

Training for excluded groups...

A challenge of engaging *with* groups...

...rather than doing it *to* them

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Citizen-First@mwra.ie for comment

Getting to where we are now:

Kortrijk conducted a pilot project designing introductory PC courses for:

- Young, poorly qualified job seekers
- Social excluded persons
- Immigrants
- Vulnerable older people

The advice offered is based upon the Kortrijk experience.

Young, poorly qualified job seekers

Basic training is inappropriate. Most young people have some experience of using computers and have no interest in spending time repeating what they already know. So how to motivate them into learning what they may not know?

The barriers include learning structures which call for too much time commitment over too long a period. Fear of computers and technology is also still a problem, as is seeing the value and utility of acquiring computer knowledge.

Recent memories of the learning experience must also play a part, together with some young persons' capacity for taking personal responsibility in the context of employability.

If a project is to be attractive to this target group, young people have to be involved in designing the programmes and in teaching or supervising classes:

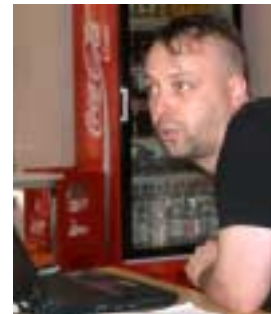
- Work with local organisations and personalities
- Approach young people individually in their own environment
- Organise short sessions without any long term commitment
- Design and offer lessons with content directed towards the interests of participants
- Teach in small groups (6 to 8 maximum)

The socially excluded

By 'socially excluded', we mean people who face severe difficulties in integrating within the social system. Many will face deprivation in their daily life. Most will not have understood the role ICT has taken in society or grasped its value and importance. Illiteracy is a major obstacle to accessing the benefits of ICT.

Rather than aggravating the risk of social exclusion, ICT should be a channel for helping socially excluded people out of isolation and poverty. However, poverty in combination with low educational attainment makes this difficult.

Training for socially excluded groups needs an holistic, integrated approach encompassing education, infrastructure, lowering barriers and other supporting measures.



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Practitioners are invited to contribute experiences, news and comment to Citizen-First@mwra.ie

Working with social exclusion...

- A strategy is needed for attracting participants in each target group
- Content has to be adjusted and made relevant to their respective environments and experiences
- Personal approaches, assisted by 'champions' from each target group, work best

Immigrants

Similar challenges emerged between immigrant groups and across the agencies consulted.

Age

There is a general desire in the immigrant community to learn how to use ICT applications. Young people openly express their wish to learn. Older people may not but are open to following ICT courses. However, 20% of the older immigrants say that working with ICT is too difficult, while 7% of younger immigrants feel the same way. Furthermore, both older and younger immigrants can be suspicious of being trained by strangers. It follows that the reasons for lack of progress may be more complex than age difference alone might suggest. One way of approaching this is to devise inter-generational projects so that young and old can be taught together.

Language

Language can be a big barrier for older immigrants but less so for the younger ones. In the Kortrijk experience, 'computer language' (mostly English) required totally different words and levels of communication from that used in everyday activities.

Language also caused difficulties for those providing the training. Kortrijk took the strategic decision to use the local language, Flemish. This imposed a responsibility upon tutors not to speak too quickly and to use simple language. Notwithstanding the strategy of training in Flemish, information brochures still have to be translated into different languages.

Gender

While most groups can be mixed, don't forget that religious restrictions may necessitate separate groups. Organise women's groups during the day, when children are at school, and men's groups in the evenings when they are home from work.

Integration

Inter-community groups and projects are to be encouraged. They stimulate integration.

Vulnerable older people

Digitalisation has overtaken this group and will continue to do so as more and more services go on-line. Independence is threatened and social exclusion can result if older people do not adapt accordingly.

Citizen First for e-Inclusion wishes to stress that any work planned with persons considered at risk must take account of current ethical and best practice. In the absence of professional advice, a database like ASSIA (Applied Social Science Index and Abstracts), accessible through any University library, will quickly identify the precautions which must be taken – for your own protection, for the protection of the participants themselves and for the success of the project.

Links:

www.kortrijk.be
www.ufi.com

<http://ipolicy.squarespace.com/ict-for-elderly-introduction/2007/3/12/ageing-well-in-the-information-society.html>

Contacts and projects:

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www.epractice.eu/cases/freecomputerlessons

www.ccan.co.uk

www.westhoek.be/info/ned/jewaserbij/2007/november/ieper0911/welkom.htm

Particular obstacles and barriers for old people

Ways of overcoming them

- Lack of mobility.....
- Sight or hearing problems.....
- Distrust in new projects.....
- Fear of dropping behind.....
- Difficulty with ‘computer English’
- Doubt about the utility of computer skills for the aged.....
- Willing self-exclusion through lack of interest.....
- Active resistance to the world of computers and the internet.....
- A distrust of training that is free when their experience tells them that nothing is free.....

- Use volunteers to collect people or to provide training in the home, especially in sheltered housing schemes
- Adjust screens and controls and make sure tutors are attentive to diction and projection
- Conduct information sessions convened in familiar places
- Form homogeneous groups or, alternatively, work inter-generationally (for example, grandparents with grandchildren)
- Convince participants that acquiring a new language is not necessary; use the testimony of former participants
- Similarly, use former participants to get the message across
- Co-opt people who can motivate others into joining a social project
- Orientate the content away from computer subjects and on to the interest of elderly people – give ICT a supporting role
- Provide information which demonstrates the trustworthiness of the project

