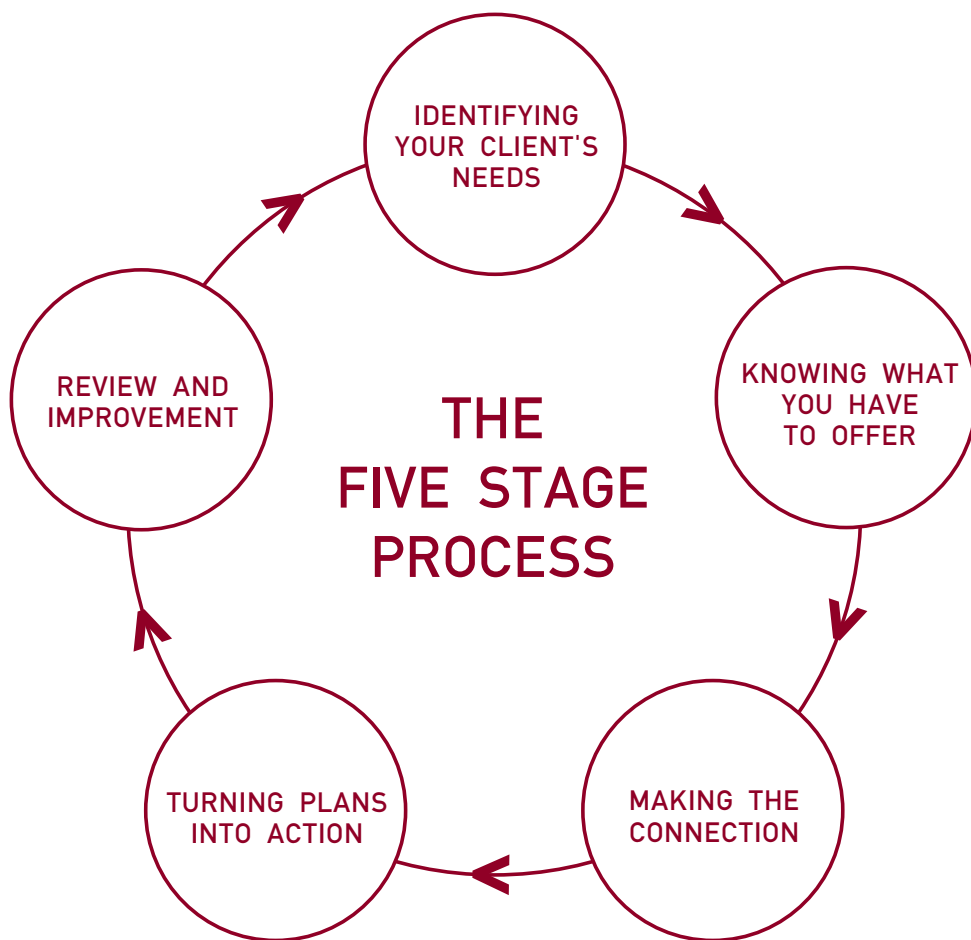


THE WINDmills programme

career tactics for the 21st century

CREATING A WINNING CV

Resource 14.1



Creating a winning CV

The chief way to sell yourself on paper is your CV. However there is no such thing as a perfect CV. Its chances of success or failure depend entirely on how far it meets the criteria, background and bias of the person reading it.

When producing a CV, many people:

- Fail to identify what the client (ie the employer) is looking for
- Undersell and underestimate what they have to offer
- Fail to provide the right evidence to support the skills and competencies
- See rejection as negative and fail to ask for constructive feedback

We have all made some of these mistakes in producing a CV but the CV in itself is not the only solution, it is a means to an end.

There are a number of steps you can take to help you create that winning CV:

Step 1 - Identify your client's needs

Considering your employer as a client ensures that you take a good look at the production of your CV from their perspective.

The following guidelines show the practical steps that will ensure you are well prepared. Remember the more you put in, the more you get out.

READ	THINK	ACT
The job advert and specification thoroughly so that you know exactly what it is they are looking for	Think about the range of skills and competencies that are required – then consider how you can tailor your experience and skills to meet those requirements	Write a clear list of your skills, qualities and experience that are essential for the position – can you back them up with evidence? – create a skills portfolio
Read any company literature or publicity material associated with the role. Refer to the website of the original job advertisement	Think about the type of language that is used in the literature. What does it tell you about the company/type of person they are looking for?	Refer to your skills portfolio – is the language the same? Is it positive and active? Do you need to update the way in which you describe yourself and your experiences/skills?
Read your current CV. Are you happy with it? Does it fully reflect you as a person and the skills you have to offer?	Think about ways in which it can be improved. Think about your current skills portfolio – are there ways to increase your chances of success?	Perform a thorough review of your current CV against your skills and those required by the position. Also, seek feedback on your current CV from colleagues, specialists and career experts
Read any professional journals, newspapers or current articles related to your field and the position you are going for	– consider what employers are looking for within that field – are there any new qualifications/standards? – is it within a growth market? – are there any new developments which would require different skills and attributes?	Again refer back to your current CV with this in mind. Also, try to identify anyone who works in a similar role /organisation and contact them to discuss the job opportunity (plan what you need to know before contacting them)
Read a good book on how to write and design a CV (sometimes a completely different perspective can provide food for thought)	Think about the examples used within the book. Use it for ideas on: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – layout – design – content – style 	Ask other people for copies of their current CV. The more examples you have the better. However remember this is going to be your personal CV – make sure it is a reflection of you. Remember also that you can learn from examples of 'how not to do it' as well (see examples of CVs in this document)
Ask yourself 'How employable am I?'	Think about the range of skills and the evidence you have to support them. Just how employable are you?	Start to prioritise these skills. Identify what categories they fall into. Are there any gaps that you need to work on?

As you can see there is plenty of preparation work to do in this step – even before starting your CV. However, the time you spend now will increase your chances of success later. You will soon see the benefits and this will help to make you stand out from other candidates.

Speaking to someone in a similar role or organisation gives invaluable advantages. It provides

- Unique information on what exactly is required
- Evidence that you are proactive and motivated by finding out more
- A more personalised, customised approach to your covering letter

Remember, working hard on this step will reap rewards not only with your job search but also in preparation for the interview.

Step 2 – Knowing what you have to offer

Knowing what you have to offer and selling this on paper is a crucial step in producing your CV.

In step 1 you researched further and identified what your client/employer was looking for. Now you can start to identify what you have to offer by assessing your skills and qualities.

Skills that employers are looking for can be categorised into four areas:

- 1 Specialist skills
- 2 General business skills
- 3 Self-reliance skills
- 4 People skills

You now need to look at your skills and split them into these four areas.

Skills Portfolio

<p style="text-align: center;">SPECIALIST</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Company-specific skills</p> <p>Specialist knowledge, eg product or market knowledge; specialist skills, eg IT packages; unique language skills, eg Chinese; specialist interpersonal skills, eg public speaker</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Technical skills</p> <p>Professional, sector-based or functional skills, eg journalism, research, aerospace engineering, tax accounting, counselling, creative design, economist, personnel, sales, marketing</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Understanding commercial goals of company</p> <p>Specialist understanding of an organisation's goals, priorities and future direction (combination of self-reliance, business acumen and people skills)</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">GENERAL BUSINESS</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Problem solving</p> <p>Achiever, successful, results-orientated, project management, creative, practical, logical, astute, agile mind</p> <p style="text-align: center;">IT/computer literacy</p> <p>IT skills, software packages, common sense, task-orientated, progressive, specific, office skills, keyboard skills</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Flexibility</p> <p>Multi-disciplinary, flexible, versatile, multi-skilled, willing, obliging, mobile, adaptable</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Numeracy skills</p> <p>Accurate, logical, problem-solver, detailed, methodical, consistent, quick thinker, analytical, thorough</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Business acumen</p> <p>Competitive, entrepreneurial, enterprising, commercial, foresight, budgeter, risk-taker, effective written communication</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Commitment</p> <p>Dedicated, trustworthy, conscientious, reliable, loyal, punctual, knowledgeable, experienced</p>
<p style="text-align: center;">SELF-RELIANCE</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Self-awareness/ confidence</p> <p>Purposeful, focused, reflective, perceptive, honest, self-belief, objective, realistic, balanced</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Self-promotion skills</p> <p>Positive, persuasive, pleasant, proactive, persistent, ambitious, opportunistic, promoter</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Initiative and proactivity</p> <p>Resourceful, energetic, drive, flexible, self-starter, self-reliant, initiative, self-disciplined</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Networking skills</p> <p>Initiator, trustful, personable, relationship builder, persistent developer, resourceful, adaptable</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Willing to learn</p> <p>Motivated, adaptable, enthusiastic, active, keen learner, inquisitive, continual improver</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Action planning</p> <p>Decision maker, planner, organised, negotiator, responsive, evaluator, forward thinker, target-driven, able to prioritise</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">PEOPLE</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Teamworking</p> <p>Supportive, facilitator, organised, co-ordinator, deliverer, imaginative, delegator, open-minded</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Leadership</p> <p>Dynamic, motivator, team-builder, confidence booster, energetic, capable, outward-looking, accountable, visionary</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Interpersonal skills</p> <p>Listener, adviser, counsellor, politically aware, initiator, professional, co-operative, constructive, assertive</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Customer orientation</p> <p>Welcoming, friendly, caring, approachable, constructive, accommodating, tactful, diplomatic, tolerant</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Oral communication</p> <p>Educator, trainer, communicator, presenter, promoter, influencer, humorous, empathetic, telephone skills</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Foreign language</p> <p>Specific language skills, cultural awareness, international experience, written and oral expertise, sensitivity</p>

Skills portfolio – further hints and tips

Using the examples on the previous page as a starting point, you could use the following further ways to develop your skills portfolio:

- Mapping out all your skills. List the positive experiences and achievements in your career to date (this will boost your confidence and help to create a broader range of positive examples)
- Consider activities beyond your normal work, eg voluntary work, community work, part-time work etc. What skills are you developing here?
- Put yourself in the shoes of three people in turn – friends, family, tutors or people you have worked with. What would their views of your skills and qualities be? Take it one step further and ask those people direct – make sure they are honest and constructive!
- Grow and revise your list again

At this stage you also need to challenge your range of skills – do you have the right balance of people, self-reliance, general and specialist skills to stay employable? Are they at the right level for the position you are in, or the position you would like to have? Get feedback on your list so far to make sure you are not underselling yourself – remember this is an important stage so get as much help as you can.

Examples of key skills and achievements

Computer literacy

Working knowledge of Microsoft Office (Word, Access and Excel). Extensive experience of PowerPoint. Confident in the application of the internet for research purposes and a proficient user of e-mail.

Organisational ability

Co-ordinating the office merger of two large geographical areas. Organising conferences for office managers and senior professionals. Planned and controlled a major information gathering exercise for all domestic and commercial properties in the Borough of Knowsley. Wide experience of prioritising workloads to meet legally enforceable deadlines.

Data management

Co-ordinating written and statistical data into report format whilst scrutinising for ambiguities and inconsistencies. This required both analytical and numeracy skills, which have been further developed through current higher education study.

Communication

Written communication is excellent as proved by my degree course work. An assertive approach has been developed from an advisory role as an information co-ordinator and has been enhanced by participation in group exercises. Extensive aptitude in listening skills gained from voluntary counselling work.

Problem solving

Wide experience in dealing with complaints from the general public. A strong aptitude for using initiative especially in areas of time management to meet deadlines. Re-designed a nationally used statistical form after detecting an imbalance in the generated information.

Teamwork

Operated in a team to successfully promote St Helens College in developing a campaign aimed at attracting adults into Higher Education. Directed a team of six in a fundraising exercise for the Children in Need appeal. Member of successful pub quiz team.

Examples of employment history

May 2000 – November 2000

B2b Co-ordinator

Zzap.com, Online Electrical Retailer, Liverpool

Planned and implemented many different marketing strategies, including; internet, radio, press, magazine, TV, outdoor advertising and staff affinity deals

Responsible for on and offline promotions and researched various promotional/advertising opportunities including situational and SWOT analyses

Developed relationships with companies to enhance sales performance

Responsible for creating monthly newsletter and e-mailing them to registrants

Achieved approximately 100% increase in the number of registrants on the company database and increased the general level of sales and traffic

1992 – 1998

Relief Deputy Manager

Ladbrokes Racing Ltd, Edgware, London

Supervised 2 – 4 staff, managed shops turning over £1 – 2 million per annum

Matched product offerings to local customer profiles

Responsible for shop layout, window and internal board displays

Trained staff in the range of products as well as security and financial systems

Consistently exceeded company targets for profit performance

Controlled administration, safety, security and financial systems

1986 – 1992

Assistant Manager

D&A Castle Dry Cleaners, Tottenham, London

Organised a prompt and reliable service for customers

Effective management of company finances and operation of machines and equipment

Planning and implementation of promotional campaigns and loyalty schemes

Step 3 – Making the connection

Tailoring your skills

Your CV always needs to reflect what the prospective client is looking for (Step 1). You have already prepared for producing your CV by identifying your key skills (Step 2). Now you must take a completely fresh look at yourself – as if through the eyes of your prospective employer.

This is the point where you move from an individual approach to a client-centred approach. We've all made statements on our CV without really considering what they mean to the client – the employer. Ask yourself:

- What are the features that really make me stand out?
- How am I going to present the evidence to really back up those statements?
- What are the benefits to the client?

You need to make the connection – refer what you have to what they want.

Provide clear evidence of these features with examples of how you have shown your proficiency.

Taking a client-centred approach

YOU	CLIENT
What makes you employable (features)?	What are the benefits to the client?
Experienced with working with a variety of people	This will indicate how you interact with colleagues and with clients. It will also give an initial indication of your proficiency in communicating and achieving a cultural fit in the organisation.
Good interpersonal skills	Knowing how you will interact with others and react in different situations is crucial for an organisation particularly when they are sifting in the recruitment process.
Ability to use own initiative	Knowing that you can work independently and use your initiative in different circumstances displays a certain strength of character necessary in most jobs in today's environment
Proactive in approach	Seeking out new ways of doing things, challenging the norm, creating opportunities for improving yourself or how the organisation works can help you to stand out from the crowd and add value to your job.
Good team player	Indications of how you will fit into the team at this stage are important – providing clear evidence of this on your CV is essential. Display evidence of how your team skills will complement their existing team/department.
Experienced in negotiating	This displays a range of competencies – communication, assertive approach and an awareness of other people's needs. All of which are essential skills.
Excellent time management skills	Time management skill ensures a knowledge and understanding of workloads, getting projects finished on time, meeting deadlines, setting objectives and prioritising.
Ability to plan and organise	Being able to plan and organise yourself and others is a key skill needed by employers. Make sure you back it up with evidence – a clear demonstration of examples where you have had to plan and organise and then brought it to a successful conclusion.

Step 4 – Turning plans into action

Producing a winning CV

You are now at the stage where you can begin to put all of the information from Steps 1 – 3 on paper.

Step 4 provides an opportunity to consider case study examples. Some of these offer examples of good technique while others include examples of poor layout, design and content.

These examples can be used as a guideline for compiling your CV but are in no way exhaustive – they provide suggestions only.

Example of a poor CV

No personal or career profile therefore no statement of skills and qualities to make an impact right from the start

Date of Birth: 6th October 1968
 Place of Birth: Warrington
 Nationality: British

Summary of Qualifications

1980 – 1985 Prescott Comprehensive School, Prescott

- GCSE English Literature
- GCSE English Language
- GCSE Maths
- GCSE Geography
- GCSE German
- GCSE French
- GCSE Biology
- GCSE Art

No need to list qualifications – it takes up space and doesn't list level of achievements

1985 – 1987 Mabel Fletcher Technical College, Wavertree

- BTEC Retail Fashion and Design
- 1990 – 1994 Scoula di Commune, Milan
- Italian Language Skills
- 1993 – 1994 Migro Schule, Zurich
- German Language Skills

No demonstration of key skills or evidence to support your application

1994 – 1995 Knowsley Community College, Huyton, Roby

- Access Humanities
- GCSE Italian
- MOCF Certificate in Basic Counselling Skills
- MOCF French Conversation.

Too much white space – information is crammed into a list approach

1995 – 1998 University of Liverpool, Liverpool.

- BSc (Hons) Psychology (2:1)
- 1998 – Present Liverpool John Moores University
- P. G. C. E (Post 16)

Professional Experience

1987 – 1995 Self-Employed Europe, South Africa, West Indies.

- Language Tutor (English/Italian)
- Translator.
- Promotional Co-ordinator
- Demonstrator.

Not easy on the eye – not written thinking about the client's needs

1995- 1996 J. K. Park Solicitors St Helens, Merseyside

- Client Care Advisor
- 1996 – 1998
- Part-Time Representative. Canon (UK), Liverpool
- Lecturer (Italian). Knowsley Community College, Liverpool

Professional experience says nothing about skills, qualities, roles or responsibilities – no evidence of competencies at all

Additional Information

Full Driving Licence (No Endorsements).

Languages

English/Italian

References

Referees upon request

Hobbies

Theatre/Ballet, Cinema, Eating Out, Travelling, Swimming, Reading, Photography.

Nothing stands out – the selling points are not clear or expressed with the job specification in mind

Marital Status

Single

Information not necessary

Example of a poor CV

PERSONAL DETAILS:

Date of Birth: 21. 1. 54	Marital Status: Married
Driving Licence: Full	

Information not necessary

No skills demonstration

EDUCATION & QUALIFICATIONS:

September 1995 – June 1998	Liverpool University BSc Hons 2.1 (Computer Information Systems)
September 1994 – June 1995	Blackburne House BTEC (Nat Cert Computer Studies – Distinction) RSA – Business Language Competence (French) City & Guilds – Competence in IT
September 1995 – June 1970	Notre Dame Collegiate School, Liverpool GCE in 4 subjects Maths, English, History and Geography

No action words used to help you to stand out

EMPLOYMENT HISTORY

September 1994 – June 1998	Liverpool University – Student
1990 – 1994	(Owner/Manager)
1987 – 1990	Shentons Jewellers – 118 High Street, Tunstall, Stoke on Trent, Staffordshire (Owner/Manager)
1982 – 1987	Parkview Inn Hotel – Hadashville, Manitoba, Canada (Owner/Manager)

Where are the unique selling points?

Again no display of competencies or evidence of skills/experience/qualities

INTERESTS

I enjoy walking, reading, music, films and theatre. I am a member of the British Computer Society.

References missing

Example of a good CV

William Miller

Profile sums up individual and gives clear indication of career aim. It is the first item on the CV and cannot therefore be missed

PERSONAL PROFILE

A hard-working and dependable business graduate with the ability to work well both independently and in a team. I have extensive experience of working with the public which has taught me the value of friendliness, open-mindedness and thinking on my feet. A long-standing interest in finance, IT and management (along with my life experiences) has now given me the confidence and determination to embark on a career in management accountancy.

ACHIEVEMENTS

Range of achievements crossing academic and personal interest areas concise and bullet pointed

- First class honours degree in business and finance
- Short-listed for Graduate of the Year 1998
- Participant on the first youth exchange programme between Britain and Thailand
- Assistant team leader with the Prince's Trust Volunteers
- Travelled the length and breadth of the USA
- Lived and worked across the world (ie Ireland, England, USA and Thailand)

KEY SKILLS

Pick up the essential skills highlighted by the job advert. Very specific and concise, eg. across a range of areas

Team player:

- Member of five project teams in final year (most of which ran simultaneously)
- Member of the news team on Campus Radio 97.4 FM
- Active within the softball club (treasurer and played at inter-varsity level)
- The Prince's Trust twelve-week personal development programme
- International voluntary work in a cross-cultural team of sixteen young people

Co-ordinator:

- Organised work placements and residential week for team members while assistant team leader with the Prince's Trust
- Fundraising and awareness-raising prior to doing VSO exchange programme raising £750 and obtaining radio and newspaper coverage
- Co-organising a residential team weekend with a £1200 budget for the VSO

Communicator:

- Planning and giving presentations while on VSOs international exchange programme
- Dealing with people from all backgrounds and at all levels while I was assistant team leader with the Prince's Trust
- Liaising with members of the community and people high up in the Prince's Trust organisation

Analysis & research:

- Project topics in university included: business strategy, the management of quality, information technology in business, human resource management
- College projects have stimulated my interest in analysing data and information in search of innovative solutions to problems

IT

- Throughout my degree I have studied IT and its effect on organisations – from its use in data processing to its impact on competitive advantage
- Final year project comparing Amazon.com and Waterstones, two companies in the same industry but with very different emphasis on technology

EDUCATION

University College Cork Degree & Grade: Major: Other significant subjects: Accounting, Economics, Corporate Finance, MIS	1992-94 (gap year). 1995 –1998 Bachelor of Commerce (1H) Management	Provides a summary with essential information in but not wasting space listing irrelevant information. Has included links to career aim again by listing other significant subjects
Secondary School Education	1986-1992	
Leaving Certificate/ Matriculation Results (ie university entry exam)	Six Honours including English (B), Mathematics (C), French (C), Business Studies (B), Geography (A), and Home Economics (A)	

WORK HISTORY

International Volunteer for Voluntary Services Overseas (VSO)	April 1999 to October 1999	Summary of work history including titles and durations – may wish to tailor this further to job and cut out non-relevant work history
Volunteer and Assistant Team Leader for the Prince's Trust Volunteers	November 1998 to April 1989	
Book salesman for South Western Company U.K Ltd.	June 1998 to July 1998	
Store associate for Wawa Food Markets in New Jersey, USA	June 1997 to September 1997	
Library assistant for Boole Library U.C.C, Cork City	November 1996 to April 1997	
Current affairs presenter for Campus Radio 97.4 FM, U.C.C	October 1996 to April 1997	
Store assistant for Joe Murphy Ltd, Fermoy, Co Cork	October 1996 to December 1996	
Helper on family farm in Araglin, Kilworth, Co Cork	June 1996 to October 1996	
Fundraiser for Irish Trust for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals, Dublin	June 1995 to September 1995	
Tester/debugger for SCI (Ireland) Ltd, Fermoy, Co Cork	September 1994 to December 1994	

INTERESTS

I enjoy outdoor pursuits, mainly abseiling and rock climbing. I also enjoy going out for meals with friends. I like listening to all types of music: classical, dance and ethnic. Another big interest of mine is community development work in developing countries.

Broad range of interests

REFERENCES

Voluntary Service Overseas 317 Putney Bridge Road London SW15 2PN 2	Dept of Marketing and Management UCC Cork City Republic of Ireland	References included by names taken off – may instead decide to put references, available on request
------------------------------------------------------------------------------	-----------------------------------------------------------------------------	-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------

Date of Birth: 27/07/74;

Nationality: Irish Personal information at the end

Example of a good CV

Jane Hughes

Profile includes many action words and uses language also used in job advert

PROFILE

A proactive and enthusiastic individual with extensive expertise in training and development, proven at both a strategic and operational level. Has boldness and vision to initiate new ideas and implement innovative approaches through strategic direction. Excellent communication and presentation skills underpinned by an enthusiastic and proactive approach.

PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE

1999 – to date

Training and Development Consultant

Training and Development Solutions

Professional experience contains key job roles with key skills undertaken in these roles – bullet-pointed to save space. Employers are in bold with dates included

- Design and delivery of course structure and training material within graduate business and
- Strategic input into organisation development and proposals for European funding
- Design and development of commercial training resource pack in career management skills for both individuals and organisations
- Thorough analysis of market and production of business plan to inform further product development
- Consultancy advice concerning overall marketing function within organisation
- Creative input into the design of interactive game within new website
- Mentoring support for graduates to develop high-level skills in communication, presentation and interview skills

1998 – 1999

Advertising Executive – Recruitment

Royal Navy and Royal Marines, Portsmouth, Hants

- Managed £4 million advertising budget to ensure recruitment targets were met
- Organised, co-ordinated and produced a recruitment advertisement for television. Filmed on location in US and Caribbean
- Provided creative direction for advertising agencies, Young and Rubicam and Saatchi & Saatchi, to develop press advertisements for recruitment
- Strategic analysis of responses to advertising, used as a tracking device to inform future decision-making, budget allocation and to identify trends
- Development of press releases and reports in response to minister's questions and Armed Forces developments
- Co-ordinated a nationwide education initiative involving the Royal Navy, Speedo and schools from across the country focusing on triathlon sports. Organised a full press event to launch the competition

1996 – 1998

Training Manager

North East Museums Service, Newcastle

- Training needs analysis undertaken across ninety-five museums and galleries covering a wide range of skills and competencies within existing staff structures and linked to nationally recognised qualifications. Subsequent production of Training and Development Plan to fulfil learning objectives within each organisation.
- Design and delivery of management training course providing the opportunity for sharing best practice and mentoring for individuals.
- Organised and managed the design and delivery of a training conference in Budapest, Hungary – a six-day intensive training course for museum professionals in management, marketing and business skills.
- Complete business plan and training analysis undertaken for the Ruler of Sharjah, Middle East, across 12 historical sites. Subsequently designed and delivered two training conferences, firstly for museum directors and secondly for all attendant staff
- Organised and managed annual training programme
- Represented organisation at policy level discussions concerning government initiatives on training within the Arts environment
- Production of reports for ministers within Whitehall concerning Training and Development initiatives within the North East

1995 – 1996

Training and Development Consultant

Graduate Into Employment Unit, University of Liverpool

- Design and delivery of training modules for innovative course in Marketing and Business skills for graduates
- Design of project within training course to enhance key skills of graduates and attract commercial interest

1993 – 1995

Lecturer

International Business and Management Centre, Wirral

- Design and delivery of modules within GNVQ and BA syllabus in marketing and business skills
- Development of key skills and competencies for each student through skills analysis and mentoring

EDUCATION AND TRAINING

1993 – 1994

International Business and Management Centre, Wirral

Chartered Institute of Marketing Diploma – part qualified.
Included Marketing Communications and Planning Strategy

Summary of education –
focus on professional
examinations

1989 – 1993

University of Teesside, Middlesbrough

BA (Hons) Public Administration and Management – Upper Second Class
Majored in Marketing, NHS Management, European Politics

1988 – 1989

Wirral Metropolitan College, Wirral

A Levels – Three subjects – English Literature, Politics, General Studies

1982 – 1988

Plessington High School, Wirral

GCSE – Six subjects – including English and Mathematics
CSE – Four subjects

INTERESTS AND ACTIVITIES

Keen interest in photography and film-making. Currently renovating and redecorating my house.
Member of local gymnasium.

PERSONAL INFORMATION

Date of birth: 18 November 1969
Full clean driving licence

REFERENCES

Available on request

JANE HUGHES, 228 RINGWOOD PRENTON CH43 2LY

TELEPHONE 01234567890

Structuring your CV

Putting the theory into practice – this structure could be used to create your own winning CV.

Remember – this is just suggested as one example.

Name - big and bold

Address on one line including postcode

Tel:

e-mail: if relevant

DOB:

CAREER PROFILE/PERSONAL PROFILE

A brief, businesslike description of you, eg main areas of experience, relevant key skills and personal characteristics followed by the area of work you are interested in – tailored to the employer.

KEY SKILLS

This documents your main skills relevant to the job you are interested in, eg:

- Excellent presentational skills gained by 10 years in a sales and marketing role
- Interviewing skills – have recruited over 50 new staff during the last two years
- IT literate – proficient in Microsoft Office packages

It can either be a list of key skills or under each of the job roles you have held – eg, see examples of CVs.

EMPLOYMENT HISTORY

Dates

Job title

company

Brief description of what you did, eg the main duties of the role, or bullet point any specific skills developed or achievements gained that have not been mentioned in the key skills section.

-
-

List jobs in reverse chronological order, give more space to the most recent job. **BE RUTHLESS** – briefly state the last two or three jobs. Any jobs before this or jobs without relevance to the one which you are currently applying for could be merged together, eg;

1977 – 1989

Administration work

General administration work with a number of Merseyside organisations.

Your work experience could take up a major part of your CV. However, this will depend on how much work you have had and its relevance to the position you are attempting to gain – you may need to prioritise.

PROFESSIONAL QUALIFICATIONS

Membership of professional bodies and any qualifications obtained

Dates

Expand on modules that are relevant

EDUCATION & QUALIFICATIONS

Dates

University/College attended

Degree/HND course

(Class/grade)

Dates

A Levels/BTEC grades achieved (if lower than D, leave off)

GCSEs, eg 9 grade C and above inc. Maths and English

INTERESTS AND ACHIEVEMENTS/RESPONSIBILITIES

This section is important as it shows that you may have developed other skills/qualities from things such as:

- Sport/team activities – such as Duke of Edinburgh Awards
- Membership of charity/interest group and related responsibilities
- Member of church/welfare group/scouting or voluntary work – what do you do and how has it helped you to develop, what responsibilities have you held?
- Social activities – Hill walking, organising events at University etc
- Travel – where have you been and what skills did you develop?
- Artistic activities – do you create anything in your spare time?

REFERENCES AVAILABLE ON REQUEST

– This allows you to decide who you want to contact for specific jobs so they can tailor your reference.

Developing the structure

Profiles

A profile is designed to provide the reader with concise information about why you are suitable for this particular position. It gives them a quick snapshot of you at the start. There are a number of different profiles you may decide to use:

Personal profile

This is a brief businesslike description of you and your personal qualities, experience skills and strengths, eg 'Bilingual postgraduate, who is hardworking, self-motivated and responsible with an outgoing personality. Enjoys meeting new challenges and seeing them through to completion whilst remaining calm and good-humoured under pressure.'

Career profile

You may want to focus your attention on your career so far rather than looking too much at your personal characteristics, eg, 'A trained sales professional with experience in sales management, specifically business-to-business negotiations. I have a proven track record in business systems, office supplies and business mechanics.'

Career objective

This focuses on what you are looking for, and can be used on its own or combined with a personal profile, eg 'An engineering graduate with a keen interest in computers, seeking to utilise IT skills within a scientific or industrial field, where a background in problem-solving is essential.'

Hints and tips

PROFILE COULD INCLUDE:

- What you do/have done (degree or job)
- Key strengths
- Background experience in.....
- What are you aiming for – how would you like to use your skills?

CV prompt list – use of language

The use of language can affect a CV considerably. Use positive/action words to make a favourable impression on the potential employer.

Achieved	Engineered	Productive
Administered	Established	Proficient
Analysed	Expanded	Profitable
Built	Experienced	Qualified
Capable	Guided	Repaired
Competent	Implemented	Resourceful
Consistent	Improved	Sold
Controlled	Initiated	Specialised
Co-ordinated	Led	Stable
Created	Managed	Successful
Designed	Monitored	Supervised
Developed	Organised	Trained
Directed	Participated	Versatile
Economical	Positive	Wide background
Efficient	Processed	

Covering letters

Covering letters are often underestimated as a key selling tool when applying for a job. They are, however, just as important as your CV and provide a further opportunity for you to sell yourself and reinforce your evidence by creating a favourable impression.

Guidelines for covering letters:

- Only use A4 paper – anything else looks unprofessional
- Use the form of address stated in the advert, eg Miss/Mrs. If the advert asks you to reply to Susan Jones or Alan Smith, start your letter 'Dear Susan' or 'Dear Alan ...' and address the envelope 'Susan Jones' or 'Alan Smith'. If you don't know the status of a woman, then you can use 'Ms'. If the advert asks you to reply to Mrs or Miss Jones, **do not** address her as Ms.
- Always type/word process a covering letter unless specifically asked for hand-written
- Type or write on one side only – business letters never use the reverse of page
- If you must handwrite, then make certain that your writing is legible and in straight lines
- Beg or borrow some thick, good quality paper. Paper weight should be 90 – 100 gm. Most photocopier paper (eg this handout) is too thin at 80 gm. Students' union shops usually sell good quality paper in small amounts
- Pick out of the job advertisement any key requirements and give evidence in your letter as to how you have obtained these
- Mention two or three transferable skills that you have, say why they will benefit the employer and how you developed them
- Tell the employer what contribution you can make to the team/role/department/ company
- Sound positive – you should aim to get the employer interested enough to want to meet you
- Keep the letter to one side of A4 only
- You can repeat information which is in your CV – it serves to emphasise your point but keep it concise
- Consider cross-referencing your letter to relevant detail in your CV
- Give some thought to the spacing of your letter – how it looks. Do not leave large areas of white space or squeeze up the last few lines
- Use business-sized envelopes in white or a colour to match your paper
- The correct way to write an address on an envelope is to start halfway down and one third of the way across
- Use first-class mail
- If you do not use a postcode, your letter will need to have the code manually put onto your envelope (a series of tiny dots which is processed in the sorting office by an optical reader) and it is almost certain that the letter will be delayed

KEY INGREDIENTS FOR SUCCESS

- | | | | |
|----|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| DO | Address it to the correct person | DON'T | Start the letter with Dear Sir/Madam if you have been asked to address it to a named person |
| DO | If you have contacted that person directly, start with a personal approach – further to our recent telephone conversation | DON'T | Address it to the wrong person, wrong title or wrong department check details for return |
| DO | Ensure that you use your covering letter as a further opportunity to support your CV | DON'T | Just put a single line 'please find enclosed my CV' – sell yourself! |
| DO | Display background research (remember preparation in Stage 1) | DON'T | Simply fire it off without any focus |
| DO | Show interest in the position – use active lively language | DON'T | Send it off with any spelling or grammar mistakes – remember this may be the first thing they see |
| DO | Make it as tailored as you can – demonstrate your keenness to gain employment | DON'T | Underestimate the impact a good covering letter will have |
| DO | Use a professional business layout | | |

Example of a covering letter

Contact address

Date

Dear

With reference to your advert for a Training and Development Co-ordinator, I would like to confirm my interest in the position and have enclosed my CV for your perusal.

After reading your advert, visiting your website and carrying out research on your organisation, I believe that there are a number of areas in which my skills and experience may be of benefit to you. Achievements of particular relevance include:

- Designing a training needs analysis to be used in a local Merseyside company (180 staff). Focus groups involvement will be incorporated before the final report is created
- Currently managing a pilot project run jointly with MTEC, which is focused on putting graduates into liP-related placements. This involves working with companies, liP advisers and graduates
- Responsible for driving my company forward in order to achieve liP accreditation
- Carrying out company visits and delivering presentations to clients on the products and services that the unit has to offer. This aspect of my role is currently increasing
- Interviewing every candidate that joins the recruitment service and dealing with companies to match their requirements. I am responsible for the whole recruitment process from following up the initial lead, matching CVs, organising interviews to giving feedback to candidates

All of my experience within my present organisation has required great flexibility as I am working on a number of projects at any one time. I have developed excellent communication skills and the ability to motivate and encourage people, especially when working with unemployed individuals through this experience.

I would be happy to discuss the Training and Development Co-ordinator position further and look forward to hearing from you.

Yours sincerely

Sally Pearson

Training & Development Officer

Enc

Stage Five – Review and improvement - Gaining feedback

By Step 5 you should now have an updated CV – however, the hard work doesn't stop here. Remember that your CV is a working resource to be used as part of the career management process.

It does not remain static so you may also want to revisit some of the different stages and continue to improve your CV as time goes on. For example you may want to seek feedback from colleagues, friends etc on how your CV looks now – has it improved, is it different and in what ways?


Remember, your CV is a means to an end.....not the end itself.

Final checklist – before you send out your CV

- How does it look – is it well presented and clearly laid out?
- Is it tailored to each and every job – have you referenced it to the original advert and person/job specification?
Steps 1 + 3
- Are your skills and competencies set out and evidenced – if not refer back to Step 2?
- Is it on good quality paper without spelling or grammatical mistakes?
- Do your unique selling points stand out? Ensure they are not lost in detail
- Is it prioritised to bring the most relevant information to the front?
- Have you used action words to strengthen your skills?
- Does your covering letter complement your CV?
- Have you acted on feedback?
- Remember to keep your CV up to date to boost your chances of success

Notes

Notes



For further copies or information contact:
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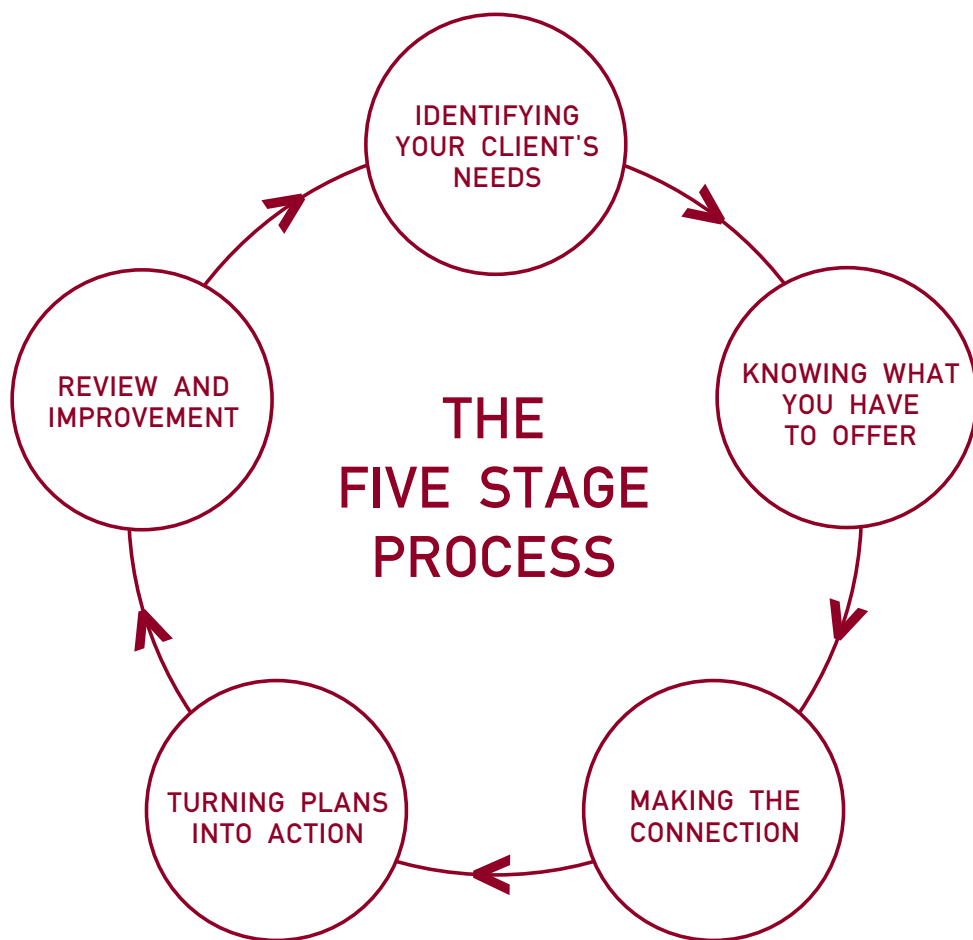
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THE WINDmills programme

career tactics for the 21st century

MAKING A SUCCESS OF INTERVIEWS

Resource 14.2



Making a success of interviews

Seeing everybody as a client, not an employer, and promoting the benefits you can bring to them is vital.

There are a number of steps that can help you:

Step 1 – Preparation: Where to start

An interview situation is an opportunity for you to identify yourself clearly as the best candidate for the job.

Your prospective client (employer) has already seen evidence of your competencies within your CV – the challenge now is to really set yourself apart from the other candidates.

Spending time and effort before the interview in preparation provides the following benefits – Five good reasons to take action:

- Firstly it creates a good impression. When you have prepared well it shows you are serious and have a commitment to the company and the position you are being interviewed for
- Being well prepared will help to boost your confidence and provides you with the opportunity to sell yourself in the best way possible
- It displays enthusiasm and proactivity
- You will be better prepared to deal with difficult or unexpected questions
- Finally, if you have prepared well and don't get the position you want, at least you know you have put in 100% effort – crucial for reviewing your performance constructively.

The reasons why you should prepare are fairly self-explanatory – but exactly what you should prepare can sometimes come as a surprise. Just how much preparation you undertake is entirely up to each individual, but putting time and effort into preparing for interview at this stage will help differentiate you from other candidates and boost your confidence.

And remember that an interview is a two-way process – taking time to consider the position also helps you to find out if this really is the job for you.

The following checklist will provide you with guidance on the range of things you should prepare, all of which are essential in creating the foundations for a successful interview.

Have you created the foundations for success?

THE POSITION	THE PERSON	THE COMPANY	YOU
Start with the original advertisement. What does it say about the company/role?	Look closely at the person specification – could you see yourself as this person?	Where are they located – are they a new company?	Know what you have to offer – what is going to set you apart from other candidates?
What type of person are they looking for? (check the words used to describe that person)	What range of skills are they looking for? Are they categorised into ESSENTIAL (skills you most have) and DESIRABLE (consider skills they would like you to have)	Are they a large/small/medium size organisation? – think of the pros/cons of this	Refer to your skills portfolio and cross-reference it with the skills list created from the person specification. Are there any gaps that you may be challenged on – how well do you fit the description?
How much experience is needed – do you fit these criteria?	Consider the objectives of the position ie – what is it you are expected to achieve?	Have they recently made any changes, eg new markets, expansion, new organisational structure? – make notes if they have	Make a list of potential questions they may ask about – Yourself – Your past experience – Your ability to do the job – Their organisation – Your future career plans
What is the job title – how does it compare to other jobs with that title?	Are you operating as part of a team or alone?	Who are their competitors?	Get a friend to help you compile the questions they may ask (getting a different perspective can sometimes help to challenge your answers).
What type of environment will you be working in – is this different from the one you are in now?	What knowledge and expertise is required? Are you being realistic and positive about your skills and expertise?	Study the company literature – what does it say about them, what language is used?	Compile answers to those questions

Creating the foundations

THE POSITION	THE PERSON	THE COMPANY	YOU
What type of role will you play – is there the chance of increased responsibility?	Will you have responsibility for other staff – what are the implications of this?	Read any current articles relevant to the company – make notes	Prepare questions that you may want to know about: – The position – The company Think also of questions that will create a rapport with the interviewer
Think about what attracted you to this job – what interests you	Consider the person specification – what type of person do you think they are looking for? Looking at it from this perspective will help you to answer questions more effectively and make it client-centred	Visit the company website for up-to-date information or even a company newsletter	Consider your motivations and barriers, strengths and weaknesses and how can you build on one and work on the other
What salary range do you expect?	Research other positions in this salary range – what responsibilities are expected – does the role compare?	Try and identify someone within the organisation who you could contact for further information	Look back at your own progression – how far have you developed and why
Looking towards the future, think about how you can see this role developing	What other opportunities can you identify for the future?	Is the organisation developing – does the role have scope?	Consider your own personal development – where do you see yourself in three to five years time?

Question preparation

One of the most nerve-racking elements of an interview situation is not knowing what questions you are going to be asked on the day. This fear of the unknown throws most of us into a complete panic.

One sure way to overcome this fear is to anticipate and prepare questions which may be asked.

Again, you need to think from the client's angle to ensure that the answers you give are tailored to them and they are convinced you are the best candidate for the job.

Within this section on preparation we have included twenty of the toughest questions you could be asked in interview, together with an explanation of what the employer is looking for in asking the question. Once you determine what this is and have thought about your response your confidence will grow as you are more able to answer proficiently and confidently.

Questions

Tell me about yourself

Employers are looking for a quick snapshot of you (both your background and your personality) and how well you sell yourself and your capabilities. Don't ramble on – be concise but make sure you get the main points in.

Why did you apply for the job?

This looks at your levels of motivation and commitment. Make sure you research thoroughly what the job entails. State the benefits you can offer them, and then what they can provide for you. Say why you want this job – not why you are leaving your present one.

Tell me what you do in your spare time

This has a double purpose. To make sure you have a rounded lifestyle – and to ensure your interests won't interfere with your job. Go over your outside interests quickly, highlighting any job relevance and outlining the skills you have developed through them. The employer will be trying to establish whether the type of satisfaction these activities give you can be provided by some elements of the job – thus ensuring job motivation.

When have you been involved in teams?

Employers want a team player – so give examples of your role within teams (eg, creative, promoter, developer, organiser, producer, inspector, maintainer, adviser).

Underline what you learned and how it has made you more effective in a team. Link your answers directly to the job you're after – check if they're looking for a creative, resourceful team member, a detail-orientated person who will see tasks through or a positive team leader. They may ask about conflict in teams so be prepared with an example where you handled the conflict well and the team still operated effectively.

What are your main strengths and weaknesses?

This revolves around self-awareness. Again, link your strengths to the particular job. Employers want someone who knows what they are good at and where they need to improve. Everybody has weaknesses but employers want to know what you are doing to improve. Choose allowable weaknesses and turn them into strengths, eg, 'I'm a bit of a perfectionist, - but that's good for quality'. 'My financial skills aren't as sharp as I'd like – but I'm attending a bookkeeping night class'.

Why should we employ you?

Which of your skills or your experiences could add value to the company? Make brief but telling comparisons between the job description and your ability to meet their needs. State briefly what you can offer and back up anything you say with facts.

What has been your biggest achievement?

This reveals what motivates you and what matters to you (family, work, education or leisure?) Choose something that makes you stand out and involves positive characteristics, eg, you developed determination, strength of character.

What have you learned from your past work experiences?

This focuses on skills developed in previous jobs (vacation, part-time, full-time). Think about those jobs. Did you have any responsibility? Pull out the positive elements and focus on benefits to the employer.

When did you last work under pressure or deal with conflict – and how did you cope?

This is aimed at discovering if you can deal with problems quickly and efficiently – and confront a situation if you become frustrated.

The best technique is to think of an example and explain how the situation arose – then say how you dealt with it. If asked directly if anything made you annoyed or frustrated, be truthful but avoid appearing negative.

What is the biggest problem/dilemma you have ever faced?

Try to choose something that will show you in a positive light and that you are prepared to discuss at interview. How did you get over it? What did you learn? This will not only show how you cope under stress but also your decision-making ability and strength of character.

What other career opportunities are you looking at?

This will illustrate how well you have researched, planned and thought through your chosen career area. It will also show an employer how much you really want the job.

If you just list a long series of unrelated career options, it will cast doubt on your motivation. If you're doing nothing it indicates a narrow perspective and lack of forward thinking.

Where would you like to be in five or ten years time?

Again, if you have a clear idea, it will show your commitment and vision. If you do have some insight into where you are heading, think of some of the functions and responsibilities you would hope to have.

When have you had to?

Employers want real-life evidence that clearly demonstrates you have particular skills. Draw up a list of key skills required for the position (found by dissecting the job ad, job description and person specification) and highlight at least two situations or achievements that prove you have each skill. Practise talking through each example and present a concise, hard-hitting case. Avoid waffle and keep it sharp.

What would you do in... situation?

Hypothetical questions are used to test your overall style and approach. Carefully prepare by listing all the roles you'll potentially undertake in the new position and think up awkward questions yourself.

So sell me this product

Role-play questions really make you think on your feet. Once again, do your homework. Be prepared to demonstrate your skills in action.

What salary do you expect?

Work out a salary range you consider reasonable – job ads in the national and local press will give you an idea. Don't undersell (or oversell) yourself. Give a range to indicate you're prepared to negotiate.

How competent are you at ...?

Many employers now like to assess candidates using scoring grids within a work-based framework. This makes it important to quote practical examples showing your level of competence.

Are you pregnant/gay/etc?

Yes it's an outrageous question – but always be on the alert for it. It may be designed to shock you and assess your reactions. It may equally reflect the fact that some employers lack formal training in interview techniques and fall back on crude stereotypes. Whatever the reason, it's vital not to lose your cool – just write it off to ignorance.

You haven't been much of a success so far, have you?

The aggressive approach may also throw you. The reasons could be the same but this time it is more likely to be a deliberate attempt to unnerve you. Again, keep your composure – it's probably the reaction they are looking for.

Do you have any questions?

Always expect this one – so prepare a list. Include a few probing questions to show you've done your research. Don't be afraid to write them down and take them to the interview with you. You'll find some suggestions below:

Suggested interview questions for the applicant

How has the job vacancy arisen?

Allows you to find out more about any organisational changes and the people you may be working with.

How will my performance be measured?

Allows you to set personal targets and to assess company standards. It also lets you know exactly what is expected of you.

Who would I be working closely with?

You get a better idea of team dynamics and potentially the size and range of teams in the company.

What are the key things I would be doing within the first six months?

Again you will show an interest in the range of projects that will be your responsibility. It also can give an indication of your awareness of project management and prioritising.

What would my future career prospects be like?

Showing commitment towards staying with the company and an interest in the potential of furthering your career and personal development with the company.

What training could I expect to get?

Showing interest in training and development again displays enthusiasm for the position and how you could further develop in that role.

What happens next? When will you be able to let me know your decision?

It is important for you to know when you will be notified.

When to talk about salary?

Use your judgement here – never bring the subject up too soon. Your main priority is to promote yourself as the most suitable candidate in order to place you in a strong negotiating position. But be clear in your mind what you really want in terms of money/package as well as experience.

Questions you ask are another opportunity to create a rapport with the interviewer showing some interest and enthusiasm. Don't forget: It is still important for you to add to these for each particular position and anticipate questions specifically related to:

- Yourself/skills/experience
- The company
- The position
- The person specification

Seeking feedback

At the end of the interview seek permission (in a positive way) to ask for feedback at a later date. This provides you with a valuable 'hook' for future contact and ensures you leave the door open even if you're rejected.

Mock interviews

At this stage you may also want to put your preparation to the test. Find a friend/colleague who would be happy to take you through a mock interview situation. Make sure you choose someone who is comfortable with this process and who can provide you with constructive and objective feedback.

Taking yourself through a mock interview at this stage provides the following benefits:

- An opportunity to test your preparation up to this point
- An opportunity to face any personal barriers in a non-threatening interview situation
- Use of the review sheet lets you gain valuable feedback on your personal performance, answers and overall approach

If you need more practice, or require a range of perspectives on your performance, this process can be repeated with different people. However, preparing for a mock interview does take time, so plan well in advance. Also remember to treat it like the real thing – and act positively on the feedback given.

Mock interview review sheet

	YES	NO
Did I appear to be confident?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Did I build rapport with the interviewer? If so, how...	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Was my body language positive?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Did I exhibit any nervous traits?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Did I maintain eye contact?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Were my answers concise and to the point?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Did I manage to discuss a broad range of skills/competencies?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Did I back these up with relevant examples?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Was I professional in my overall approach?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Are there any areas for development?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Stage 2 – Checking your balance of skills

For each interview check your list of skills and ensure you take a client-centred approach, tailoring your skills and experience to those required by the employer for the position.

Remember to continually improve your skills portfolio by:

- Taking a close look at your list of skills and achievements – start to think about how they match what the client is looking for
- Thinking about your balance of skills – are there any areas needing development?
- Asking if you are well enough prepared to be able to sell those skills effectively at interview
- Re-checking your balance of skills – is it right for you/your client or do areas need developing?
- Referring back to your preparations stage – have you prepared enough to be able to sell these skills effectively at interview?

Stage 3 – Making the connection

This is where the depth of your preparation in Steps 1 and 2 is really challenged. Step 3 is about selling the benefits and making sure that each answer within the interview can be backed up with:

- Depth of evidence of the skills and qualities displayed
- Breadth evidence (one or two examples) of situations when you have had to use those skills

Becoming client-focused

Considering the employer as your client and not the other way round can be the crucial link to gaining success in interview. Moving to this client perspective you will be more able to promote the benefits you can bring to them. You need to make sure you tailor your analysis of evidence to their requirements and not your own.

Remember to:

- Ask yourself exactly what they are looking for (refer back to the preparation stage and check job description, advert, company literature etc)
- Put yourself in the shoes of the client – how are you going to demonstrate clearly that you are the best candidate – exactly what is going to set you apart?, What are your unique selling points?
- Check that your answers (from Step 1 and mock interview) are focused and clearly demonstrate:
 - Your skills/qualities/experience
 - The benefits they offer the client/organisation
- Look at your research on the company again – is it in-depth enough, is it up-to-date and current?

This client-centred approach lets you take time out before the interview to double-check that your preparation has been focused on the needs of the client and not just your needs.

Stage 4 – Practical application

The interview

Marketing and selling ourselves rarely comes naturally, and for many of us an interview situation can generate anxiety and feelings of stress.

Putting time and effort into your preparation will have already removed some of this stress by boosting your confidence and reassuring you that you know what your client wants and what you have to offer.

There are other practical techniques that can help too.

Tips for reducing stress and anxiety:

Nerves affect people in different ways in interviews. They can affect the way we communicate, how we present ourselves and even our thought patterns. Typical symptoms are:

- Dry mouth
- Stumbling over words
- Hot flushes
- Sweating
- Mind goes blank
- Lose the thread of answers
- Feel over-emotional
- Difficult to maintain eye contact
- Shaking
- Nervous twiddling (with hair or clothes)

Ways of dealing with this include:

PREPARE – Feeling confident in your research and the depth to which you know yourself, the position and the company, to boost your performance.

ORGANISE – Lack of organisation is also a major cause of anxiety. Make sure you check:

- Time and place of the interview
- Any information you need to take with you
- Car park facilities (do you need change?)
- Your route by road or train times
- Allow time for unforeseen delays

VISUALISE – Yourself walking into the room, introducing yourself and delivering questions in the interview with confidence. Mentally rehearse this sequence, it will help you to remain positive and help you focus on what you need to be successful.

PRACTICE – You will have already taken the opportunity to go through a mock interview situation – review how this went. What were your areas for improvement? Repeat this as often as needed.

BREATHE – When you feel nervous, you may not be breathing deeply enough. Make sure you sit up straight, but relaxed and inhale deeply a number of times.

RELEASE TENSION – Unreleased energy may cause hands and legs to shake. Before standing up to give a presentation, it is good idea to try to release some of the pent-up exercise by doing simple, unobtrusive muscle (isometric) exercises.

PREPARE WHAT YOU WILL WEAR – Make sure you are appropriately dressed and feel comfortable in what you are wearing (plan this in advance).

Making an impact

Remember always to think of the interviewer as the client. Throughout Steps 1 to 3 we have looked at making yourself stand out. This can be further enhanced by:

- Looking positive as you greet the interviewer/s (firm handshake, direct eye contact and smile!)
- Acting and appearing professional from the first minute – remember that first impressions count. This will boost your confidence throughout
- Being confident and concise with your answers (this is when all the preparation pays off)
- Leaving the interview with the same professionalism as you entered

Stage 5 – Review and improvement

Gaining feedback

Whether you are successful or not, it is crucial to learn from experience. Knowing what you did right is just as important as knowing what you didn't. Follow up the interview and:

- Ask for specific feedback if you were unsuccessful – have questions in mind
- Ask to be kept on file (other vacancies may occur)
- Consider whether you really wanted the job (if so, apply again if another position comes up)
- Be realistic about your own performance. What did you do well/what could you have done better?
- If some areas need developing go back to the preparation step and put together a plan of action
- Don't be too negative about yourself – use it as a learning experience for next time

Whether you have been successful or not, go back to your list of skills and achievements and reflect on how much you have achieved so far.

Reflecting and taking time to assess your performance after interview is an essential part of managing your career and will enable you to learn and keep on moving forward through the career management cycle. Successful or not, there will be learning outcomes and areas for improvement after every interview.

There's nothing more certain in a successful career than being rejected. The people who get rejected the most are those who are the most proactive. They usually develop to become successful on the basis of this. But rejection can leave you with low confidence, self-esteem and motivation. That's why it is vital to take stock of the situation and rebuild your confidence. This will help you to:

- Improve your self-image
- Help you deal positively with rejection
- Encourage others to believe in you and your abilities
- Let you move forward and provide you with areas for development

The following 'morale boosters' may help you to maintain your confidence and keep yourself going.

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10 top morale boosters

You really can boost your self-esteem and self-confidence if you follow a few simple rules:

- 1 List the achievements you're proud of and collect evidence of success, such as awards, certificates, letters and commendations.
- 2 Seek feedback. Add to this list by asking friends, family and colleagues to each name five positive things about you. Yes, it sounds embarrassing, but you'll be surprised at the good things you can learn about yourself – valuable qualities you probably never knew you had. Once you recognise these, you can start to use them to help you. Also, ask people for constructive comments on areas you need to develop. But never take criticism personally.
- 3 Update your list of achievements and positive points regularly and refer to it frequently. This reinforces the good feelings about yourself. Keep a diary of positive events in your life.
- 4 Create positive pictures of your world and the part you play in it. Avoid negative or cynical imagery. You'll build confidence if you exercise your best skills.
- 5 Put things in perspective. Volunteer to support an individual or group who need to cope with far greater challenges than yourself. Also remember that many of the people who appear loud and self-confident on the surface are often quite fragile underneath.
- 6 Step beyond your comfort zone and try new things – anything from a new activity to talking to new people. There's no need to take huge risks – a number of small ones is just as effective (eg, give small presentations).
- 7 Hang out with positive people. Build your own support network (see Tactic 6 in **The Art of Building Windmills**) and avoid negative people – they only drag you down to their level.
- 8 Learn from other confident people and invest in a self-development book or course. Recognise that everyone has problems with self-confidence.
- 9 Understand why you are rejected. A job may have been earmarked for an internal candidate. You could be overqualified, not quite the right personality, or someone else has 10 years more experience. Accept that by selecting you for interview, employers have already recognised that your skills and qualities are suitable for the position. It's probably just a matter of time and persistence before you find the right opportunity.
- 10 Accept rejection – it happens to us all and is not that unusual. Learn to accept critical feedback and improve on whatever let you down.

Interviews – your next move

Now that you have assured your performance make a note of:

- Your successes
- Things you might have done better


Then put together personal action points to help maintain your approach and sustain a positive attitude towards your career.

Finally Your Interview Checklist

- | | | | |
|-----------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| DO | Research into the organisation beforehand | DON'T | Arrive late or unprepared for the interview |
| DO | Act and appear professional from the first minute – first impressions count | DON'T | Act too laid back and personal (although the odd bit of humanity always helps) |
| DO | Adapt your skills as closely to the company's needs as possible | DON'T | Waffle, wander or focus on your needs at the expense of the company |
| DO | Sell your achievements and benefits you can bring | DON'T | Appear too cocky, undersell yourself, talk quickly or mumble |
| DO | Keep positive, friendly, polite and confident and project your enthusiasm for the job | DON'T | Look unmotivated and bored |
| DO | Listen to why the question is being asked | DON'T | Jump in before the question has been completed |
| DO | Bring support information and list of key questions to ask | DON'T | Undersell yourself by not providing back-up information |
| DO | Ask questions that show you've done your background homework | DON'T | Forget to ask some positive questions yourself – it's a two-way process |
| DO | Seek feedback on your performance and keep doors open if unsuccessful | DON'T | Take rejection personally and end on a sour note |
| DO | Learn from each experience | | |

Notes

Notes



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