

## Working in a bubble?

*Staff*

A conversation I recently had with the manager of an employment resource centre confirmed for me something that I have often suspected; we tend to work in bubbles. Working in bubbles may have perceived advantages and many disadvantages. One perception that leads people to operate in bubbles is something that is often referred to as the 'Scarcity Mentality'. Simple put it means that there is not enough of something to go around for everyone. Perhaps in our industry it often means service providers believe that there are only so many unemployed people and perhaps not enough to go around. Perhaps it means there is a limited source of funds we can get to help people and if XYZ company gets it ABC company may not. That thinking translates into a poor atmosphere for sharing of knowledge and information among companies and very often, reinventing of the wheel.

Imagine, if you will, there was an unlimited source of clients (and our industry comes as close to any for that to be true since the economy produces an ever replenishing source of people) and that there were an unlimited source of funds. More specifically, if you or your organization had a good, viable idea that would help people during their career transition, there would be a funder for the project or a fee paying market for the product or service. If those conditions were true, would you be more willing to sit down with your "competitor" and share notes on the operation of your organizations with the goal of determining how to do your job better? Would you be willing to sit down with your "competitors" and discuss issues that arise with your clients? My guess is you probably would. You might say that while you believe there are lots of people in career transition to go around, there is not an unlimited source of funds, and, you would be right.

If two people had the same good idea and were competing for the same clients or the same funds, the model can break down. But imagine an environment where you and another service provider were sitting down and discussing problems than your clients were encountering and thought to yourselves maybe a service or program could be designed and offered to alleviate the problem. At that point you have a choice. Both could scurry off to your respective offices, cease sharing information, and compete. Your other choice though is to combine knowledge and resources, produce a far superior service or product that either of you could do alone, and work together. Idealistic? Simplistic? Possibly. But I am an eternal optimist and a firm believer that the sum of many peoples knowledge and skills can be more than the individual parts.

There are a number of industry associations and conferences geared towards the above goals and philosophies but they only work when people come to the mind set that it is better to share than to hoard, and if you give, you might just receive. Even if you do not fully share the above philosophy, do yourself a favour and attend a conference or workshop and see how many hands working together can lighten the load.