

## Support after 'culture shock' redundancies

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"I'D NEVER been made redundant in my life. It was just such a culture shock."

Cynthia Whitehurst had worked in the ceramics industry for 32 years before she lost her job as production manager at Longton-based Hartley Greens last month.

The 52-year-old from Park Hall was among a group of at least 50 North Staffordshire professionals who attended a free workshop last week aimed at helping them find another job.

The scheme, run by professional services network finest and human resources and management consultancy firm MPCG Business Solutions, was launched to provide targeted support for lawyers, accountants, managers and specialists hit by the economic downturn.

Mrs Whitehurst said the event, at Staffordshire University's Stoke campus, provided some useful tips.

She said: "I've done a CV already, but now I've had lots of advice I have to go back and do it again – it's really pointed me in the right direction.

"When you're doing a job you just do things naturally, but they've got us to break down all the skills we have. They've showed us how to sell ourselves more."

Kevin Ecclestone, from Fenton, lost his job as a regional depot manager for tyre firm Pirelli in February.

The 43-year-old said: "Any event like this that bolsters your skills base has got to be a good thing.

"I'd say you would have covered 70 to 80 per cent of it if you've had any redundancy help from your employers, but it's always good to hear fresh ideas.

"So far I've been very targeted with my applications – I've only applied for jobs with the same level of salary and responsibility I had before.

"I'm lucky I'm insured up to the hilt so I don't have the burning pressure of having to get another job as soon as possible.

"If I'm unsuccessful with that I'm going to start broadening the search, but I think once you're over 40 and you get yourself stuck in a certain level of job you struggle to get out."

Ken Marchant, of Stone, lost his job as a computer programme manager eight months ago.

The 55-year-old said he hopes the workshop, funded by regional development agency Advantage West Midlands, will prove useful. He said: "You always pick up something that's worth taking forward.

"There's also the opportunity to network with people and it helps just to realise you're not the only one in the same situation."

Mr Marchant said he has applied for around 35 jobs since being made redundant.

He added: "The Jobcentre has been virtually no help. Because I've done my research I'm going in and telling them what I'm entitled to and asking about courses, then they have to go away and find out about it.

"A lot of companies you apply to say if you don't hear from us, you haven't got it, which is fair enough because they're being inundated with hundreds of applications.

"It is frustrating, but that's the sort of world we live in now.

"There's no point in getting depressed because if you're ringing someone up looking for a job the last thing they want to hear is moaning.

"It's important to keep up appearances to some extent – you have to keep going on the basis that the right job might come around tomorrow."

Bob Bell, managing director of Stoke-based MPCG, said: "Having sat through the sessions, it's clear people thought they knew what they were doing in applying for jobs and writing CVs, but it's about making the link between what's advertised and their transferable skills.

"The feedback I've been getting is that people feel they are getting value from it. Someone told me it's nice just to feel that someone cares about them.

"Hopefully people will be able to go away and run with the advice we've given them."

How have you dealt with losing your job? Email us at [businessdesk@thesentinel.co.uk](mailto:businessdesk@thesentinel.co.uk)



**ALL CHANGE:** Cynthia Whitehurst worked in the ceramics industry for 32 years before being made redundant by Longton-based company Hartley Greens last month.