively, the development work on the existing JPU system could be outsourced to a professional developer. This would take longer to implement than an off-the-shelf system but would have the benefit of minimising disruption to the department, reducing the time required for retraining and maintaining some of the standard JPU system functionality that may be lacking in off-the-shelf systems.

The cost of either option would be more than offset by the value of improved efficiency in the JPU.

This would also represent the single biggest PR win of the entire reform effort and hence should probably be implemented more-or-less immediately, as it would require concurrent development of a new website for the JPU (See above recommendation 19b).

Such a system should provide qualifying job-seekers (Caymanians, status-holders, those married to Caymanians and permanent residents) with a secure account from which they could:

- Update status/personal details
- Browse for jobs
- Apply for jobs
- Set up email alerts to automatically advise of relevant jobs
- Exchange messages with DER/Employers

Employers should also have secure accounts allowing them to:

- Update company details and status
- Register jobs
- Maintain relevant company information (employee numbers, immigration status etc)

7. Issuance of “waiver letters”

Observation

JPU policy requires a waiver letter to be issued to employers after a job has been registered for 10 working days without any job-seeker referrals.

However, the process for issuing “waiver letters” is excessively manual in nature and lacking in appropriate controls to ensure timeliness. Waiver letters are currently prepared by JPO’s and distributed (usually faxed) by CLO’s.

Our own experience and anecdotal evidence (based, for example, on the recent Chamber Immigration event) strongly suggests that waiver letters are not always forthcoming on a timely basis.

Furthermore, the requirement to issue waiver letters has resulted in processes focused on jobs when the focus clearly ought to be on *job-seekers*.

However, a formal requirement to register jobs with DER (per Recommendation 2) could result in a flood of job-registrations (each potentially requiring a waiver letter), far more than the existing resources could cope with. Therefore such a reform would need to be combined with a greatly increased level of automation in the process.

Consequences/Risks

- Reduced attention to job-seekers.
- Inefficient use of departmental resources (JPO’s) who must keep track of numerous jobs and spend time manually producing waiver letters.
- Avoidable expense in faxing/distributing waivers
- Significant likelihood of delays in issuing waiver letters to employers resulting in negative financial consequence for the employer and a loss of goodwill.

Recommendation 9

Waiver letters should be issued *automatically* if no job-seekers have been referred for a job within 10 working days.

If the employer were able to access a web page showing the job details, date of registration and status of referrals, after 10 working days without any referrals the status could be automatically changed to “waived” and simply printed by the employer.

Should a candidate be put forward for the job (or apply directly should the system be upgraded to allow that), the status would be “pending” until the application was dealt with to the satisfaction of the JPU.

At the same time, the job should be “closed out” in the database to prevent any further referrals from DER (or direct applications)

Such a system would need to include a means to prevent employers from registering duplicate jobs which would potentially allow them to circumvent unwanted candidates (there would be some protection against this as they would also need to duplicate advertisements at some cost).

My suggestion would be to charge employers for every position registered with the JPU and not ultimately filled by a Caymanian or a work permit holder (say CI\$250). This would mitigate it but not eliminate it entirely. On the other hand, so long as job-seekers are able to browse vacancies themselves, the tactic of registering jobs more than once in the hope one will get a waiver may be unlikely to succeed.

8. Departmental data

Observation

Some critical JPU data is inaccurate or incomplete. Most notably there is no effective system to maintain accurate data on job-seeker employment status or accurate contact information.

There appeared to be no adequate controls over accuracy of job-seeker data and classification in the database. Although a quarterly audit is carried out, it does not include any protocol to categorically ascertain job-seeker status, change job-seeker classification, advise job-seekers of a change in their recorded status or otherwise feed results back into the database on a timely basis.

A list of job-seekers is produced and distributed among JPO's and CLO's who call each job-seeker (once) and note the outcome. According to management, from this process, at the last audit, 50% of job-seekers could not be contacted. There is no standard protocol to make further attempts to reach the candidate, or to follow up by email or by letter or by a visit from a district representative, or to try alternative telephone numbers, or to contact next of kin; no requirement to update the database based on the findings of the audit (for example to make the job-seeker "inactive" in the database so that they cannot be referred for jobs), and no control to ensure the staff-member concerned actually tried to contact the job-seeker (i.e. a double or sample check).

There was unanimous consensus among JPO's that a significant proportion of job-seekers in the database could not be contacted at any one time (although this does not prevent them being referred as there is no formal system requiring JPO's to contact job-seekers prior to referral).

The Immigration department echoed the concerns about accuracy of contact details.

Consequences/Risks

- DER may fail to correctly identify and interpret problematic trends in employment statistics
- Time may be wasted by the JPU and employers working on misclassified or incommunicado job-seekers
- Job-seekers may miss out on employment opportunities as a result of outdated contact details held by DER
- Job-seeker data may be misreported to the Ministry resulting in sub-optimal or flawed policy-making
- Job-seeker data may be misreported to the press/public causing misplaced public outrage and negative public perception of the JPU.

Recommendation 8 a

The JPU should implement procedures designed to maintain data accuracy, in particular job-seeker classification and contact details. There are several possible methods by which this could be achieved.

The most effective system would require some action on the part of job-seekers to maintain their "active" status in the JPU system, akin to the UK system of "signing on" which requires job-seekers to visit their local JobCentre on a bi-weekly basis and sign a form which confirms that they are still unemployed and that they have been actively seeking work within the reference period. This method may not be practical here in Cayman as:

- a) There is no incentive for job-seekers to do so beyond continued assistance from the JPU (i.e. in the absence of unemployment benefit). This may give rise to a rapid drop in job-seeker numbers that is patently unrealistic, causing more public outrage.
- b) Unless a deal could be struck to provide free public transport there would also be a cost associated with bi-weekly visits to the DER office. (Although, if a candidate is unable to travel to the DER office once per month, one wonders how would they be able to travel to an interview or for that matter to work should they find a job.)

Nonetheless, such a method would ensure that active job-seeker data was continuously up-to-date. To reduce the burden on job-seekers the requirement could be reduced to once per month (this would equate to around 25-50 per day representing 500-1,000 active job-seekers in total).

This process would need to be handled by either by a receptionist or dedicated CLO.

Job-seekers could have the option to log on to the website to confirm their current status (or call as a last resort). This could be as straightforward as checking a box or clicking a button to confirm status (although ideally they would also provide some commentary on their own job seeking activity in the period).

Job-seekers would be advised in advance that, should they fail to confirm that they are still seeking work and available, they would become inactive and cease to be referred for jobs until they re-activated their job-seeker status (which they could do at any time).

Once made inactive a standard contact protocol could be implemented. For example, the responsible JPO (or assistant) should call the candidate to enquire as to their status (the JPO would be alerted to the status change). Letters, emails and/or text messages should be sent to inactive job-seekers warning/reminding them of their inactive status and inviting them to contact the JPU to update their status. This process could be done in bulk once per month to improve efficiency and facilitate management oversight.

This would ensure the JPU only spent time working on motivated and available job-seekers and would therefore act as one effective means of prioritisation.

Recommendation 8 b

Unless the "signing on" recommendation is adopted which would be far more effective, periodic job-seeker audits should be properly planned, carried out and controlled with standard contact protocols and procedures to be followed based on outcome. This should be led by JPO's and

CLO's in respect of their own candidate portfolio (which should be rotated on an annual or semi-annual basis).

The database should record a "last contacted" date so that active candidates contacted recently can be excluded from the process. Job-seekers previously labelled "inactive" should also be excluded.

For example, staff-members should follow this procedure until they successfully contact the job-seeker:

- Telephone call attempt 1 (Call using cell phone, home phone)
- Email on all known email addresses
- Telephone call attempt 2 (next day, different staff-member)
- Telephone call attempt 3 (next day, different staff-member)
- Contact next of kin with set script
- Transfer to incommunicado list
- Write to incommunicado job-seekers en masse informing that they will become inactive unless they respond to update contact details within 14 days of sending
- Collate responses and update to database
- 14 days later, make inactive

9. Job-seeker processing

Observation

There is no standard process in place for dealing with registered job-seekers. For example:

- No standard information is provided to job-seekers (although at least one JPO has developed material on their own initiative) including for example:
 - Job-seeking strategies
 - Job interviews “dos and don’ts”.
 - DER’s role in their job search
 - Their responsibilities in the job-seeking process
 - Ways they can improve their appeal to prospective employers
 - Procedure for complaints
- There is no standard framework for diagnosing and addressing long-standing and underlying employment problems.
- There is no formal requirement to check a job-seeker’s references or assess their aptitude for basic job-related skills or soft skills.
- There is no formal timetable for follow up consultations or for gradually reducing salary or other job-related expectations.⁶

This is closely related to the lack of formal responsibility/accountability among JPO’s for individual job-seeker outcomes.

Consequences/Risks

- Job-seekers may overstate their skill level in the futile hope of obtaining a better-paying job
- JPO time may be wasted referring unsuitable candidates
- Goodwill with employers may be undermined
- Serious problems affecting employment prospects (for example poor work ethic that may be detected via employment references) may go unnoticed and unaddressed
- Soft-skills training needs (for example resume preparation and interview skills) may be overlooked

Recommendation 9 a

Information to be provided and procedures to be undertaken before, during and after initial job-seeker consultation should be formalised and should include the following:

- Standard questions
- Standard information to be communicated verbally

⁶ That is, if a job-seeker has been out of work for six months, they almost certainly need to lower their expectations. In any case they would have little to lose in accepting a lower paid job without any formal unemployment benefit, even if they were to continue their search for more preferable employment.

- Standard documentation including
 - FAQ document about DER role
 - Job-seeker agreement (See recommendation 16)
 - Interview tips
 - Individual job-seeking tips

Procedures/Information should also be formalised for follow-up consultations that should be scheduled according to a standard timeline (personal consultations should be held no less than every 2 months although these could be conducted by telephone).

Recommendation 9 b

Basic due diligence should be performed to determine job-seekers' skill level and fitness for work.

- Employment reference checks
- Aptitude testing (where relevant, for example basic office skills, computer literacy etc).

A full suite of online aptitude tests covering all manner of subjects can be purchased for around US\$2,000 per annum.

Reference checks would also help to identify any work-ethic related problems which may need to be addressed.

Recommendation 9 c

A diagnostic framework should be developed which requires the JPO to assess the job-seeker on a range of qualities, determine whether any action is required in each case, and recommend a course of action. This would be a key management control as it would allow them to much more easily review the quality of the JPO's work with the job seeker as well as their productivity as it related to progress on the individual job-seeker.

The process should also facilitate prioritisation of job-seekers.

Candidates should be assessed on each of the following:

- Resume
- Skill level in relation to job desired
- Personal presentation
- Punctuality
- Communication/interview skills
- Literacy
- Soft skills
- Attitude/work ethic
- Salary expectations
- Other job-related expectations

Recommendation 9 d

JPO's should determine and assign a "priority score" to job-seekers to enable the unit to distinguish between cases based on need and thus allocate resources more effectively.

The score should take into account:

- Length of time unemployed
- Number of dependent family members
- Reasonableness/flexibility of salary and work expectations
- Skill level
- Attitude
- Other special needs (for example disabilities or criminal record)

Again, a standard framework should be developed to assist the JPO in the scoring process and to maintain consistency between JPO's and job-seekers. For example, a score could be given out of five on each of the above measures, which would give a score out of a potential 30.

This would provide management with a means to review the activity of JPO's on the job-seekers of most need.

10. Over-reliance on CISCO coding

Observation

There is a degree of over-reliance on the JPU system in matching job-seekers with jobs as it relies heavily on the "CISCO" occupational classification system.

Under the current system, CISCO codes are attributed to job-seekers at the time of registration. A job-seeker may be allocated to any number of CISCO codes depending on their preferences, skills, qualifications and experience.

However, there did not appear to be an adequate system for assigning codes to job-seekers and the concept itself is overly restrictive given the degree of complexity in classifying jobs and job-seekers. For example, consider the skill-set of someone who is reasonably computer literate and educated to a high school level, who is also presentable and a reasonably good communicator. Such a job-seeker would be suited to jobs as diverse as:

- Aircraft flight attendant
- Airport desk attendant
- Junior office administrator (which could in reality be almost any one of 50 secretarial or administrative roles depending on industry focus)
- Salesperson
- Cashier
- Clerk
- "Account Officer" (an apparently common, if enigmatic job title)

In practice job titles are somewhat arbitrary and workers are selected based more on personal qualities and skills than experience ("what is someone able to do" rather than "what has someone done"). Roles in small companies⁷ are often, through necessity, built around a person's skill-set rather than the person being selected for a rigid, well-defined role. This is particularly true in financial services. Trades, retail and tourism have somewhat more well-defined and rigid roles.

Under the current system it would be an impractically onerous task to assign a comprehensive list of codes for every job-seeker taking into account all the possible jobs the person was able to do. From discussion with JPO's the system seemed to be more focused on what a person had done or wanted to do. This would seem to restrict the pool of possible vacancies when the idea should be to cast the net as far and wide as possible based on the candidate's skill-set and salary expectations. This would not be such a problem if the referral process were not so dependent on the automatic matching of candidates based on CISCO codes (i.e. if that was merely a starting point but not considered authoritative).

Job vacancies are also coded at the time of registration, by an individual in the research unit. However, there appeared to be no adequate control over accuracy of coding and each job can

⁷ The Chamber CEO recently noted that 80% of Chamber members employed fewer than 15 staff.

only be coded with a single CISCO code even though some jobs may combine roles as defined under the CISCO classification system.

At the time of “processing” the job vacancy, the JPU system identifies job-seekers matching the code of the job vacancy, from which the JPO selects candidates to refer to the employer.

Although JPO’s are able to assign or refer other candidates for jobs, reliance is primarily placed on the code matching system in the database and referral of other candidates relies on the JPO processing the job having first hand knowledge of the excluded candidate.

Furthermore the need to maintain and continually refine the CISCO coding system (which is also over-relied on, in my opinion, by the Immigration department) is a significant task in itself. The arbitrariness and infinite complexity of private sector roles makes this whole exercise somewhat futile. The more you try to classify a job, the more cumbersome and complex, and the less useful the classification system becomes.

Consequences/Risks

- Job-seekers may not be matched with vacancies they would be willing to consider and for which they are in fact qualified
- Job-seekers may be referred for jobs for which they are ill-suited, wasting employers’ time and undermining goodwill with the JPU
- Manual errors in coding may result in mismatching or omission of candidates.
- Time may be wasted in the JPU continually refining the CISCO coding system in an attempt to resolve the endless anomalies.

Recommendation 10

The JPU should reduce its reliance on the CISCO coding system and instead use the judgment of the JPO to match job-seekers with available jobs based on job-seekers’ preferences, skills, qualifications and experience.

The CISCO code should essentially be a starting point for the matching process but not the “be all and end all”.

It should be noted that job/candidate classification is something that the entire recruitment industry has grappled with for many years. However, the private sector’s response is instructive.

Although *jobs* are coded for the purposes of job-seeker searching, the trend among online job boards (e.g. Monster, Careerbuilder etc) in recent years has been to move away from rigid taxonomical classification in favour of word-based searches which are less likely to miss relevant results.

The two “off-the-shelf” recruitment databases we have used do not require classification of candidates, only jobs (and even then only for the purposes of enabling candidates to browse jobs by industry or job function rather than candidate/job matching). Lists for standard

qualifications, location and other attributes can be hard-coded, allowing searches on those attributes.

In the private sector, the process for matching candidates with jobs varies depending on whether a consultant is seeking candidates for a job, or jobs for a candidate.

If the consultant is seeking candidates for a particular job, the consultant will normally begin searching with keywords corresponding to job requirements, starting with the most restrictive (i.e. essential requirements) and then narrowing the pool of candidates by searching or individually appraising based on subordinate requirements.

For example, if the employer has stipulated that a candidate must have experience with Quickbooks, the consultant would begin by searching the resume database for the keyword "quickbooks".⁸ This approach allows consultants to apply judgment in the matching process by selecting any quality on which to search and slowly narrowing the pool of potential candidates. For example, whilst "quickbooks" is an example of a specific software package, it is neither a skill in itself (the skill would be book-keeping or accounting) nor a qualification, nor a job title. The consultant could have opted to begin their search with any one of these job-seeker attributes (for example they could have searched "book-keeping" or "accounts assistant" or "accountant" or "CA" or "ACCA" depending on the job requirements). Although this method depends to some degree on good candidate records in other respects (such as completeness of resumes), that will be a requirement in order to ultimately apply for the job in any case.

Searching for jobs for a particular candidate is normally more straightforward as there are generally fewer jobs than candidates. Consultants often have sufficient working knowledge of active jobs and their requirements to be able to work from memory. This is an additional advantage of assigning JPO's to focus on a single or narrow set of industries (see recommendation 21 a).

⁸ Note that, in the private sector, candidates resumes are stored electronically. The JPU does not have this capability.

11. Division of responsibility**Observation**

The division of responsibility between JPO's (Job Placement Officer) and CLO's (Client Liaison Officer) is not conducive to constructive employer-relations, teamwork or career advancement.

Furthermore, CLO's are frustrated by the lack of progression, variety, job satisfaction and volume of tedious manual work.

Consequences/Risks

- The JPU may fail to establish or maintain effective working relationships with employers
- Time may be wasted on excessively manual processes that could be automated without significant expense
- CLO's may become demoralised and unproductive
- CLO's may fail to develop to their full potential

Recommendation 11

The role of the CLO should be dramatically altered to involve much less tedious data entry (most of which should be automated) and less critical customer communication. In essence the role should become that of a junior JPO, each under the day-to-day supervision of a single JPO and assisting them with their daily responsibilities, particularly when it requires low level processing or administrative tasks (for example, referring candidates to jobs and arranging interviews).

The JPO could thus provide a means of direct productivity monitoring, coaching in higher level tasks and so on, delegating an increasing amount of responsibility in line with the CLO's capability and desire.

In turn, the CLO would provide absence cover to the JPO when required.

12. JPO accountability for job-seekers.**Observation**

Under the current system, no single person is formally responsible for the outcome for a particular job-seeker.

This undoubtedly contributes to poor outcomes as difficult job-seeker cases can be perpetually overlooked in favour of those more straightforward.

Consequences/Risks

- Management is unable to exercise a key control over JPO performance and outcomes by, for example, running a report showing candidates and length of time out of work with file notes and activity.
- Job-seekers may feel they are being “passed from pillar to post” as they can potentially talk to several different JPO’s, none of whom are individually required to take responsibility for them.
- Contact details are less likely to be properly maintained as no single person is responsible for the data.

Recommendation 12

Processes at DER should change to become more focused on job-seekers than jobs.

JPO’s should be given primary responsibility for a portfolio of *jobseekers* so that a single person is responsible and accountable for outcomes and proper tracking of candidates. Job-seekers should be assigned to JPO’s based on industry preference (see recommendation 23a). Note that this would not prevent the job-seeker working with other JPO’s if they had a suitable job. The key improvement is that one person would have responsibility for this person’s outcome.

Management should periodically review a report showing job-seeker cases by JPO and “Drill down” to review the action taken to confirm all that ought to be done is being done.

This would encourage JPO’s to build stronger relationships with job-seekers and allow JPO performance to be more easily assessed.

JPU management should consider transferring candidates to a new JPO in the case that insufficient efforts have been made on the part of a JPO to assist that candidate.

13. Job-seeker referral process

Observation

The “job-seeker referral” process (i.e. the submission of candidates to employers for registered vacancies) is too informal and passive.

For example, JPO’s do not personally arrange interviews, thus a key step in the “recruitment lifecycle”⁹ is delegated to the employer. In fact, there is normally no direct contact between the JPO and the employer in relation to any job or referral (and indeed often none with job-seekers). In the majority of cases, the referral is simply faxed or emailed and the response duly recorded, without any formal introduction or follow up.

Furthermore the target volume of referrals (five per job) is arbitrary and counter-productive to good employer relations as it shows a disregard for the value of the employer’s time. There would be no need to send five candidates if the JPO was properly engaged in the recruitment process, vetting candidates against the job description and focusing the employer’s attention on the best among them. JPO’s could send more candidates based on feedback obtained from the first batch, if there are candidates more suited to the employer’s requirements. Sending five candidates in the first batch would make it diplomatically difficult to send yet more candidates based on employer feedback (unless the JPO was to agree to reject some of the original candidates, in which case it would have been a waste of everyone’s time to refer them in the first place).

In addition, each candidate is likely to represent several hours work for management or HR at the employer. Consider that the following steps will be (or at least *should* be) taken for each and every candidate referred.

- Review resume
- Call to arrange interview (potentially more than once, especially given issues with contact details)
- Interview (with notes)

⁹ The “Recruitment Life-Cycle” is standard recruitment industry terminology for the evolution of a recruitment assignment from cradle to grave (from job registration to placement). This normally involves certain standard steps. Every stage in the lifecycle must be optimised to ensure the recruitment assignment advances to the next stage as every step represents a potential barrier to closing. Although it varies from company to company, it is normally a close variation of the following:

1. Registration of job
2. Advertising
3. Registration of candidates
4. Screening of candidates
5. Short-listing of candidates
6. Referral of candidates to employer
7. Interview(s)
8. Interview feedback
9. Offer of employment
10. Acceptance

- (Potentially) Aptitude test
- Check references
- Advise candidate of outcome
- Report outcome to DER
- (Potentially) Document decision to support work permit application

You can see why this process could be extremely frustrating to employers when the candidate has not been properly vetted by the JPO. This increases the likelihood of the employer using unscrupulous tactics to get around DER requirements (not that this justified in any circumstances).

Because of the need to “process” jobs, there is no ability to register “perennial” jobs such as Temporary Contract Administrator or Supermarket Cashier (which one supermarket has previously complained about). In fact this is a fairly serious shortcoming as there are many positions on the island for which a Caymanian would be considered whether or not a specific vacancy existed. This is also related to the problem of multiple homogeneous vacancies noted elsewhere.

On the candidate side there also seems to be some lack of engagement, or at least inconsistency in procedure. There is no requirement in the referral process for a candidate to have been spoken to prior to referral.

In my own experience as an employer, there have been numerous occasions in which the candidate was not contacted prior to referral and, when contacted by CML, said they had not been contacted by DER beforehand.

Consequences/Risks

- Employers may neglect to call referred candidates (whether inadvertently or deliberately)
- Employers may later (falsely) claim to not have been able to contact referred candidates
- Employers may delay the process needlessly to frustrate the JPU process
- Employers may become frustrated with a lack of cooperation/partnership at DER
- Candidates may be submitted for jobs they do not want, wasting their time and that of the employer
- Candidates may not be properly briefed on the job requirements prior to being contacted by the employer
- Candidates may fail to properly prepare for job interviews (e.g. being on time, researching company and so on)
- JPO's may fail to obtain relevant information which may enhance the chances of a positive outcome (for example an area of deficiency in a candidate's skill set which may have led the JPO to introduce an alternative candidate who would be a “better fit”)

Recommendation 13

The role of the JPO should be far more pro-active at every stage of the recruitment lifecycle. Standard checklists should be developed for procedures to be performed at each stage (although this need not subvert the judgment and autonomy of the JPO, often acting as more of an aide memoire).

A control environment should be implemented to spot check JPO compliance with standard procedure, focusing particularly on high priority jobs and job-seekers.

The pro-active version of this process, with the JPO in control of both parties throughout, would resemble the following (which is based on CML standard procedure):

- Job registered
 - JPO calls employer to discuss/understand job requirement and challenge title/description/requirements/salary
- Candidates short-listed
 - JPO calls candidate to describe job (and company), confirm interest/suitability and availability for interview
- Referral of candidates
 - JPO calls employer to introduce candidates, discuss suitability and request interview time/date
- Interview
 - JPO contacts candidate to advise of interview time
 - JPO calls/emails employer and candidate to remind prior to interview
- Interview feedback
 - ASAP after interview, JPO calls employer and candidate to obtain feedback and discuss intention to proceed on both sides
- Offer
 - Employer provides offer via JPO
 - JPO presents offer to candidate, discusses response
 - JPO confirms response to employer, confirm start date if positive
- Follow-up
 - ASAP after commencement JPO contacts employer and candidate to confirm commencement and seek feedback on progress

14. Prioritisation of jobs and job-seekers**Observation**

The current system appears to invest an equal amount of time in every job and every job-seeker, regardless of the likelihood of the job being filled by an unemployed Caymanian, a job-seeker filling an available job, or the relative need of the job-seeker.

Consequences/Risks

- JPO's may focus (consciously or unconsciously) on low priority cases which are more straightforward
- Job-seekers with high priority needs (such as dependent family members) may endure serious hardship
- Job-seekers may resort to anti-social or criminal activity

Recommendation 14

To more effectively allocate limited resources, job-seekers should be prioritised based on such factors as:

- Number of dependents
- Length of time unemployed
- Skills and qualifications (i.e. the more skilled, the higher priority)
- Salary expectation (i.e. the lower the salary expectation, the higher priority)
- Reason for leaving last employment (i.e. if resigned should be lower priority)
- Level of cooperation with the unit (i.e. attendance at soft skills training, remaining in contact, attending meetings and interviews, applying for jobs on own initiative etc).

Similarly, jobs should be prioritised based on the following factors:

- Skills and qualifications required (i.e. the lower the skill-level the higher the priority)
- Salary (i.e. the higher the salary relative to the skill level, the higher the priority)
- Desirability among job-seekers (i.e. the less manual and tedious, the higher priority)

15. Reasonableness of job descriptions**Observation**

There is currently no formal process of review of the reasonableness of job descriptions or requirements (although some review does take place in the statistics section to “code” the job vacancy it does not extend to the reasonableness of the requirements).

Based on a scan review:

- Some jobs descriptions and requirements have a readily apparent bias towards incumbent work permit holders.
- Of registered jobs, many jobs are registered with no description at all. Others are scant or tautological (for example job ID 115797, “Comfort Suites General Manager” simply states “General Manager of a hotel”).

This issue is connected with some of the other issues observed including:

- Segregation of duties in the unit between JPO’s/CLO’s/Statistics
- Lack of formal ability to directly influence the immigration process (i.e. beyond issuance of waiver letters)
- Lack of open communication with employers

Consequences/Risks

- Jobs may be registered with unreasonable duties or requirements to deliberately preclude Caymanian applications
- Caymanian candidates substantially matching the legitimate requirements may be disenfranchised

Recommendation 15

Although it is tempting to recommend a control procedure which entailed reviewing each individual job description, this would simply be impractical for the 23-27,000 work permits issued annually (see recommendation 2). Furthermore the unit may have limited ability to influence the job requirements without going to great lengths to disprove an employer’s assertion.

The best approach may be for JPO’s to be encouraged to critically review job requirements for any job they feel a job-seeker may be suited and to discuss such requirements with the employer directly in the hope of negotiating more realistic requirements which may then apply to the Caymanian job-seeker.

If, *after reasonable enquiry*, the JPO concludes that any specific requirement is unreasonable, they should have the authority to:

- a) Refer a Caymanian candidate they feel is suitably qualified for the job based on its legitimate requirements
- b) Notify the employer of an intention to recommend against the issuance of a work permit on grounds of an unreasonable requirement, inviting the employer to make contradictory representations
- c) Ultimately recommend to the board that the work permit be refused or deferred pending evidence of the legitimacy of the requirement.

Note that this system would be dependent on the availability of a Caymanian candidate the JPO (potentially in collaboration with an industry expert, see recommendation 21) concluded was suitably qualified for the position based on the remaining legitimate requirements. This would avoid the unit wasting time negotiating job descriptions and requirements for vacancies regardless of the benefit to Caymanian job-seekers (which would be the outcome of a unilateral control over job vacancy reasonableness).

16. Job-seeker Agreements

Observation

The unit lacks incentives or sanctions to maintain “job-seeker discipline”. In other words, to encourage them to:

- Attend soft-skills seminars or undertake other training
- Attend meetings with the unit
- Attend interviews with employers
- Undertake a certain level of job-seeking activity on their own initiative
- Adjust job and salary expectations (i.e. if a job-seeker has unrealistic salary expectations in relation to their skill level, the department is wasting its time)

Consequences/Risks

- Job-seekers may not cooperate with the JPU’s efforts to find them work
- Job-seekers may be less motivated to attend job interviews or
- The JPU may waste time with individuals who are not genuinely motivated to find work at the expense of those that are

Recommendation 16

As a part of the standard procedures undertaken during the initial consultation with new job-seekers (see recommendation 9), job-seekers should be required to sign an agreement which sets out the JPU’s expectations of them, including:

- Maintenance of up-to-date contact details
- Attendance at all meetings arranged with the JPU and employers (i.e. interviews)
- “Signing on” at appointed times, if adopted
- Not accepting a job offered within job-seeker’s agreed parameters (salary range, industry etc)
- Resigning from a job or being dismissed for legitimate disciplinary reasons

The British *JobCentre* has such a requirement for job-seekers.

The agreement should also stipulate that failure on the part of the job-seeker to fulfil their obligations will result in the JPU suspending them from active representation by the JPU for a period of time (I would suggest escalating periods: one month initially, then two, then three). This would not prevent the job-seeker from using JPU resources or seeking work on their own initiative.

Obviously in practice such a sanction would be used judiciously at the JPU’s discretion.

17. Job Placement Forms

Observation

Job Placement Forms are poorly designed and lacking in relevant information, including:

- Alternative contact details
 - Email
 - Telephone
 - Next of kin
- Minimum salary expectation
 - Basis for minimum salary expectation
- Access to computer
- Industries/jobs preferred (checkboxes)
- Length of time unemployed
- Number of dependents
- Current/prospective means of support
- Reason for leaving last employment
- Availability (planned vacations or other absence from island)
- Willingness/ability/desire to work overseas

Consequences/Risks

- The JPU may fail to properly prioritise cases in the greatest need
- JPU may refer candidates to positions below their salary requirements

Recommendation 17

Job Placement Forms (i.e. job-seeker registrations) should be improved to include the additional information listed above.

18. JPO initiation, professional development and procedures manual**Observation**

Based on interviews performed, JPO's hired recently had received no significant training in their role beyond use of IT resources. There did not appear to be any ongoing professional development in the form of periodic courses (for example recruiting strategies, project management, career counselling, training opportunities).

There is no procedure manual for staff to refer to.

There is significant inconsistency between standard procedures employed by JPO's (for example in relation to job-seeker advice).

Consequences/Risks

- There may be inconsistencies between procedures used by different staff, creating confusion among job-seekers and a loss of control by management
- JPO's may employ sub-optimal procedures
- JPO's may come to rely on ongoing management guidance which is an inefficient use of management time
- It may be difficult to gradually improve JPU procedures without standardisation and documentation

Recommendation 18 a

A procedures manual should be developed which outlines standard procedures and processes across the JPU.

Recommendation 18 b

Induction training for JPO's should be formalised based on the procedures manual.

Recommendation 18 c

To facilitate ongoing professional development of JPU staff, weekly meetings should include a training/discussion session conducted by senior personnel. Staff should be invited to propose training topics.

Section 3**Other Resources****19. Public Relations****Observation**

There is a widespread lack of awareness and understanding, in both the private sector and the community, of the JPU's responsibilities and processes in relation to:

- Unemployed individuals
- Employed individuals
- Immigration
- Employer

Furthermore some of confusion surrounding the unit's responsibilities may be due to the title "Job Placement Unit" which implies that it is the job of the unit to "place" Caymanians in jobs rather than to merely assist them with their employment search.

Consequences/Risks

- Registered Caymanians may place undue reliance on the JPU in assisting their job-seeking efforts, reducing their own direct efforts
- Unemployed Caymanians may be dissatisfied at the level of service received or results obtained, even if they are in line with JPU standards
- Employers may fail to register jobs for which registered Caymanians would be suited
- Employers may be frustrated at the speed or outcome of service, even if those are in line with JPU standards

Recommendation 19 a

The JPU should obtain a dedicated Marketing and PR resource. Although this could be a person hired to work within the JPU, it may be preferable for to outsource this function to a local marketing/PR firm. The mandate would include:

- Design, copy-writing and development of new website
- An ongoing media campaign to
 - Improve public perception of the JPU
 - Raise awareness of services among job-seekers and employers
 - Respond to negative publicity
 - Announce new initiatives
- Production of monthly newsletters (electronic and hard copy) for job-seekers and employers
- Periodic customer satisfaction surveys (quarterly or semi-annually)
- Production of promotional collateral such as:

- Leaflets which outline the JPU process for job-seekers including
 - Job-seeker rights and obligations
 - Timeframe of service
 - Realistic expectations
 - Other job-seeking activities recommended
 - FAQ section
- Similar for employers
- Interview technique
 - Do's and Don'ts

As all of this would almost certainly constitute a full time job (on a salary of around US\$40-60,000 depending on the individual's experience), a reasonable budget for outsourcing such a service would be US\$60-100,000 depending on exact specification.

Recommendation 19 b

Whether or not the JPU opted to hire an additional PR resource, a web development firm should be retained to create a new website from scratch with the ability to add additional functionality when technically possible (per recommendation 8). A new website would be likely to cost no more than CI\$3-5,000 not including rebranding.

Recommendation 19 c

As a part of the wider reform and re-launch effort, the unit should be rebranded with a more appropriate title that reflects its role in supporting unemployed Caymanians with their job search, such as the Employment Assistance Unit or Employment Advice Centre for example.

20. "Back to work" programs

Observation

There is a lack of incentives for employers to take on "problem" candidates such as those with criminal records, poor references and little or no experience. This results in an "unemployment trap" or "catch 22" situation which exacerbates long-term unemployment and prevents unemployed Caymanians with reasonable skills returning to the workforce.

There is no means for the individual or the JPU to address such issues beyond the hope of finding an employer who either fails to perform effective due diligence (i.e. reference checks) or considers it a matter of social responsibility to "give them a chance". Both of these seem somewhat passive and unrealistic, especially in the current economic climate.

Such cases seem the most likely to result in negative social consequences such as resorting to criminal activity or vagrancy.

Furthermore before and after such employees are placed in jobs there is no formal framework of counselling or monitoring to address the issues that held them back in the past or prevent them from manifesting in the new role.

Consequences/Risks

- Employers may routinely avoid hiring candidates with problematic backgrounds in favour of expatriates or less needy Caymanians.
- Individuals with "attitude problems" and poor "work ethic" may bounce from job to job without identifying or addressing underlying character flaws, in turn wasting staff time and undermining goodwill with employers.
- Unemployed Caymanians may become marginalised, destitute or resort to criminal activity.

Recommendation 20

The JPU should design one or more programs, combining incentives for employers with hands-on counselling by the JPU, aiming to bridge the gap between long-term unemployment and a permanent return to the workforce.

Such programs should be temporary in nature (between six weeks and six months) and should focus on the job-seekers most in need (those assigned a high priority, see recommendation 11e)

An example of such a program was proposed previously by CML dubbed the "Fresh Start" or "Fresh Focus" Program.

Incentives for employers may include:

- Public recognition
- Points towards accreditation

- Low-cost labour (whether low-paying or subsidised)
- Additional financial incentives

Incentives should be proportionate to the undesirability of the individual and the degree of need/urgency. For example, an individual with skills and qualifications but poor references could be hired on a relatively low salary for a period of three months to obtain a reference. On the other hand, for an individual with a serious criminal record, the unit might subsidise a small salary (or "stipend") for a period of time, giving the employer free labour which they would be very unlikely to decline.

Although this may seem an unworthy cause and poor use of public money, getting the individual back into the workforce may be significantly less expensive than the long run social cost of long term unemployment and disenfranchisement.

21. Industry Expertise

Observation

None of the JPU staff have any direct employment or human resources experience in any of the three predominant industries on the island:

- Tourism/hospitality
- Financial Services
- Construction

Consequences/Risks

- JPO's ability to detect and challenge disingenuous job descriptions and requirements may be undermined.
- JPO's ability to advise candidates on job-seeking tactics and provide career development counselling may be limited.

Recommendation 21 a

It is unrealistic to expect JPO's to have (or develop) the knowledge required in every industry on the island (i.e. the current situation).

The JPU should re-organise the JPO responsibilities such that each JPO has primary responsibility for a single industry or set of industries. For example, one JPO should cover Financial Services, another should cover Trades and Construction, another Tourism. This would allow JPO's to enhance their level of industry knowledge and judgment, which is critical to successful matching of candidates with vacancies, and to build stronger relationships with HR and management staff at the employers.

Such industry allocations could overlap to some degree to allow for variation in industry size (and thus workload) and applicability to Caymanian job-seekers (for example, financial services may be a large industry but have little significance to the typical DER job-seeker).

JPO's could be rotated periodically (say, annually or semi-annually) to allow them to enhance their skill set, introduce some variety, pre-empt the formation of corrupt relationships and provide cross-training for succession planning and absence cover.

In future, recruitment of JPO's should place a higher priority on industry experience (particularly HR-related) that might improve internal resources.

Recommendation 21 b

The JPU should solicit volunteers from the private sector who could act as "industry experts":

- Assisting JPO's
 - Classifying candidates and vacancies

- Matching candidates with vacancies
- Assessing job descriptions and titles
- Providing career guidance to jobseekers
 - Suitable jobs
 - Training that may be beneficial
 - Resume advice

Such industry experts could be asked to attend the JPU for a 1-2 hour period on a monthly basis to provide an open consultation time for JPO's and job-seekers. The schedule would need to be carefully managed by the JPU to ensure volunteers' timely attendance and effective use of their time. Volunteers should be publicly recognised for service to the community.

22. Access to IT resources for the non-computer literate**Observation**

The implementation of an enhanced website with job-seeker registration and job browsing functionalities may have limited usefulness to a significant minority of job-seekers that are either non-computer literate or do not have ready access to a computer. At the same time, some candidates may be unable to travel frequently to George Town due to cost or family responsibilities.

Consequences/Risks

- Some job-seekers may be prejudiced in the job-seeking process in favour of those more computer literate
- Job-seekers may fail to maintain contact with the JPU making:
 - Successful job placement less likely
 - Loss of contact more likely

Recommendation 22

Librarians or other staff at public libraries or other community facilities should be trained to assist job-seekers in using the online resources available via the JPU website including both job searching and registration.

They could also be required to maintain a hard copy binder of available jobs that could be updated on a weekly basis from the online job listings (which should be separated by industry).

23. Soft-skills training**Observation**

In spite of unanimous consensus among JPO's of the need for improved "soft skills" training for job-seekers, there is no formal means to consider or identify the soft-skills training needs of individual job-seekers and no formal timetable of soft-skills training seminars, literature or other resources.

Such "soft skills" include:

- Interview skills (including personal presentation)
- Resume preparation
- Individual job-seeking strategies

Consequences/Risks

- Sub-optimal outcomes for job-seekers and the JPU due to:
 - Poorly presented resumes
 - Poor interview technique
 - Poor job seeking strategies or lack of individual effort

Recommendation 23a

JPO's should be required, as part of their formal assessment of newly-registered job-seekers, to assess the need of the individual for soft skills training.

Feedback on interview performance and resume should be sought from employers to whom the job-seeker was unsuccessfully referred to identify shortcomings in soft-skills.

Recommendation 23b

Literature should be provided to job-seekers during the initial consultation which provides practical guidance to improve their soft skills.

Recommendation 23c

A standard timetable of soft-skills seminars should be maintained with sessions taking place on at least a monthly basis. Sessions should be prepared by JPO's in collaboration with management and presented by a JPO (primarily) and a member of the management team. JPO's should be rotated between seminar topics.

Newly registered job-seekers should be encouraged (and in some cases required) to attend soft-skills training seminars.

24. Training opportunities**Observation**

Although a lack of training opportunities for Caymanians was identified by most of the staff in the unit, there is no strategy for encouraging employers to offer training (or “entry-level”) opportunities or for identifying them if they do exist (since an employer would not be obliged to contact DER even if they had one).

There did not appear to be any protocol for the JPU to communicate with the BSP board to ascertain which companies had pledged (or been obligated) to provide entry-level opportunities.

Consequences/Risks

- Young Caymanians may find themselves in an employment trap without experience and without the means to acquire it
- Employers who may be willing to offer training opportunities for young Caymanians may lack the resources or experience to structure one effectively or the time and resources to effectively promote or run it

Recommendation 24 a

The JPU should work with industry experts (see recommendation 21b) to develop a standard framework for an internship program that can be easily customised and adopted by employers.

The JPU should meet with employers to discuss and promote internship and other training opportunities provided by the firm.

The JPU should maintain a database of such opportunities and assist employers with identifying and screening suitable candidates.

A protocol should be established with the BSPB and WPB to formally recognise participating employers.

Recommendation 24 b

The JPU should liaise with the Immigration Department to collate and monitor training and entry-level opportunities which companies have agreed to provide under the BSP scheme.

25. Further education course catalogue**Observation**

In spite of the unanimous agreement among JPO's and management of the need for more training, no catalogue of training opportunities is maintained for JPO (or job-seeker) reference. JPO's must therefore rely on personal knowledge of training opportunities on the island, which is patchy.

There is no referral protocol with training institutions and no budget to subsidise training if required.

Staff at all levels cited the need for training that does not appear to exist on the island.¹⁰

Consequences/Risks

- Opportunities for job-seekers to address shortcomings in skill level and qualifications may be missed.
- JPO's may prescribe a need for training that is not available ahead of accepting jobs that are more realistic in line with a job-seeker's existing skill set.

Recommendation 25a

The JPU should collate a catalogue of on-island educational/vocational training opportunities and organisations in relevant topics and occupations.

JPO's should be required to assess the job-seekers training needs in conjunction with available, timely, on-island, courses.

JPO's should encourage job-seekers to seek work based on their existing skillset whilst also seeking or undertaking (preferably part-time, evening or weekend) training to improve their skills and marketability in line with their career preferences.

Recommendation 25b

The Ministry should allocate a training budget at the disposal of the JPU for courses provided by UCCI or private training providers. This should only be accessible to those in greatest need (i.e. special needs, top priority cases, or long term unemployed).

¹⁰ Whilst this may be relevant information for the Ministry, it does not benefit the job-seeker. In fact it is more likely to frustrate them and validate long-term unemployment.