

HtR Outplacement Services



Job Seekers Guide

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Table of Contents

	Page
CV Techniques	1
Achievements	2
Buzz Words	3
Overview of your Role and Company	4
Key Skill Statements / Profile	4
Biographical or Functional CV?	5
Tailor your CV	5
Example Biographical CV	7
Functional CVs	9
Example Functional CV	10
Phrases and Words for CVs	12
Where should you look for a Job?	13
Job Centre Plus	13
Press and Trade Magazine advertisements	13
Recruitment Agencies	14
Internet	16
E-Mail	16
Job Boards and 'Jobs by e-mail'	17
Identifying Job Sites	18
Job Crawlers / Job Spiders	18
Main UK Job Boards	19

Industry Specific Job Boards	19
Company Websites	20
CV Mailing Sites.....	20
On-line CV Databases	20
Main CV Databases	22
Identity Fraud Protection.....	23
Stopping your Employer finding your CV	23
CV Database Multiple Profiles	23
Networking.....	24
Speculative Approaches	24
Linked In and Xing.com	26
How to Write a Speculative Letter / e-mail.....	27
Speculative Letter Example	28
Speculative E-mail Example	29
Direct 'Walk-in' approaches	30
Application Covering Letters / e-mails	30
Application Forms / S.T.A.R. Technique.....	31
Following up Applications	32
Track and Record your approaches	32
Mobile Phone.....	33
Online Profile	33
Interview Preparation/Typical Questions	34
Overview	34
Most Common reasons people don't get a Job	34
Logistics / What to Wear.....	35

Company Research.....	35
Preparing for Interview Questions	36
Predicting Skill & Experience Questions / Competency Identification (Mind Mapping™ Technique)	36
Post Room Example	37
Relating Skills and Experience to Questions	40
Handling Interview Questions	40
Common Interview Questions.....	41
Questions an Interviewer cannot ask.....	55
Telephone Interviews	56
Second Interviews	57
Meeting the Managing Director.....	57
Panel Interviews / More than one Interviewer.....	58
Interviewer Styles	58
Value Based Interviews	61
Mental Preparation before an Interview	62
The Interview Day.....	62
The Interview	62
Questions to ask.....	63
Have your own Interview Agenda	64
The Interview Close	65
Tours of the Building.....	66
Psychometric Testing	66
Assessment Centres	67
Disclaimer	68



CV Techniques

Part of the support we provide is to assist you in writing a CV that really highlights your skills.

Before you write a CV it is important to realise that in the modern world a CV needs to be tailored to the job you are applying for.

When I was a lad...local papers carried adverts, your application was via the post and maybe one of 30 CV's that arrived. Now your CV is one of potentially several hundred that arrives via e-mail.

So it is critical that you tailor your CV for each and every application to highlight exactly why you match the job...

Also – Remember that when opening your CV on a computer...the top half of the CV is your 'Shop Window'

Some of the key considerations when writing a CV are as follows:

- Length – Not too long, ideally 2 pages, 3 to 4 pages at most
- Detail – not only where you have worked but also your achievements
- Easy to Read – easy for someone to read and logical in its layout, most recent employer first if writing a biographical CV
- Buzz Words – include all the appropriate 'buzz words' to describe your skills and experience (very important to be found on CV databases)
- Format – use Microsoft Word (.doc) as Firewalls often block 'html', PDF or other advanced formats. *If you have Word 2007 save your CV in the 97-2003 compatible format, to read '.docx' files that Word 2007 produces you need to download converters which most companies stop.*
- Tables – Do not use tables within your document as these can be distorted when opened on different versions of Word.
- Font – Use a normal type face such as Arial or Times Roman, and in a font size that can easily be read when printed.
- Layout – Ensure it is easy to read, large blocks of text can be a turn off to the reader. Bullet points, if used well, can make it easy to scan read
- Jargon – If you use abbreviations/jargon that is specific to your role ensure they are explained.
- Third Party – Write in the third party, i.e. as if someone was writing about you
- **Most Importantly** – Be tailored to individual applications. You may need to produce several master versions, each highlighting specific skills. These must then be tailored to the role applied for (see Page 36 and the 'Mind Mapping' technique that help highlight key skill areas).

Achievements

Most people, when they compile a CV, will merely list their roles, duties and responsibilities. Employers these days want to know much more about what an individual has achieved in previous roles, so another way to look at your achievements is to think about what your 'output' was in the role.

For example:

A Refuse Collector (Bin Man) empties bins. Does he have achievements?

Yes – He works to targets and tight deadlines, and by emptying X number of bins in a shift, he has achieved his target and deadlines. In addition he has, at times, to deal with difficult members of the public in a sympathetic manner – another achievement. He has to be a team player and get on with the rest of the crew.

So, start writing your CV by listing your Employers, Job Titles, and Dates, leaving plenty of space between jobs. List under each not only your responsibilities and duties, focusing upon 6 month periods of time, remember experience you gained 3 years ago may be highly relevant to a new role, so don't just focus upon the present.

Next, try and identify your 'output' or achievements in the roles, also things you are proud of. Make sure you identify both large and small scale achievements to demonstrate depth and breadth of experience.

To demonstrate the difference that this approach can make to your CV, below is a list of responsibilities and duties, followed by a more comprehensive list of achievements and responsibilities:

Before:

Duties include:

- Managing a team of 3 customer services staff
- Processing sales orders
- Dealing with telephone enquiries
- Liaising with the warehouse
- Handling petty cash
- Opening up at weekends

After – Now we focus on the 'output' and highlight achievements:

Achievements include:

- Performance managing a team of 3 customer service staff ensuring they achieved weekly and daily performance targets
- Processing sales orders within tight deadlines and with a 100% accuracy
- Dealing with telephone enquires in a polite and efficient manner, whilst delivering a high level of customer service



- Liaising with the warehouse to ensure orders were despatched to customers within agreed deadlines and timeframes

Responsibilities include:

- Handling petty cash
- Opening up at weekends

Don't fall into the trap of trying to make every element of your role into an achievement, as you will see above, handling petty cash and opening up can just be responsibilities.

The structure above works well for a Biographical CV as it not only highlights the achievements in a specific role, but also includes responsibilities.

Remember when writing an achievement to highlight the output or benefit first:
 NOT – Introduced a number of changes throughresulting in 10K of savings
 BUT – Saved 10K by introducing...

Figures are also important on your CV as a means of identifying the level you are capable of operating at, so remember to include the 'numbers' such as the size of the budget, number of staff managed, project value, cost reduction of....

'Buzz' words

Often the person screening your CV is inexperienced and looks for the 'buzz' words, phrases, or job titles that describe your skills. It is therefore important to incorporate the appropriate phrases for your role and not just assume that the reader will understand exactly what you did in a position. So include as many 'buzz' words as appropriate, but ensure they are used in such a way as to retain overall readability of the CV.

If you intend using the online CV databases, getting these phrases into your CV along with other variations of your job title is imperative. When trawling the CV databases, employers and recruiters will search for specific phrases and job titles to select CVs for subsequent review.

For example a 'Programmer' could be known also as a 'Software Developer' or 'Software Engineer'. If these additional phrases are not on your CV and the recruiter searches for a 'Software Developer' you will not appear in the search results.

'Buzz' words you may need to include, depending upon your role could be:

- | | |
|----------------------------|-------------------|
| • Project Manager | • Forecasting |
| • Budgetary responsibility | • Secretary |
| • Warehouse | • Sales Executive |
| • UNIX | • Excel |
| • FLT | • Managed |

For some of these 'buzz' words to have impact you need to include them in a short phrase where you add more details to quantify them:

- 'Target of ... exceeded within the first 6 months'
- 'Managed Team of 35'
- 'Inbound and Outbound'
- 'Experienced in Word'

So start by writing a list of jobs you have held and under each one, list the 'buzz words' describing your own skills or experience, then think of job title variations that may apply to the role.

For instance:

General Manager = Operations Manager = Commercial Manager = ?

When you write your CV, one trick is to put beside your job title within brackets, the 'alternative' job title. For instance: Product Manager (Project Manager). This also highlights that you have this skill to the reader. It may also be useful to include, within the text, the job title of either your boss or a person that reported into you. For instance, you may have been a Production Director, but that is just a title and you may be quite happy taking a job as a Production Manager. If a recruiter searched for candidates on a CV Database your CV would appear in both searches.

Overview of Your Role and Company

If you asked someone in the street who Microsoft are they will probably know the answer, however if you asked them who HtR are, most of them will probably not have a clue.....Just because you know what marketplace your employer operates in, don't assume that everyone reading your CV does.

By including a quick summary about each of your employers you inform the reader of the size of business, industry sector, etc. Include 2 or 3 lines of introduction under each company.

Now, include a brief overview of your job role in the same way.

Key Skill Statements / Profile

Key skill statements are often included at the start of a CV. They are your 'Headlines' that tell the reader exactly who you are and set the scene. It is easy to change these statements to make them relevant to the job you are applying for.

Alternatively you may wish to write a short Profile to highlight experience and skills. Profiles can be used to explain how you are looking for a change in career direction, or that you no longer wish the same level of responsibility you once had. Graduates can use this space to show commitment to a career direction.

Some people put major achievements in this space as an alternative to their key skills. If you intend to do this, make sure the achievements are not 20 years old!

Biographical CV or Functional CV?

Although people will advise you about different styles, the traditional biographical CV format is still the favoured one when applying for a vacancy. It has evolved and nowadays features 'Key Skill' statements and possibly a 'Profile' which allows you to highlight main skills and areas of experience.

However a functional CV if written well can be far more powerful in convincing an interviewer you have the required skill set. In the same way application forms focus you towards providing precise evidence required by a job, a bespoke functional CV has the same effect.

We would recommend a functional CV if you have been / are:

- 1) A Contractor in IT or where you have worked on a number of projects such as in the construction industry – use headings to group together all your experience in that area
- 2) For those seeking Contract, Consultancy or Interim work where it is more important to highlight specific skills such as 'Project Management' more than your career history
- 3) If you are looking to make a total career change, and move away from an industry or field you have been 'boxed' into
- 4) Where you want to down play some parts of your experience, yet highlight other specific skills and experience
- 5) When you want to 'slip time' and highlight older experience first

Tailor your CV

Having spent time writing a CV, remember that for different job applications it may be necessary to tailor your CV to the role being applied for. Recruiters may only spend 15 seconds reviewing your CV in an initial sift. You **MUST** make sure your relevant experience and skills stand out.

It is important to include for the recruiter the skills they will be looking for, and so take time analysing each advertisement and re-structure and change your CV as required.

Regard each job Advert as an exam question, your CV is the answer paper

As a starting point we suggest producing a number of CV's, each highlighting a specific skill you may have.

For instance if are a Technical Manager with Project Manager experience, you may have a Project Management CV highlighting your Project Management experience, a Technical CV highlighting technical skills etc.

To produce these more focused CVs, one trick is to first download a few job advertisements and analyse them for the skills, experience, and language used by the advertisers (Wikipedia also has job descriptions for you to view). Now you can write your CV highlighting these skills and experience, rather than a CV that merely details your work history,

It is important to also focus on the language used. KPI's (Key Performance Indicators) is the modern term used to describe organisational goals and how well a business is doing. These could be referred to as 'targets' also. By using the term KPI's you are using the language the recruiter is looking for.

Once you have your template and before applying for a job, look at your CV to see if it highlights the skills and experience needed for the role. If it doesn't restructure the content of your CV to bring forward what the recruiter is looking for.

Your job title can also be misleading – and a key screening criteria for many recruiters is your last few job titles, and whether those titles imply you have the right background.

For instance, 50% of your last job may have been on Project Management. Your job title was Business Manager. Should you decide to apply for a Project Management role and your title was Business Manager:

- Your job title 'Business Manager' would not imply that you have Project Management skills, therefore put in brackets behind as a descriptive term the term Project Manager – Business Manager (Project Manager)
- In the Key Skills section at the top of your CV or in your Profile, the first skill highlighted should be Project Management
- In the overview of your role, highlight your project management experience first, and possibly add in more detail to really highlight your experience
- Restructure your achievements to highlight Project Management achievements near the top

This simple technique can be quite effective, clearly highlighting to the reader your specific skill or experience.

Another tip is to try and incorporate some of the language used in the job advertisement. For instance if the job description highlights 'working at a strategic level', highlight this ability – but be careful not to be too obvious what you are doing.

REMEMBER – Even if you have produced several CV's to highlight individual skills and experience, always tailor your CV to the role you are applying for.

To help highlight the skills and experience required by a role, consider using the Mind MappingTM technique on Page 36 of this guide



Example of a Biographical CV

Garry James BSc

Address: 55 Arian Court
St Thomas' Drive
Any Town
Middlesex HA5 4SR

Email: gary@hotmail.com

Mobile Tel: xxxxxx xxxxxxxxxx

Home Tel: 0201 xxxxxxxx

- **Excellent people management skills – managed 100+ staff over a 3 year period in last role**
- **Experienced Commercial Manager and Business Manager – worked with a £1 million+ budget in last role**
- **Effective Strategy Manager – managed successful integration of new hardware and software systems, including introduction of major data collection changes within the business, utilising new technologies**
- **Comprehensive knowledge of Project Management with over 5 years experience**

EMPLOYMENT HISTORY

Nov 92 – Present (Marketing Services Ltd)

Best Marketing Services are a Market Research organisation.
(PROVIDE AN OVERVIEW OF THE BUSINESS – IDENTIFIES TO THE READER INDUSTRY SECTOR / SIZE OF BUSINESS)

Client Services Manager (Operations Manager) Jan 05-Jan 08

Made redundant because of company restructure *(OPTIONAL)*

Managed the research division, which involved setting performance targets for 100+ staff, and managing a £1m budget *(BRIEF OVERVIEW OF YOUR ROLE AS AN INTRODUCTION)*

Achievements:

- Generated £250,000 of new revenue in 2007 by introducing a new computer based data collection project for T Mobile
- Re-structure the data collection methodology, moving it from 'paper and telephone based' collection to 'WIFI Internet' processing.

(IDENTIFY ACHIEVEMENT FROM YOUR WHOLE TIME THERE AND NOT JUST FROM THE PRESENT)



Responsibilities:

- Lead Project Teams setting up new projects and ensuring full integration into Operations schedules.
- Set and monitored performance targets for all managers and departments.
- Met large clients such as GBH and FFRSL to discuss best strategy and recommended best practices to achieve and exceed their expectations.

Projects Manager Jan 02-Jan 05

(BRIEF OVERVIEW OF THE ROLE)

Achievements:

- Identify achievements relating to previous roles...
- XXX
- XXX
- XXX

Responsibilities:

- List responsibilities
- XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX
- XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX
- XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX

Section Leader Sept 1992-Jan 02

Employed initially as a Customer Advisor; promoted to Section Leader in 2001.
BRIEF OVERVIEW AS NOT A ROLE THE PERSON WANTS TO GO BACK TO.

EDUCATION AND TRAINING

- 1989-1992 Salford – BSc in Applied Sciences
- 1990 3 ‘A’ Levels: Biology, Physics & General Studies
- 1988 10 GSCE’s: Including Mathematics and English Language

Courses attended in recent years include:
Staff Motivation and Targeting
Interpersonal Managing Skills
6 Months Management Development Course

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Member of the Institute of Directors
Proficient in UNIX based SPSS processing systems Quancept & Quantum

I enjoy watching and playing sport, especially football and golf.



The layout of the CV example may not be your style, but it easily identifies to the reader your skills and experience.

Putting your age or date of birth on the CV is totally optional and not a legal requirement.

Functional CVs

Many people produce both CV types, functional and biographical, using the most appropriate depending upon the role they are applying for.

The main difference of a functional CV is that instead of detailing under each job role, achievements, duties and responsibilities, you summarise your experience under skill headings. Under these headings you detail ALL your expertise in an area, often from several jobs and companies.

Examples of skill and experience headings are:

- Management Experience
- Project Management
- Change Management
- Financial Control and Budgeting
- Training and Development
- People Management
- Strategic Management
- Operational Management
- Administration Skills
- IT Skills
- Training and Development

Underneath each heading you then provide evidence to justify your claim to having that skill. This needs to include examples, achievements, numbers etc. In simple terms regard each heading as an exam question.

You can produce a generic functional CV that highlights your transferable skills, but for far greater impact you need to write a bespoke functional CV for each role you apply for.

By prioritising your skills within the sequence you can highlight relevant expertise for the role applied for. The skill you place first is very important as it will be seen to be your main skill and used to categorise you.

It is very important to tailor your CV to each application. By doing so you clearly highlight to the reader that you have their required experience



Example of a Functional CV

Garry James BSc

PERSONAL DETAILS

Address: 55 Arian Court
St Thomas' Drive
Any Town
Middlesex HA5 4SR

Email: gary@hotmail.com

Mobile Tel: xxxxx xxxxxxxx

Home Tel: 0201 xxxxxxxx

- Excellent people management skills - managed 100+ staff over a 3 year period in last role
Experienced Commercial Manager and Business Manager - worked with a £1 million+ budget in last role
Effective Strategy Manager - managed successful integration of new hardware and software systems, including introduction of major data collection changes within the business, utilising new technologies
Comprehensive knowledge of Project Management with over 5 years experience

Project Management

An accomplished Project Manager with over 5 years experience. This has included both working within multifunctional teams of up to twelve, along with leading many projects. Recent projects include:

- IT data base implementation: 30K project to implement a new state of the art IT data collection and analysis system. Lead a team of 6 staff.
Delivered the project on time and within budget

Summarise in the area all the project management experience you may have.

Remember it is important to provide a variety of examples to substantiate your ability and provide 'depth and breadth' of experience. INCLUDE Achievements!

Leadership Skills

XX
XX
XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX

- Xxxxxxxx
XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX
XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX



- XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX
- XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX
- XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXxxxXXXXX

Operational and Strategic Management

XX
XX
XX
XX

- xxxxxxxxxxxx
- xxxxxxxxxxxx
- xxxxxxxxxxxx
- xxxxxxxxxxxx
- xxxxxxxxxxxx

EMPLOYMENT HISTORY

GFLP	2007 – 2009	Business General Manager
Dunlop Research	2001 – 2007	Project Specialist
Tri Changer	1999 – 2001	Operations Manager
J James and Sons	1983 – 1999	Programme Manager

EDUCATION AND TRAINING

1991-1992 Lancaster University – BSC in Applied Sciences

1990 3 ‘A’ Levels:
English Literature, Politics & General Studies

Courses attended in recent years include:
Staff Motivation and Targeting
Interpersonal Managing Skills
6 Months Management Development Course

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Member of the Institute of Directors
Proficient in UNIX based SPSS processing systems Quancept & Quantum

HOBBIES AND INTERESTS

Watching and playing sport, especially football and golf, travelling and reading.

When using bullet points, the sentence may show up as being grammatically incorrect in a Grammar Check (green line underneath). To stop this, merely leave off the Full Stop at the end of the line

Phrases and Words for CV's

The language used in a CV can really help 'sell' you and project a certain image, for instance, "Performance managed twenty staff..." sounds far more impressive than "Managed twenty staff..."

Here are some words that can be incorporated into your CV to emphasise your abilities:

Accountable	Achieved	Adaptable	Ambitious
Analytical	Articulate	Capable	Challenging
Committed	Competitive	Concise	Confident
Conscientious	Consistent	Consultative	Creative
Decisive	Dedicated	Determined	Diplomatic
Efficient	Empowering	Entrepreneurial	Enthusiastic
Fair	Flexible	Friendly	Genuine
Helpful	Honest	Imaginative	Independent
Influential	Innovative	Inspirational	Inventive
Knowledgeable	Logical	Loyal	Motivational
Objective	Optimistic	Organised	Originate
Perceptive	Perfectionist	Persistent	Persuasive
Pioneering	Positive	Practical	Pragmatic
Precise	Professional	Proactive	Performance
Realistic	Reconcile	Reliable	Resolved
Resourceful	Responsible	Risk	Scientific
Self Reliant	Shaped	Sincere	Supportive
Systematic	Thoughtful	Tolerant	United
Versatile	Visionary		

When highlighting achievements, by starting the achievement with an 'action' word you can emphasise the achievement. Words such as:

Accomplished	Attained	Achieved	Analysed
Created	Calculated	Consolidated	Conceived
Conducted	Converted	Designed	Directed
Defined	Developed	Ensured	Established
Engineered	Eradicated	Exceeded	Expanded
Enhanced	Executed	Evaluated	Founded
Generated	Headed	Halved	Highlighted
Instigated	Introduced	Inspired	Initiated
Led	Launched	Liaise	Lowered
Met	Modified	Minimised	Motivated
Negotiated	Originated	Overcame	Outlined
Organised	Optimised	Performance	Piloted
Performed	Proposed	Promoted	Reorganised
Restructured	Revamped	Recommended	Resolved
Retained	Specified	Shaped	Saved
Streamlined	Strengthened	Set up	Solved
Scheduled	Stimulated	Supported	Transformed

Where should you look for a Job?

There have been many surveys on where people find a new job. As a rough guide the approximate breakdown is thought to be as follows:

- Press and Trade magazine advertising 10%
- Agencies 5%
- Internet 25%
- Networking (contacts, friends, etc) 30%
- Speculative Approaches 30%

Jobcentre Plus currently advertises approximately 20% to 30% of all vacancies in the UK so, although not included in the above figures, it is also a valuable place to find work. As of November 2009, 10% of those roles were Executive or Professional in nature, 90% other white and blue collar jobs.

Jobcentre Plus

Jobcentre Plus will at any time be advertising thousands of vacancies and many employers will only advertise their vacancies with them. In addition to visiting the job centre, the jobs can also be viewed on-line at www.jobcentreplus.gov.uk or www.jobcentreonline.com (if in Northern Ireland).

Press and Trade Magazine advertisements

When you think about looking for a new role in the newspapers or trade magazines do not just see the advertisements as a list of jobs, but view them as a resource tool. Even if the advertisements do not contain the perfect job for you, do not ignore them. Instead use the advertisements to give you leads and information – a list of people to whom you can send your CV to:

- Local employers for Speculative Approaches
- Agencies who may specialise in your chosen field

Just because you may only have half of the experience or skill set listed in the advertisement, apply anyway. Our experience in recruitment tells us that the ideal candidate does not often exist. Companies may advertise for their ideal candidate but are sufficiently pragmatic to consider taking the best fit.

Business pages can provide information about companies expanding, or moving into an area and are a good source of leads for speculative approaches.

Although the number of jobs they advertise has declined, local newspapers are still an excellent way of finding a vacancy with a Local Authority, the Health Service; or manual roles and driving jobs.

Recruitment Agencies

Recruitment/Job Agencies generate their income from placing people into jobs by charging a placement fee to the company that employs them. Fees for their services range from 15% to 30% of the successful recruit's annual salary.

Recruitment consultants are fundamentally sales people and most agencies will have their consultants ringing companies trying to identify vacancies to fill between 10am and midday, and 2pm and 4pm. If you ring the agency between these times, it is unlikely you will be able to speak to the consultant, although receptionists are usually primed to take down your details and record the fact you have rung in – thus identifying you are still actively looking for work.

You may be used to seeing large agencies such as Reed or Manpower on the high street, but there will often be numerous other agencies in a town or city. To find them look online at www.yell.co.uk (search under Recruitment Agencies and your own area), or look in the local Yellow Pages or Thompson Local.

The majority of vacancies you see advertised by an agency will either be vacancies they cannot fill or ones that are termed 'bread and butter' positions. If you see an advertised job in your field, but feel it may not be quite right for you, send them your CV anyway, as they may have other vacancies on their books that are ideal for your experience and skills.

**What you must remember is that Agencies are there to fill vacancies
NOT to find you a job.**

As far as the consultants are concerned, most really do not care which candidate gets the job, as long as it is one of their candidates that does. So you risk being 'one of many' unless you have rare skills, but there are techniques to get them on your side and working for you.

The basic principle is to work on your relationship with the agency consultant in order to build a rapport that will ensure you are high profile to them.

But how can you achieve this?

- 1) Where possible, go and register with the consultant in person, rather than just sending your CV. This affords you the opportunity to start building that all important rapport
- 2) Phone the consultant weekly or fortnightly so they do not forget you. It also informs them that you are still available. A high street recruitment consultant may interview 25 or more candidates each week, more than 100 in a month. Only those candidates with rare skills will stand out at the registration stage.
- 3) If the agency is local, drop-in occasionally, even if you only get to speak to the receptionist, you will keep the contact going. In a lot of Agencies they still rely on a paper list, compiled by the receptionist on a weekly basis, of



- people who have rung in or dropped by. When a job comes in, the Consultant will often go to this list before they start to go through the files.
- 4) If you register your CV by post or email, phone the consultant a few days later to discuss what possible vacancies they may have. Make it clear to them what type of work, salary, etc you will consider and try to elaborate on the contents of your CV.
 - 5) Also, if you register by email, re-submit the CV every 3 months and mention that it has been updated (even if unaltered) otherwise most agencies will archive your CV, assuming you have found alternative employment. Your re-submitted CV will be put back in the system and marked as current and available.
 - 6) Treat the consultant with a degree of respect. There are varying levels of competency within the recruitment field. Many consultants are excellent; however others may appear arrogant or useless. Remember they may get you that perfect job and you may need their help.

When looking to recruit staff companies will often have preferred agencies, or long standing relationships with only one or two. If you register with only one agency you are severely limiting your employment prospects. On average we would recommend registering with between ten and fifteen agencies that deal in your type of work, These should be a mixture of both local agencies and national or regional agencies specialising in Sales, Management, Executive or IT.

If you have a skill such as Project Management; you should register with agencies dealing in these specific skills also, and may end up being registered with up to thirty agencies.

It becomes even more important to register with a larger number of agencies if you are a Senior Manager. Vacancies for jobs at a senior level are more likely to be filled through the use of these preferred agencies or an Executive Recruiter with whom a company has a strong relationship. We recommend registering with fifteen to twenty Executive Recruitment Agencies. You should also aim to identify Search Consultants rather than Executive Recruitment Agencies. The difference is that Executive Recruitment Agencies tend to fill vacancies whereas a Search Consultant will often work with an individual, pro-actively ringing companies on your behalf to try and create a job for you. However:

WARNING – In 2009 the agencies were badly hit by the recession due to a downturn in recruitment and employers not wanting to pay their fees. Think carefully about letting an agency forward your CV speculatively to companies you could be sending it to yourself. Once an agency has sent your CV forward, they may have a legal claim on a placement fee for 6 months after. If the company then advertises and you apply direct, could the potential fee stop you getting the job?

Temporary work / Contract / Interim positions; One last thing to note is that agencies nowadays supply to some larger organisations temporary staff on a long term basis. Companies such as IBM for all their administration and non IT specific roles. Therefore do not ignore this as an option. Agencies often have

different Consultants for Permanent and Temporary/Contract positions, so make sure you are registered with both. If registering in person, ask to be introduced to the other Consultant so you can ensure your details are passed across.

WARNING – When you register with an agency you will often be asked by the Consultant for a list of companies your details have been put forward to already, “So we do not end up sending in your details twice and wasting time”. This is, on the whole, untrue and what they are really trying to do is identify companies with vacancies to fill, which are on other agencies books. If you provide such a list they are likely to be on the phone canvassing them and putting their candidates forward. You are creating competition for yourself and we recommend that you do not provide this information.

Note – Most agencies will want your CV in electronic format.

Internet

Anyone aged over 40 missed out on learning IT skills at school, and unless they have developed those skills independently the internet is new to them. For those who find the internet difficult to master, it may be worth seeking the help of friends or other family members. It is not uncommon for a twelve year old child to help their parents use the internet.

Before looking at the benefits of the internet, it should be stated that not all types of jobs are to be found there. If you are looking for a trade, toolmaker, warehouse, labouring, or other manual job, the internet may not be the best source for you. These types of roles are usually advertised in local papers, Job Centres, or filled by Recruitment Agencies, through speculative applications, or word of mouth.

However...Many roles that were historically advertised in the local papers are now advertised on the Internet as it is cheaper for advertisers, and potentially reaches a far larger audience.

Not everyone has access to the internet at home, so remember that Public Libraries often provide free internet access along with Cyber Cafes (though they may charge a small fee). If you have a laptop with a wireless connection you may find companies provide complementary wireless access, such as McDonalds and Costa Coffee, when purchasing their products.

E-mail

When applying for most jobs, even those in the paper, you will in most instances be requested to e-mail your CV. It is important therefore to set up a personal e-mail account. If you don't have one, you can open up free e-mail accounts with companies such as Yahoo, Hotmail or Gmail. Many providers provide web based e-mail accounts that can be accessed from any computer.



Two tips: Do NOT use your work e-mail address as many companies are known to monitor email communications. Also don't use joke or funny e-mail addresses.

Once you have set up an e-mail account and you are using it to apply for jobs, remember to check it daily, as many employers will e-mail selected candidates to invite them for interview rather than write to them.

Job Boards and 'Jobs by e-mail'

Job Boards are press job advertisements and trade journal job adverts on-line. They list the details about a role, and allow you to apply for a job by e-mail or by filling in an on-line application form.

When you first log onto the site and search under a specific job term you may be presented with 300 jobs...and initially you will need to look at each of them individually to see if they appeal.

One good feature that sites have is that they allow you to save the search and set up Jobs by e-mail (also known as Job Alerts). Every night the jobsite will search their own site for new roles that fit your selected criteria; the site then e-mails you a list of links to the new vacancies. By following the links within the e-mail you can view the vacancy details.

What you MUST remember when searching a site for potential jobs is that employers may use different job titles to describe the same role:

Programmer = Software Technician = Software Developer = ???

Marketing Assistant = PR Officer = Marketing Manager = ???

Secretary = PA = Executive Assistant = ???

Operations Manager = General Manager = Office Manager = Operations Director
= Sales Office Manager = Business Manager = ???

You need to try and predict and read peoples minds, therefore you need to search under all the different titles that may be applied to the role you are looking for and set up job alerts for each.

In addition if a skill you have is Project Management, you may also wish to set up alerts under this skill heading to receive specific project management vacancies.

To help refine your search you can use Boolean Language. By placing words in speech marks, the search will be for the exact phrase "Administration Manager". Without the " " results will feature jobs with either word, Administration or Manager. The search can be further be refined by the use of AND OR NOT: "Project Manager" AND "IT" NOT "Engineering". Try the different search criteria on the site to ensure you are getting the appropriate results returned to you.

Identifying Job Sites

In addition to industry specific jobsites there are general sites that may also feature roles relevant to you.

The best way to identify relevant sites where jobs that may interest you can be found is via trade journals, and by searching on internet search engines such as:

- www.google.co.uk
- www.yahoo.co.uk
- www.msn.co.uk

Simply type in phrases such as 'Jobs in IT', 'Secretarial Jobs', 'Engineering Job Sites', then follow the numerous links.

Unlike most searches where you may merely look at pages one and two of the results, we recommend going at least 5 pages down. Mixed in with the results will be recruitment agencies that may also be worth contacting.

For those looking to work abroad, the trick is to look at these same search engines but look at the local country specific search engine. For instance:

Ireland	www.google.ie	Germany	www.google.de
France	www.google.fr	Spain	www.google.es
Not all are so obvious:		Australia	www.google.com.au

Job Crawlers / Job Spiders

Job Crawlers are search engines that search Job Boards. The main ones are:

- www.workhound.co.uk (claiming to be the UK's largest job crawler)
- www.indeed.co.uk (indeed searching over 4500 job boards)
- www.jobrapido.co.uk (statistics unavailable)
- www.twitjobsearch.com (Twitter™ search engine)

The big advantage of the Job Crawlers is they search potentially hundreds of job sites – local, national, agency, employer, and government. Once you search is refined, set up 'job alerts' so new vacancies are e-mailed to you daily.

ALWAYS use the 'Advanced Job Search'. Use words to attract as many relevant vacancies as possible; and remove unwanted roles using the "With Non of these words" field.

WARNING – Some of the specialist job boards block the job crawlers and their jobs will not appear in the listings. It may be necessary to register with individual specialist boards also.

If looking for work abroad Jobrapido has nearly 30 international versions:

USA	www.jobrapido.com	France	www.jobrapido.fr
Indeed works well in Ireland:		Ireland	www.indeed.ie

Main UK Job Boards

There are literally hundreds of UK Job Boards. A few of the larger ones are:

- | | |
|--|-------------------------------------|
| • www.jobsearch.co.uk | General vacancies |
| • www.workthing.co.uk | Employer jobs only (no agencies) |
| • www.planetrecluit.com | Technology based vacancies |
| • www.thegraduate.co.uk | Graduate vacancies |
| • www.reed.co.uk | General vacancies |
| • www.monster.co.uk | General vacancies |
| • www.totaljobs.co.uk | General vacancies |
| • www.jobsite.co.uk | General vacancies |
| • www.cv-library.co.uk | General Vacancies |
| • www.fish4jobs.co.uk | General vacancies |
| • www.jobsin.co.uk | General vacancies |
| • www.scotcareers.co.uk | Scottish job site |
| • www.s1jobs.com | Claiming to be Scotland's No 1 site |
| • www.gumtree.co.uk | Lots of local regional sites |
| • www.jobsite.co.uk | General vacancies |
| • www.NIjobs.com | Northern Ireland |

Executive boards include:

- | | |
|--|------------------------|
| • www.allexecutivejobs.com | Salaries over £50K |
| • www.executivesontheweb.com | Senior Management Jobs |

Remember to use the Search Engines as a tool to help you identify other jobsites

There are numerous local jobsites that are regional or area specific such as:

- www.mymanchesterjobs.co.uk
- www.londonjobs.co.uk
- www.cityjobs.co.uk

Also, the main newspapers such as The Guardian and The Times have their own job boards:

- <http://jobs.guardian.co.uk/>
- <http://jobs.timesonline.co.uk>

Industry Specific Job Boards

Trade Magazines nowadays have internet sites. There are also specialist job boards such as:

- www.salesvacancies.com Sales
- www.gaapweb.co.uk Accountancy
- www.totallyfinancial.co.uk Financial and Insurance
- www.thecareerengineer.com Engineering
- www.jobineducation.co.uk Education
- www.totallylegal.com Legal
- www.secsinthecity.co.uk London Secretarial
- www.cwjobs.co.uk Computer and IT roles

REMEMBER – It costs recruiters to advertise on most job boards so they will only select a small number to use for their vacancies. It is important to identify as many sites as you can and set up ‘Jobs by e-mail’ with each to ensure you capture as many opportunities as possible.

Company Websites

Job Crawlers will search Company Job Boards for vacancies which are being advertised. Some companies such as Kellogg’s have invested in CV database software for themselves. On the company’s website you are presented with the opportunity to add your details to their CV database, which is then searched by their HR Department as vacancies arise. Therefore if you have an interest in working for a specific employer, visit their site, and submit your CV.

CV Mailing Sites

There are other internet sites that will mail out your CV to potential agencies dealing in your type of work. These include:

- www.e-CVs.net
- www.alljobsuk.com
- www.workthingplus.co.uk

By using their mass mailing capability you can have your CV circulated to relevant recruitment agencies and companies within your industry. Some charge for this service and there are no guarantees those receiving your CV will read it.

Online CV Databases

As well as advertising vacancies, most jobsites allow you to place your CV onto their on-line CV databases. Simply by uploading your CV onto a site to apply for a vacancy will not usually add your details to that sites database. When you upload your CV to the site you will be asked whether you wish it to be made



public or visible. If you say 'yes' your CV is added to the searchable database. Most sites allow you to upload different versions of your CV and on sites such as Monster; several can be made visible or public. They can be completely different to the CV you send when applying to a vacancy.

Often you see this feature advertised on the jobsite as 'Get yourself Headhunted'. The job site sells access to the public CV database to both Employers and Recruitment Agencies. They then search it for candidates to fill vacant positions.

Trinity Mirror Digital Recruitment estimate at least 1 in 5 people gain employment by being 'found' on a CV database.

Buying access to these databases is very popular as agencies no longer need to spend time and effort maintaining their own. A lot of agencies no longer advertise their jobs, merely identifying candidates from the online CV databases.

The search facility of these databases has a range of criteria including, location, salary range, skill set, job title, educational level and professional qualifications. To maximise your chances of being found by the person searching, you must ensure that your CV contains the 'buzz words' that relate to your skills and experience, such as Word, Excel, Project, Shorthand etc. In addition it is useful to include alternative job titles on your CV, because people may search under the term 'Programmer', and by you describing yourself as a 'Software Engineer' you may not appear in the search results. In the same way as you should look for jobs under different titles, your CV needs to include variations of your job title to maximise your chances of being found.

There are two main benefits of placing your CV on the database:

- First – Employers and agencies are increasingly searching the CV databases in preference to advertising jobs. The Trinity Mirror CV database has several million CV's on it and Monster a similar number. Thus people are being found and filling jobs that are not advertised
- Secondly – Employers and agencies can set up CV alerts (similar to 'jobs by e-mail'). If your CV meets their criteria they receive a link to your CV. You are therefore sending your CV out potentially to numerous agencies you may never have found but who specialise in your industry

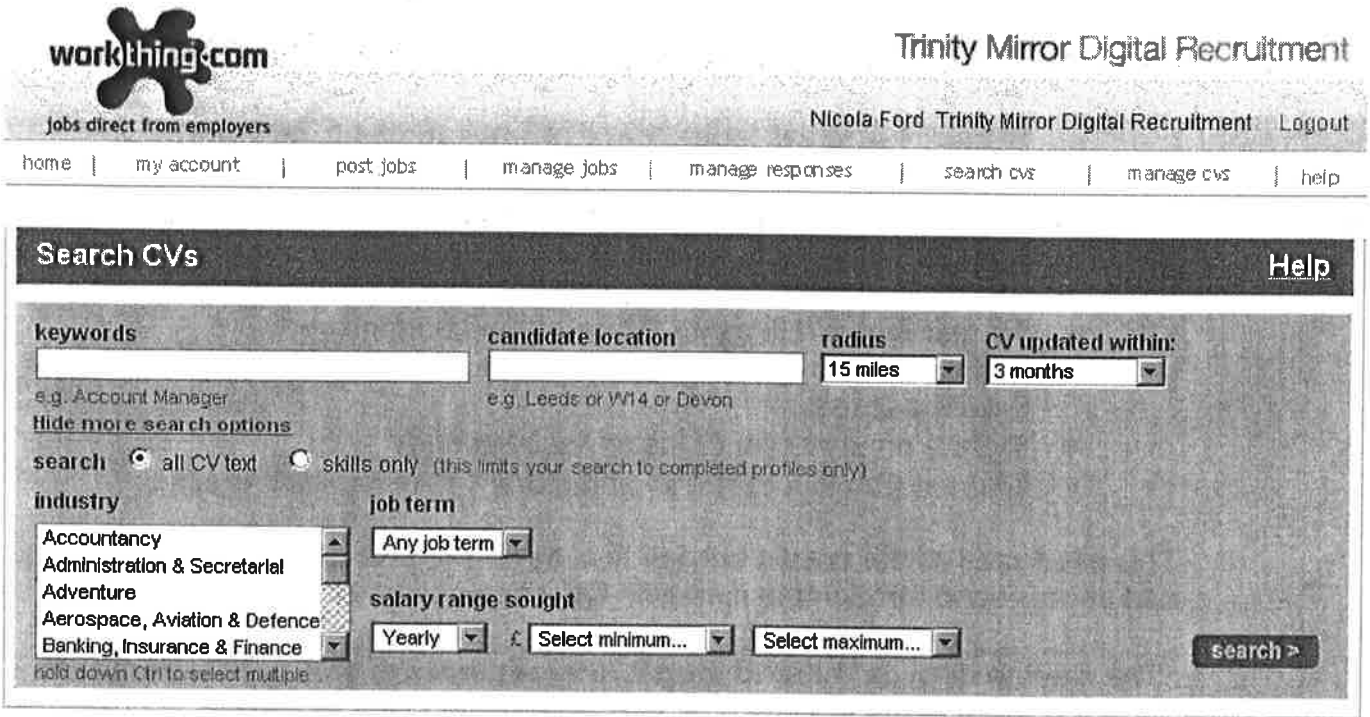
With Monster having approximately 1 in 5 of the working population on its CV database, you can see why employers and agencies are increasing using it in preference to advertising. The search engines are also very powerful, the recruiter enters 'buzz' words, location, skills etc to find potential candidates.

NOTE however that when an employer searches a CV database, they also can search 'CV's updated within...' For most the default search criteria is set at 3 months, for Monster 1 month. Therefore if you placed your CV on Monster 5 weeks ago, unless the person searching alters the search criteria from 1 month to 3 months, you will not appear in the search results.

Important – You MUST update your CV every month on a CV database to appear in the search results

To demonstrate how recruiters search, the screen print below is from the Trinity Mirror Digital Recruitment CV database that is fed into by sites such as Gaapweb, Workthing Gisajob, Jobsearch, Workthingplus, Secsinthecity.

IMPORTANT – before you add your CV to an online database please read the later section on Identity Fraud Protection



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If looking for work abroad, we suggest uploading your CV onto CV databases operated in the country you wish to relocate to: www.monster.com lists their international sites, Stepstone is another international site www.stepstone.com

Main CV Databases

Almost every job site you visit has its own CV database which you can add your CV to. In the same way it costs to advertise a job, it costs an employer or agency to purchase access to each of them. It is therefore important to place your CV on both industry specific and more general CV databases.

The main CV databases employers and agencies can buy access to:

www.jobsearch.co.uk	www.monster.co.uk
www.totaljobs.co.uk	www.cv-library.co.uk
www.jobsite.co.uk	www.reed.co.uk



Identity Fraud Protection

If you intend to place a copy of your CV on the on-line CV databases, remember that personal details can be used by fraudsters. By using details from your CV, and searching other sites, they can find additional personal details. When you have finished writing your CV, we suggest you then produce a second copy for the CV databases with certain details removed.

Monster has admitted that they have been hacked into several times and CV's illegally downloaded – the last time January 2009.

For your on-line CV we advise that you remove the following information:

- 'Name', if Andrew Jones, leave off your surname, so 'Andrew J'
- 'Address', if, for example, you live in Sale, which is just South of Manchester, only specify 'Home Location – Greater Manchester'.
- 'Date of Birth', (not required on a CV) only specify 'Age – 35 years'.
- 'Home Telephone Number', but state your 'Mobile Number'.
- 'Marital Status' / 'Maiden Name' should be removed.
- 'Details regarding schools attended' but leave on details of 'Grades/ Exams passed'.
- 'Details of any Local Clubs or Associations'.
- 'Current Employers Name' and merely describe their 'Business'.

This all sounds a little drastic but safety is by far the best policy. Remember, you can always send through the complete CV when you know who is reading it.

The on-line copy is there to attract interest and the only personal details it needs are a contact number and your first name.

Stopping your Employer finding your CV

Many employers who purchase access will set up permanent CV Alerts (similar to Job Alerts mentioned before) to inform them when a CV is placed on a site with their company name on it. Why? To see if any of their staff are looking for alternative employment...If you were an employer, would you still see one of your employees as a committed and valued member of your team if you received an alert that they were looking for another job?

Although some sites offer a privacy option that supposedly protects your private details, we have found that in practice it does not and if your CV includes personal details, these are referenced in the search results. The trick therefore is to remove your current employers name from your CV if still in employment.

CV Databases Multiple Profiles

When you register with a CV database, several allow you to upload different versions of your CV. On Jobsearch you create a profile for each CV you upload.

What this allows you to do is project different skills in different versions of your CV. You may have a CV that highlights your training skills, a second that highlights your line management experience etc.

It is worth producing these different versions to ensure that anyone searching the CV database finds a version of your CV which clearly identifies the skills they are looking for. Generic CV's often fail to do this.

Networking

It is exactly what it says, talking to people you know, former clients, people you met at trade exhibitions and people you used to work with. Who you talk to will depend on your level of confidence but, 30% of all new jobs are achieved this way.

The best possible source of leads for potential vacancies is former work colleagues who have moved into companies and perform similar work to your own. We also recommend keeping in touch with colleagues being made redundant at the same time as you – active jobseekers who can pass across leads for jobs.

Trade bodies, when you were working you may not have been bothered with them – well now is the time to join one. A lot of contacts can, in a very short time, be made and you never know who their acquaintances are. Also ask your friends and family for suggestions of who they know are recruiting, it is surprising what people are aware of.

A useful site to help networking is www.linkedin.com which is looked at later in this guide. The site allows you to track down ex-colleagues and join 'Groups' to help networking.

Note – The people you know are often NOT the people to get you a job, it is their contacts and you should use them as a link.

Speculative Approaches

The Internet has revolutionised this process, which traditionally meant producing large volumes of paper based CV's with covering letters and purchasing stamps.

The basic principles of Speculative Approaches are as follows:

- 1) On average an employer will, each year, have between 10% and 35% staff turnover. In the retail industry this can reach as high as 80%. An employer with 100 staff will need to recruit at least 10 replacements each year. By sending in a speculative copy of your CV, you may just have perfect timing as someone is about to leave or the company looking to expand.
- 2) Companies have budget restrictions. If they can fill a vacancy using a CV sent in speculatively, they will do so.



So where do you find details of who to send your CV to? Search on the internet for companies who are potential employers.

If your field is Electronics, key in 'electronic companies' into the search engine and a list of companies will appear. You can key in specific skill sets. Recently we worked with a 'Sigma Six Black Belt' (not martial arts but a project management tool qualification) and keying in the phrase 'Sigma Six' a list of companies/articles about organisations using Sigma Six appeared; several were quite local to the individual and ideal potential employers.

Tip – Competitors to your last employer may employ your skill set. An individual we helped in 2009 found a new role 25 hours after one of our workshops by sending off his CV to a competitor – following our advice.

If you do decide to approach competitors, one way to identify them is to ask your sales people. A second – www.yell.co.uk (Yellow Pages On-line) Type in your employers name and find how they are classified. Then search again on 'Yell' using this industry classification.

In addition 'Yell' has the advantage of listing in its classifications, specific industry types such as Butchers, Stationery Suppliers and by city, town or region. If you are a sales person in the stationery field looking for a new job in Leeds – there is the starting point, search for 'Stationery Companies Leeds'.

Or you can literally get in the car or on the bus and go round a geographical area compiling a list of companies to approach. If feeling confident, 'drop-in' to their reception and ask for the name of the person to send your CV to.

So you have your list, now what?

Rather than post a CV addressed 'To whom it may concern', ring the company and ask for the name of the relevant person likely to employ you, for example, Sales Manager, Office Manager or Warehouse Manager. A named approach is far more fruitful; if possible, obtain an email address to utilise for ease and speed.

The idea behind sending your CV to the line manager is that they are often the decision maker in the recruitment process; the Human Resources (HR) team may only be there to offer advice and monitor. A line manager may be on the lookout for someone with your skill set and receiving your CV may just spur them into action.

Try and avoid sending your CV to the HR Department as they can represent a black hole to a lot of job seekers, too busy often to forward your CV. Send your CV instead to a line manager who could be your potential new boss. In some larger organisations, HR often 'controls' the entire recruitment process so you may get referred to them anyway.

Also – Use www.linkedin.com to help find named individuals to write to

At senior level, we always advise finding out the name of the PA to the Managing Director and sending your CV direct to them. The PA will, usually, happily provide their email address and is far more accessible than the Managing Director. You can also make a follow-up call a few days after sending your CV and find out if there is any feedback.

Tip – A lot of companies have a policy not to give out names. We suggest you ask for “The Marketing Directors PA” as switchboards will often put you through to them – but won’t tell you their name...!

Remember to include a simple covering letter with your CV stating what type of work you are looking for and highlighting your skills and experience. One page is enough. If you have seen something on their website or in the newspaper referring to them, make reference to it in your letter.

A week or so later, if you have not heard anything, ring them and follow-up your application! Make a note of the person’s details and, if still looking, re-submit your CV every 3 months.

www.linkedin.com and www.xing.com

Two sites that help in speculative applications, as well as networking and in obtaining employment are www.linkedin.com and www.xing.com. These sites can help you:

- Track down ex-colleagues and contact them via the site
- Research your interviewer
- For speculative approaches, help identify names contacts in businesses
- Contact directly potentially your new boss or key personnel in employers
- Create a profile on yourself that interviewers may reference as part of the selection technique
- Have ex-bosses or colleagues recommend you via the site (an on-line reference)
- Keep in contact with ex-colleagues also made redundant, which may have information that can help you find a job as they carry out their own hunt
- Send ‘pass the parcel’ type messages to individuals you may want to approach about a job
- Find a job – Head Hunters / Employers searching the site for new employees
- Identify current job vacancies – Jobs advertised on the site are often exclusive to the site
- Get past a companies ‘no names’ policy. By identifying named individuals within a business in any role, you can bypass what is often a switchboard block of names.

How to write a Speculative Letter / e-mail

When a person receives your CV, you are effectively imposing upon their time, so write a covering note that is short, to the point and encourages the reader to read your attached CV.

When writing a letter/e-mail, try not to name job titles as this narrows down options, refer to job types instead such as “I am looking for an administration or customer services role...”

Also be careful about including comments such as:

“I am looking for a job in which I can further develop my skills” as this can imply that your skills are not fully developed and in need of extensive training.

Or

“I am looking for a dynamic role that offers good promotion prospects” as the person may not see an existing vacancy as a dynamic job. In addition if the role has currently no prospects attached you may have just ruled yourself out.

Highlight a few of your ‘headlines’ – skills and experience that highlight what you offer as an employee.

The following examples show how bullet points can make the letter/e-mail more ‘punchy’ and easier to scan read.

This style and layout of letter works well as a covering letter also – see Page 30

EXAMPLE SPECULATIVE LETTER

Your address
Telephone number

Mr James
Office Manager
Company name and address

Date *****

Dear Mr James

Last week, I was interested to read in the local newspaper that you have been awarded a new contract.

I am an experienced Sales Administrator looking for a more challenging and rewarding position. As a result I thought a direct approach would be in order.

As you will see from my CV, I have much to offer your company as an employee including:

- **Three years order processing and general administration experience**
- **Excellent IT and Computer skills**
- **Several years Customer Services experience, including dealing with difficult and demanding clients and problems**
- **Good problem solving skills**

I would welcome the opportunity to meet with you to discuss how my skills could benefit your organisation. Please feel free to contact me on my mobile 07973 XXXXXX (OPTIONAL LINE) – I will ring you in a few days time to see if there are any opportunities that may be suitable.

Yours sincerely

Mr Edward Evans

☞ 'Bullet Points' are fine in modern day letters so use them as they have greater impact.

The big advantage of word processing is that you can save the main body of the text as a 'Word' document and 'copy and paste' it. The **bold** text is standard to most applications. But always add the personal address.

EXAMPLE SPECULATIVE EMAIL

Subject – Application for Employment

Dear Mr James (always address the email if you have a contact name)

Last week, I was interested to read in the local newspaper that you have been awarded a new contract.

I am an experienced Sales Administrator looking for a more challenging and rewarding position. As a result I thought a direct approach would be in order.

As you will see from my CV, I have much to offer your company as an employee including:

- **Three years order processing and general administration experience**
- **Excellent IT and Computer skills**
- **Several years Customer Services experience, including dealing with difficult and demanding clients and problems**
- **Good problem solving skills**

I would welcome the opportunity to meet with you to discuss how my skills could benefit your organisation. Please feel free to contact me on my mobile 07973 XXXXXX. (OPTIONAL LINE) I will ring you in a few days time to see if there are any opportunities that may be suitable.

Yours sincerely

Mr Edward Evans

☞ The email version is not really very different to the letter version. Make sure you personalise the email by name.

Again the **'bold'** text is 'copy and paste' from a saved standard document.

Direct 'Walk-In' Approaches

Another form of speculative approach is the 'walk-in'.

It is what it says – you take the direct approach of walking around an area, and walking in. Ask to speak to the Office Manager or Warehouse Manager and hand them a copy of your CV in person.

If an Accountant, by walking into a small firm and dropping off your CV with the Main Partner it may work well, but this approach often works better for more junior roles.

Application Covering Letters / E-mails

When sending your CV off to an agency or employer we would recommend drawing out relevant facts from your background and including them in your covering letter/email. Also you should review your CV content to ensure it is tailored to your application.

IMPORTANT – Don't fall into the trap of using the covering letter on it's own to highlight relevant experience and skills without also altering your CV. Many recruiters ignore your covering letter when screening large volumes of CV's, going straight to the CV to identify skills and experience required. Line managers who interview you will however read your covering letter and like to see how you present yourself.

The facts included in a covering letter must be relevant to the role you are applying for. In speculative approaches the covering letter will show a standard overview of yourself, however if you are applying for an advertised position you need to relate the content to the role applied for:

Our client needs to recruit a senior manager to help develop their operation from a strategic point of view

You need to match your own experience to what you know about the job requirements and emphasise it.

For example – You have 6 years senior management experience with in the last 2 years a split of 60% strategic planning and 40% operational management:

'I have six years experience of working at senior management level. During the last two years 60% of my time has been spent on strategic planning, the other 40% to operational management.'

You have highlighted both the required experience and skills by doing so.

Remember, not to get carried away by putting in too much content. Ideally it should be reasonably short and no more than one page and bullet points are ideal at highlighting your background and how it is relevant to the role applied for.

Even if applying via an 'Internet Job Board', include a covering note. So many people just hit 'apply/send' and do not include a note. Employers want to feel that you have a strong interest in their role and a keen interest in the job.

Don't use a standard copy and paste document. Refer to the job role and address the note, if you have a contact name use it.

With regard e-mail covering notes, keep the content brief so that if it is opened in Outlook or Outlook Express the whole note appears in the right hand window. Email it to yourself to make sure. The reader will not want to scroll down or across to see what you have written.

Application Forms / S.T.A.R. Technique

Many companies still rely upon application forms. Public sector and Charities use them exclusively. Many private sector organisations are bringing them back in. Why? Because CV's focus upon a person's job history, and tend not to be personalised/tailored to the role applied for.

When filling application forms in – read the instructions. If they say use a black pen, use one. Print clearly and keep a dictionary at hand to check your spelling. If online, try and print the form off before completing, giving you time to think about what you are going to type in.

From experience, people quickly fill in forms without much thought. You spend hours writing a CV, then ten minutes filling in an application form. Both are aimed at the same result, gaining you an interview.

So how do you fill them in?

1. If you have a person specification/job specification it is important to provide evidence for each and every point that highlights your skills/experience/ability.
2. Work through each point one by one - Most include a large 'Other Information' box which is possibly the most important part of the form. job/person specifications often list each requirement and in the box:
 - a. Highlight each skill or experience in turn listed on the job/person specification
 - b. Underneath each point then provide evidence/examples to identify you have the required skill/experience
 - c. Use S.T.A.R – It helps to structure your answers and evidence:
 - **S** = Situation – Describe the scene
 - **T** = Tasks – Identified any tasks involved
 - **A** = Actions – Your actions
 - **R** = Results – The benefit/results you achieved

3. Don't be afraid to use several additional sheets
4. Provide a brief example of how your experience matches the requirements
5. If there is no clear list to highlight person/job requirements, try analysing the information using the Mind Mapping technique on page 36.

Some forms have set questions and answer boxes below – again use S.T.A.R.

NEVER enter 'See above' ALWAYS enter your example...

Often each box/point carries a score and is marked. So by utilising S.T.A.R. you provide a full answer to the question set.

Following up Applications

If you are applying to a job advertised by a Recruitment Agency we recommend that you always ring them to check they have received your CV, and ask as to whether they think your background is suitable.

When applying directly to a company you can also follow up on your application but this can be far less productive. If you do decide to follow up your application, if you get through to the relevant person:

- Introduce yourself and identify that you have applied for the role of
- Ask (if you don't already know) if they have received your CV?
- You could also ask
 - "Is there any more information they need from you at this time?"
 - "Looking at my CV, do you feel my background and experience is right for this role?"
 - "Are there any other skills or experience you are looking for?"

A lot of people when writing their CV expect the people reviewing their CV to be mind readers and fill in the gaps. They forget that the person screening a CV often looks for buzz words and phrases and may not fully understand the role they are screening the CV's for. Therefore by asking the question:

"Are there any other skills or experience you are looking for?"

You can (if answered honestly) potentially fill in the gaps.

On the other hand if they say 'none', you can ask if you are to be interviewed. Many people think this can be a little too pushy, but it can work to your benefit.

Track and Record your Approaches

Vital information you need to record and track, is which companies you have sent your CV to, who it was addressed to, when it was sent, and when you need to follow-up your application. In addition you will need to remind yourself to:



- Contact Recruitment Agencies – At least every 2 weeks
- Update your CV on CV Databases – At least every 4 weeks
- Resend speculative approaches – At least every 12 weeks
- Follow up Walk In approaches – At least every 8 weeks

Mobile Phone

When looking for a new job a mobile phone is, we believe, essential.

An interviewer will ring a mobile phone to contact a person about a job in preference to writing to them or ringing a home number.

Ensure that it is switched on at all times and the Answer Machine (Voice Messaging) is turned on. Also ensure any recorded message is 'appropriate and not 'silly'. Alternatively you could ask a family member who has a mobile phone if you can use their number on your CV and take messages for you.

Online Profile

With sites such as Facebook and Twitter, what is now emerging is an online profile. Interviewers may search these sites prior to interviewing a candidate to see what they say about themselves and how they present themselves to the world. Placing the right information on such sites could work for you.

A key site already mentioned is www.linkedin.com where you can place online a career history/profile. This can be used to really highlight your achievements and background. BUT REMEMBER, Identity fraudsters also visit such sites for their own purposes, so be careful what personal information you put on them.

Other key sites employers may look at include:

- www.friendsreunited.co.uk
- www.facebook.com
- www.youtube.com
- www.vimeo.com

If you are a creative individual you might also wish to upload samples of your work to specialist sites that can provide an advertising platform. Then include the web addresses on your CV. HOWEVER get other people to look at how your work is displayed on these sites to ensure it looks good, before broadcasting the address.

You may also wish to build your own website to display your work. One internet hosting company that is good value, offers good functionality, and has simple website templates/web building tools is 1and1 Internet www.1and1.co.uk

Interview Preparation/Typical Questions

Overview

The first thing to take onboard is that an interview is a two sided process. In the same way you are trying to impress an interviewer, the interviewer is also trying to impress you on how good their job is.

The second is that you would not be having an interview if the person seeing you did not think you could do the job. Why one person gets the job rather than another is not just down to skills and experience, it is also how well you present yourself on the day, and how you bond with the interviewer.

When you get an interview you have got the job! You now have an hour to talk yourself out of it...

Most interviews last one hour, but in effect there are only 40 minutes of actual interview:

- 10 minutes settling you down, walking you to the venue etc
- 40 minutes of interview
- 10 minutes you asking them questions, and walking out of the building

Preparation is the key to a good interview and it is important to remember that first impressions are very important. Also be positive throughout!

Practice is also important, if offered an interview which really is not 'you' it may be worth going to the interview for practice and develop your interview technique.

Most common reasons people don't get a Job

In a recent survey published in The Times career section (compiled by Peninsula) 937 employers, when asked the main reasons why they turned down interviewees, highlighted:

- 25% Inappropriate Dress
- 20% Unenthusiastic
- 12% Bad Manners
- 9% Poorly Prepared
- 8% Salary Obsessed

INTERESTING STATISTICS.....



Logistics / What to Wear

The first step, once the interview is confirmed, is to look at the logistics and work out how you will get there, how long it will take and the best means of transport. Turning up late gives a bad impression despite genuine excuses.

Also, bear in mind that most interviewers interview back to back. Just because you arrive 15 minutes late does not mean that they will make the next candidate wait. They are far more likely to cut your interview short.

Decide what you are going to wear. We would recommend wearing a suit and tie/smart business dress even if applying to a company with a dress down culture. The formal appearance makes you look smart. If applying for warehouse/factory roles we recommend a clean shirt, tie and smart trousers (no jeans).

Do you need a hair cut? Are your shoes clean? Interviewers will take all sorts of things into account about your appearance – remember The Times Survey...

Subconsciously, an interviewer may compare you to a stereotype or pre-judge you on your appearance. It is therefore worth conforming to more usual or expected dress codes when attending an interview.

Company Research

For most people:

<p>'Preparation = Company Research' WRONG</p>

There is a lot more personal preparation than that required, company research is only a small part. Company research should take about an hour spent at home on the Internet. If you don't have Internet access, remember free access is often available in Libraries, or alternatively simply telephone the company's switchboard or customer services department and ask for a brochure.

To find the Company's Internet site phone their switchboard and ask for the address. Alternatively, go onto 'Google' www.google.co.uk or 'Yahoo' www.yahoo.co.uk and search for the Company there.

You may also wish to research your interviewer. By entering their name into Google you may discover facts about them which you can reference during your interview, this will impress them with the depth of your research.

Company research is all about establishing the following facts:

- What the company does (products and services)
- Other locations
- Other divisions
- Approximate size

An Interviewer will not (unless they are the Managing Director) expect you to have memorised the background to the company, its share price and who the main shareholders are.

One good section to view on the company's website is Press Releases. It is an excellent way of finding that extra fact that could impress the Interviewer.

You may also need to research the industry sector, or developments in relation to their business. This is particularly important if they are a public sector, charity, environmental or other similar organisation.

One trick is to print off pages from a company's website and take them with you to the interview in a folder. When asked "What do you know about us?" open up your folder and take out the sheets. This shows preparation...

Preparing for Interview Questions

Once you have researched the company, you now need to prepare answers to likely questions about:

- Skills and Experience
- Typical / Common Questions

If you went into an interview and knew all the questions you were to be asked and had prepared the appropriate answers, wouldn't the interview be a lot easier?

Our belief is that you can predict most of the questions you are likely to be asked and prepare reasonable answers. Therefore nothing should trip you up in the interview nor catch you unprepared.

Predicting Skill and Experience Questions/Job Competency Identification (Mind Mapping™ Technique)

We will now guide you through a very simple method of analysing the information you have regarding a job role such as the advertisement, job description, person specification or information pack. This technique should help you in most instances identify certainly some, if not all, of the job skills and experience requirements (competencies).

Mind Mapping™ technique can be used to not only prepare for an interview, but also help highlight how a CV or covering letter might be tailored.

The example below relates to a Post Room role, the technique works however with all types of job, technical, senior etc and is based on Mind Mapping™.

Example – Post Room Role

Job advertisements and descriptions are written in such a way that the most important skills and experience requirements are at the top or start.

The first tip is to learn to pick out from the advert the key phrases, experience and required skills. This will involve thinking about what each word means and interpreting them.

For example – below is the first third of an advert for a Post Room role:

A fantastic opportunity has arisen for an **experienced and well organised administrator** to work with a well- respected international company.

Job Description

Vacancy description:

To **deliver internally** all incoming mail and deliveries within the buildings.
To carryout scheduled collection of mail from agreed locations within the building for **sorting** for further distribution both internally and externally.
For ensuring that mail is **sent out externally using least cost routing by utilising all of the available distribution methods.**

You will see that we have highlighted several phrases. The first being:

A fantastic opportunity has arisen for an **experienced and well organised administrator** to work with a well- respected international company.

In the first sentence two areas of likely questioning are highlighted:

Organisational Skills

Administration Experience

Likely questions therefore would be:

“Can you give me an example of where you have had to organise your own workload?” or “Tell me about your administration experience?”

If we read on:

Job Description

Vacancy description:

To **deliver internally** all incoming mail and deliveries within the buildings.

So the role is delivering mail and deliveries around the building. Think about what this actually involves and the skills/requirements attached to it.

First, you are representing the post room and so how smart and presentable you are at interview may be important

Second, you will be moving possibly heavy items and so may need to be physically fit

Third, you will be interacting with people. You may need good interpersonal skills.

It is this last point that is most important. There will be nice people, difficult people, and miserable people potentially. By walking into their departments you will need to be able to interact with them all. Therefore Interpersonal Skills are important. Interviewers when probing Interpersonal skills are unlikely to ask you questions relating to how you get on with nice people; they tend to focus upon difficult interaction. Questions are likely to be around winning individuals over such as:

“Tell me about a difficult person you had to win over?”

Or

“Give me an example of a strong business relationship you have had to build up, and tell me why building such a relationship up was important”

They may also focus upon your problem solving skills by putting you in a hypothetical work situation:

“The post has left for the evening, and an important manager comes to you asking for an urgent parcel to go out that evening. How would you handle this situation and what would you say?”

The next sentence helps define the organisational skills.

To carry out scheduled collection of mail from agreed locations within the building for **sorting** for further distribution both internally and externally

It is now not just delivering the mail, but also sorting it = Organisational Skill.

For ensuring that mail is sent out externally using **least cost routing by utilising all of the available distribution methods.**

This last sentence introduces new skills. The person needs numeric skills to be able to work out the cheapest way to send mail and parcels out.



This sentence also helps define the Interpersonal Skill requirement, and the need to build up relationships with external postal carriers.

Simply highlighting each of these skills has identified several potential interview areas:

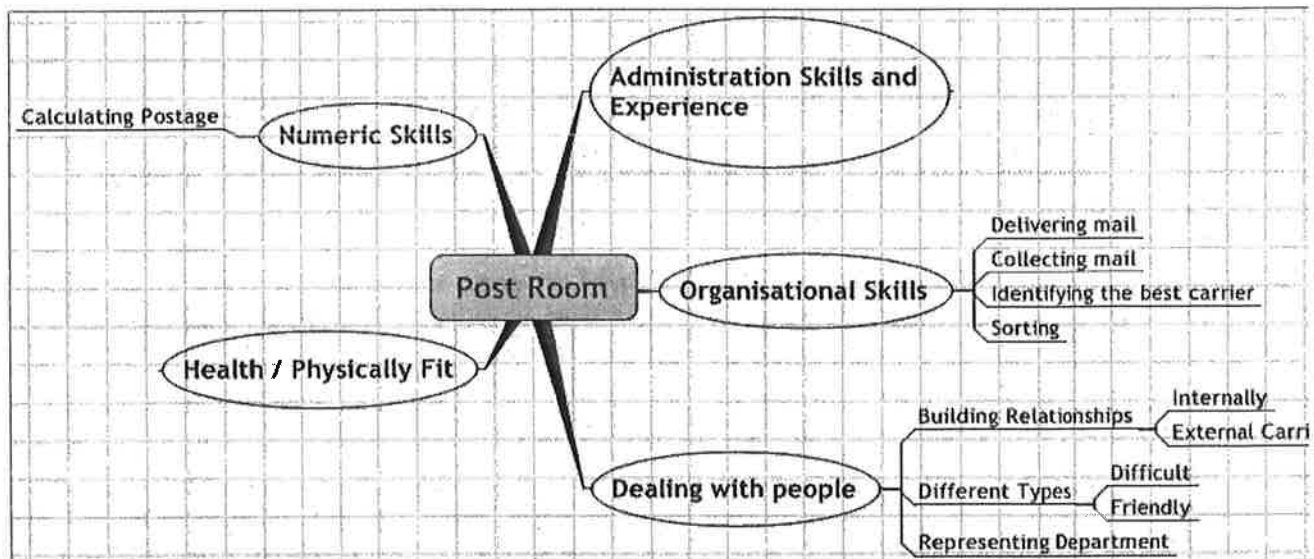
Organisational Administrative Interpersonal Numeric

In preparing for the interview the trick now is to think of questions an interviewer may ask you with regards each of the areas. For example:

“Can you give me an example of where you have had to organise your own workload?”

A technique we find works very well is to transfer this information as you read the job information to a visual diagram based upon Mind Mapping™ Techniques.

Start with a clean sheet of A4 or larger paper if available. Draw a circle in the middle and write “Post Room”. As you identify each of the main skill or experience areas place each into a radiating circle. Linked pieces of information can be added to established facts as below.



By transferring the information you are analysing it, linking relevant facts, and building up a better picture of the role requirements.

Having built up the diagram, write beside each area examples to provide at interview that will demonstrate your experience and skills. Also concentrate upon those areas where you DON'T have the skills, and decide what you would say to handle questions relating to your lack of experience 'objection handling'.

Tip – Also take note how often an area of expertise/skill is mentioned. More important requirements are often highlighted several times

Relating Skill and Experience to answer Typical Questions

Now you have an idea of the skills and experience required in the job, you may decide to include reference to them when answering common interview questions such as:

“What are your strengths?”

A typical answer may be: “I’m hard working, reliable, and a good time keeper”
For the role of Post Room, we identified the need for organisational ability, numeric skills, interpersonal skills, and administration experience. So when answering the question:

“What are your strengths?”

You could reference the required skills:

“I consider myself very well organised, I get on well with people and I am quite capable of dealing with difficult individuals. I also see myself as hard working, reliable and a good time keeper”

By stating that you have skills relating to the role in such a way, your answer becomes much more powerful and presents you as a close match to the job. Be careful however not to just reel off a long list of required skills or experience. Instead choose a few of the most important skill requirements.

Handling Interview Questions

As you have just seen, the trick to being good at interviews is to prepare answers to potential areas of questioning. In a moment we will look at common questions which many interviewers use. Before we do, REMEMBER when preparing your answers there are some simple tips:

When answering a hypothetical question, it is better to provide an example of where you have done something before – demonstrating you have actually dealt with similar situations. Use S.T.A.R as a structure.

When answering some questions where the full facts are not available it may be better to ‘sit on the fence’, as by coming down one way or another you may be shooting yourself in the foot.

Think laterally. If asked a direct question such as “How would you deal with a difficult member of the public?” and you have never had to deal with members of the public, what is the interviewer actually asking? The real question is “How would you deal with a difficult person?” Have you had difficult colleagues to deal with? Think of other times you have had to deal with difficult individuals in a social environment.

Even if you hated your last employer or manager with a vengeance, in an interview play this down. You don’t want to appear to be too negative.



The truth sometimes needs to be 'watered' down! If you are absent minded, forgetful, a poor time keeper, if you reveal these facts at interview you may not get the job. The fact you messed up an order costing your old employer thousands of pounds does also not place you in a positive light.

All the questions you are asked in an interview may be there for a purpose. Even, "Did you find getting here OK?" may be asked to see if you are likely to be late for work.

If you blatantly lie in an interview and you are found out at a later date, you can be sacked.

Try not to talk about "We..." as this can imply you were a passenger and not instrumental in decisions/actions.

Don't waffle in your answers.

Silence! At the end of your answer there is often a gap where there is silence. People hate this silence and most will start to babble to fill the silence, rather than wait to see if the interviewer has a follow on question. If you have answered the question – SHUT UP. If the interviewer is not happy with your answer they will ask a follow on question or move on. Interviewers often use silences as part of their technique to try and see if you will trip yourself up.

Common Interview Questions

Interviewers are usually not very original and ask the same question in slightly different ways.

We have listed examples of some of the common probing questions interviewers use to ascertain responses that fit their role criteria. This is not a comprehensive list and many questions may not apply to your own situation.

Do not think you need to take the list and memorise answers to all of them. Identify those you are most likely to be asked and prepare appropriate answers.

Where you see *****SKILLS**** written beside a question, you can include some of those identified from the previous techniques in your answer to good effect.

Most Common Questions

"What are your strengths?" "What would you bring to this role?" or other alternatives **"What can you do for us that someone else cannot?" "We are considering two other candidates, what makes you better than them?" "We have other applicants, why should you get the job instead of them?" "What are you good at?"**

SKILLS

This is the ideal time to really 'sell' yourself to an employer and highlight your skills and experience. You could say "Hard working, reliable and adaptable" but these do not really sell you to an employer. Think of more original traits.

Alternatively highlight the skills required by the role and identify them as your own as with the Post Room Example: "I'm well organised, good with people; and I believe I have good administration skills..." Try not to include ALL the skills identified, merely the most important

Ask yourself – What are your strengths? Both personal and with regards this particular role. Highlight these. Tenacity...Dedicated...Skills & experience

Always make positive statements that may impress.

One tip if you are too modest or struggling in preparing an answer is to ask a colleague or friend. But remember they have only seen you in certain environments and may not really know all your abilities. To really identify personal strengths, preferences etc, you could invest in a personality profile, which can be very revealing.

A good answer recently: "In my last appraisal my old boss highlighted..."

The Strengths and Weakness questions are probably asked in one way or another in 99% of all interviews.

“How would you describe yourself?”

Similar to the previous question, but this is much more personal in nature.

“What are your weaknesses?” “What personal traits get in the way of you performing your job?” “Why should I not give you the job?”

A very risky and 'killer' question if you are not careful. There are a number of ways to answer it:

- Please try not to be predictable by saying "I'm a perfectionist". If you do use this answer, highlight that "It sounds a cliché...but..."
- One approach is to turn the question into a positive. "My biggest weakness is that I probably spend work too hard and my personal life takes second place". What you're actually saying is that you are very committed to a job. Try and focus upon a more original personal trait, one that although you may highlight it as being a negative, may actually be regarded by the recruiter as a positive. Another example – A Payroll Manager may highlight they may focus too heavily upon the detail at times...possibly not a weakness but expected in that role.
- Another answer would be to pick on a training need everyone would have. People usually need to learn about new products or systems when they start a new job and again, but highlight also that "I'm a quick learner so not a problem" so another positive is mentioned.



- Identify a real weakness and then tell the interviewer what you have done to resolve the problem. “My time management was my biggest weakness; however what I have done to rectify it is...”
- Turn this into a selling opportunity. “For the role in question I don’t think I have any weaknesses, because...” You MUST tell them why by matching yourself to the job. Notice the focus is upon the role. Never simply say you have no weaknesses – everyone has some.
- Identify something that does not impact upon the job. “My hand writing is not the easiest to read, but these days I use a computer and don’t tend to write anything”

IMPORTANT – Prepare this answer well and reflect on your answer. Does your chosen weakness impact on your ability to do the job applied for? What is the most negative interpretation? Could your answer lose you the job?

“Tell me about yourself!” “Talk me through your CV!” “What sort of person are you?”

An Interviewer is looking for a BRIEF summary of your career and work history. What they are trying to do is to see how your skills and experience would fit into their company. Keep your answer relevant to the role you have applied for. They may also want to hear about you as an individual and how you have developed your career. Summarise your career rather than bore your Interviewer.

People when answering this question tend to go into far too much detail. Practice summarising your CV and get it down to a few minutes.

Inexperienced interviewers may use this question to help fill up time...

“Where do you see yourself in 2, 3 or 5 years time?”

They want to know how ambitious you are. You would need to fully understand the position to answer this question well. It may be best to sit on the fence if you are not sure of the opportunities to progress within the business. If the role has no promotion prospects, by saying you are ambitious may lose you the job. Vice versa also, by saying you are happy to stay in the same role for a number of years when the interviewer is succession planning may also lose you the job. You may choose to ‘sit on the fence’ and an answer could be “If I’m still enjoying the role I could still see myself in it in a few years time, however, I’m also one to take opportunities as they come along”. Then ask what opportunities do exist.

Career Questions

“Why did you choose this career path?”

They want to know where you are coming from, what motivates you, try to avoid “Oh I seemed to fall into...” and talk about aspects you enjoy.

“How successful do you think you have been in your career so far?”

Certainly do not say you are a failure! Try to focus upon some of your achievements, and link together to show a planned set of career moves.



“What would you be looking to achieve in the first 3 or 6 months?” or, an alternative, **“How long would it take before you made a meaningful contribution to our organisation?”**

The most likely reason you are asked this question is because the company needs you to be up to speed and contributing to their organisation very quickly. Your answer should reflect this, but also realistic.

“Do you prefer to work for a large organisation, or a small company?” and **“Why?”**

Your research should give you an idea of their company size so try to relate your answer to them. You may want to sit on the fence “Either, a small organisation offers greater responsibilities, a larger one more opportunities”

“You have not been with your current employer a long time, why are you looking to move now?”

The answer could be ‘broken promises’ but you need to be careful how you phrase things. Ask yourself why you are looking for a new job and be as honest as possible. It is OK to state the role was only a stop gap, but be careful in your answer.

“You have been with your current employer a long time, why are you only now looking to move?”

New opportunity, time to move on, career blockage, are all reasonable answers. Ask yourself why you are looking for a new job and be as honest as possible.

Personal Questions

“How do you take criticism?”

No one takes it well, but a boss wants to feel you will listen to it and take onboard their ideas, certainly not bear a grudge for a few weeks. The fact you are asked this question may imply the interviewer has had staff who took criticism badly.

How do you handle conflict?”

The role you are applying for may place you in a situation where conflict can occur. A good answer is to provide an example to demonstrate how you have dealt with a real life situation in the past.

“How do you like to be managed?”

To answer this question well, you need to understand the individual you will be working for. If their preferred management style is to have daily reports or conversations, to state that you like to be left alone to get on with things may not go down too well, or vice versa. A way of dealing with this is to turn the question back on them and state that you are quite open to different management styles. Ask them how they would want to manage you. Interviews are two way processes and by asking this question you can identify if there style is one you can work under and reflect on whether this is the job for you.

“Would you describe yourself as being creative or innovative?” “Why?”

Not everyone is creative and it may be enough to say “Personally, no, but I know how to learn from others and build upon the best parts of their ideas to ensure best practice.”

“How would you describe your personality?”

‘Jolly’; ‘miserable’; ‘overpowering’; ‘depressing’; ‘easy going’; ‘laid back’. This can be turned into an opportunity to talk about your strengths, but be careful. Laid back can imply lazy, easy going says you are a push over and implies a weak manager. An Interviewer taking on a more challenging interview style may throw these comments back at you with negative connotations. If you however say you are a bit of a comedian this can imply you may be disruptive.

“How would your boss describe you?”

****SKILLS**** This is a good chance to ‘sell’ yourself with terms such as hard working, self motivated, dedicated etc. Honesty may not be the best policy when answering this question...

“How do you feel about carrying out mundane or repetitive work?”

“No problem” if the role includes such tasks. Try to give an example of where you have previously carried out similar mundane tasks.

“Which parts of your current role do you dislike or find boring?”

The interviewer will make direct comparisons to the job on offer. If you state you dislike the amount of admin within your current role, and the new role involves admin, you will be shooting yourself in the foot.

“Describe your ideal job to me”

A risky question, as you may outline a number of traits that are not in the job you are applying for. ****SKILLS****

“How would you define success?”

Try not to focus on a big house, or a Ferrari, think about the greater things in life and a good answer is to focus at a higher level. You could talk about achieving short term goals, bringing up your children to be happy and responsible citizens. Possibly focus upon a personal achievement or your career successes.

“What parts of our job do you think you would not enjoy so much?”

Simple answer is “None”. Highlight any aspects and you are shooting yourself in the foot. You may want to highlight what appeals to you about the job ****SKILLS****

“What motivates you?” or “What gets you out of bed in the morning?”

For sales people it is mainly money, for others challenge, opportunity, enjoyment.

“What attracts you to this role?”

Simply ask yourself, “Why did I apply in the first instance?” If the motivation is not clear or ‘because it is a job that pays money’ try and bring into your answer elements of the job or your background that are relevant ****SKILLS****

You can include aspects such as your long term career goals, if you have any, and how the role relates to them/offers opportunity to you. Be careful however if highlighting opportunities to develop your skills as this may imply you need a lot of training!

“If we look back over the last year, have you changed at all or learnt any new skills?” “Looking at your personal development, what new skills have you learnt in the last year or two?”

The answer may be genuinely ‘no’ due to being an experienced individual, but try and identify something as this shows you are looking for self development.

“How do you keep your skills up to date?”

A similar question to that above, the interviewer is looking to see whether you seek self development.

Relationships

“How good are you at building relationships?” followed by **“Tell me about the most successful/strongest business relationship you have developed.”** It could be with a supplier, customer or colleague in another part of the business. Think of an example in your preparation.

“Who is the most difficult person you have had to deal with/win over, and how did you get them on your side?” or **“Give me an example of a difficult client/colleague relationship you have been able to ‘win round.’ ”**

What they want to see is how you can get people round to your way of thinking and win them over to your ideas. If you have identified the role interacts with other people, ALWAYS prepare an answer to this question.

Sales

“What has been the most difficult sale?” or **“Who has been the most difficult client you have been able to gain business from?”** and **“How did you win them over?”**

This does not have to be a large sale, just an example of a difficult individual who you ‘won over’

“Which ‘Sale’ are you most proud of and why?”

Try and give a different example to the previous question.

“What do you need to earn to make you comfortable?”

Often asked in sales or performance targeted role where bonuses, based on performance, are paid. An employer is looking for you to still be ‘hungry’ for more money and success, even if you are on a £250k basic salary.

“How do you handle rejection?”

Again try to give an example. This question is commonly used for sales related roles. Do not say “Badly.” Read between the lines, if things are not going well for you, can you pick yourself up, put it behind you, and move on?



BE WARNED – An old technique still used by interviewers with sales people is to interject words such as ‘chemistry’, ‘rhubarb’ or ‘thunder’ during the interview to see if they can carry on the conversation and pick up the thread.

Motivation to Change Jobs

“Why are you looking to leave your current job?”

Do not criticise your existing employers even if they are dreadful and you dislike them. Safe answers include. “It is time for me to move on as I have done all I can there”, “I am looking for a new challenge”, “I am looking to progress my career and the opportunities do not exist with my current employer”. Do not say you are bored as this projects you in a negative image, so think through your answer well.

“Why did you leave your last job?”

The Interviewer may be looking at your motivation and reasons behind your move. They may be digging for any problems you had with your last employer. This is a question that needs careful preparation, especially if you were made redundant through a compromise agreement due to your face not fitting. If you were sacked, rehearse your answer. Often in compromise agreements it is agreed that both parties will tell the same story.

If you were made redundant as part of a general downsizing, state that you were one of....made redundant, thus highlighting it was not just you that went! This can be misinterpreted. Also if the redundancy process was one of re-applying for your job or a points scoring process, if you do reference this within your answer be warned that by doing so may place you in a negative light!

If you had a horrible manager, try not to focus upon all your problems. If you can reasonably put across what happened, and not sound bitter or detrimental towards your former employer, this is the best strategy. Alternatively focus upon the fact you were looking for a new challenge.

“What are you looking for in a job?” “What are you looking for in your next job?”

Try and talk about things that relate to the job you are applying for ****SKILLS****. You could be more general in your reply, but, be warned; if you start talking about an ideal role you could easily shoot yourself in the foot as the interviewer will be comparing your answer to the job on offer.

Housekeeping

“What is your current salary and what salary are you expecting?” “What salary are you looking for?”

Remember to talk about your whole package and not just the salary. When asked what you are looking for, be realistic as, if not careful, you could very easily price yourself out of a job. You may also have been paid a higher salary in your previous role, and your expectations may need to be reviewed.

“Why are you looking to relocate? How does your family view the possibility?”

This is always a major concern to a recruiter when hiring from out of the area. If possible, evidence a previous relocation experience. Also identify to the interviewer any ties to the area, or a lack of ties elsewhere.

“Are you willing to travel as part of the job role?”

This often infers overnight stays; if in previous jobs this was required refer back to it. Simple answer is “No problem I’m quite happy to travel and stay away as required” but be honest to yourself “Happy to stay away one night per week” etc.

“How much training do you think you will need to be able to perform this job to the best of your ability?” or “What training and support do you think you will need to help make you successful in this role?”

Another risky question! If you highlight too many areas you are shooting yourself in the foot. Product training and systems training are reasonably safe answers.

“Have you taken time off to come here today?”

In other words, “Are you skiving? And will you take unofficial time off if we employ you?” Even if you have worked into your day time for the interview, via a Doctors appointment, it is possibly best to say that you have taken holiday time off.

“What other interviews have you had?” or “What other jobs are you applying for?”

Here they may be looking to see if you are keen to find work similar to the job they have on offer or are applying for anything you see advertised. Or they may be trying to see whether they have competition for your services from other employers. If you are at the interview stage with others, you should mention this to them, but add the comment “However, of all the roles, I must say your job seems to be the one I would favour”.

Remember the Interviewer wants to feel special and that their job is your ‘number one’. If asked the question “How does our job compare to the others?” remember the interviewer wants to feel you really want their job, and not be second best.

“When can you start?”

No, you have not got the job, but it is a good sign. If you have to give 3 months notice, even if you are not sure that you could reduce it, state you ‘think’ that it may be reduced, but would need to investigate. If the job is vacant, the deciding factor may be how quickly you, or another applicant, could start. Better to get the job offer and then try to get your notice reduced, as most employers are flexible.

“If offered the job, how long do you think it will be before you get bored and look to move on?” “How long do you see yourself staying with your next employer?”

Although people tend to move jobs every few years, employers still expect employees to make much longer commitments. If you have had a number of very short term roles, the interviewer may need reassurance that you intend to stay.

“So what questions do you have for us?”

A question asked at the end of an interview. We suggest preparing a list, writing the questions down and not relying upon your memory. SEE LATER SECTION.

Team Questions**“Do you regard yourself as working as part of a team currently?” “What team do you see yourself as belonging to?”**

If the role you are applying for involves team work, an interviewer may focus upon exiting team work to prove you are a team player. These questions are used to identify whether you see yourself as part of a team.

“What types of people do you find difficult to work with?”

‘Risky’ question. Unless you fully understand the situation and the people you would be working with.

“Do you prefer to work on your own or as part of a team?”

You need to read the situation with regards to the role you are applying for. A safe answer is to sit on the fence and say that you enjoy team work but are sufficiently self motivated to work on your own.

“How would you describe your role in a team?”

Think carefully about how you answer this question. You can describe yourself as a leader, an inspirational ideas person, or an organiser. If you are applying for a management or team leader role, be a leader!

“Are you a Team Player?” “Give me an example.”

The best example is a work related situation but, if you play a lot of sports, team games are also good examples.

For managers it is important to recognise that they are a team player when sat within their peer group, but when managing their own staff they are not true team players, they are the boss. As a leader you are not a true team player as you have to tell others what to do and potentially make difficult decisions.

Management Questions**“How would you motivate a team and gain their commitment?”**

If possible provide a real life example to demonstrate your methodology.

“Tell me about your management style?” or “How would your staff describe you as a manager?”

The usual answers come out here, but please avoid “Firm but fair” and try to be more original. Good answers link into examples without being prompted. So “Firm because...” “Fair because...” The latest version is ‘Hard but fair’. An original answer would be to talk about being ‘collaborative in approach’ or ‘hands on manager who likes to lead by example’ (if that is your style). Try to think about your style and link to it an example to support your answer.

Also remember that managers are there to achieve results. If you state your style is “laid back and easy going” this can be interpreted as you running a holiday camp! Balance your answer to include achievement focus.

“How would you deal with a team member or work colleague who is not performing?”

You need to demonstrate both compassion and that you are also willing to take on responsibility. Be prepared to mention disciplinary procedures, as in any management role, you can only tolerate under performance for a short period of time.

“How do you feel about firing staff?”

Focus your answer more around how you try and work with under performance and see discipline as the last, but sometimes necessary, step. Most employers want to see a supportive manager who will not write people off, but will try to sort out performance issues. But at the same time don't project yourself as being a soft touch.

“How easy do you find it to dismiss staff?”

A similar question to the previous one but asked where a situation may mean taking hard decisions.

“How much of your role was ‘strategically’ as opposed to ‘operationally’ focused?” followed by **“Can you give me an example of a strategic change you introduced?”**

A lot of managers think they are strategic but are really operational. The question is very much focused on ‘prove you are strategic’. Provide an example of a strategic decision you made and not one you implemented (which is operational).

“Would your staff say you are a good manager?”

The obvious answer is “Yes”. The next question will be “Why?” so you will need to be able to expand upon your answer, providing reasons and examples. Similar question to “What is your management style” focusing more on staff interaction.

“What management decisions do you find it difficult to make?”

A dangerous question as your answer could demonstrate personal weakness.

“How would your work colleagues describe you?” or **“How would the staff working for you describe you?”**

A similar question used before but in a management context, the Interviewer is looking for how ‘they’ may view your management style. Often, the evidence you provide, is how you see yourself, rather than how you think they view you.

“What is it about you that makes you a good manager?”

Again, it is asking about your style of management, but you can draw on your experience and exposure to situations.

“Who has been your best manager, and why?” or **“How do you like to be managed?”**

They are trying to identify whether you prefer to be left alone to get on with things or need to be controlled. Often a role may be home based so being self motivated is important, however, your new boss may want daily contact and reporting, so an 'on the fence' answer may be best.

“What was your last manager like?”

Any negative comments will not be taken well by the Interviewer, after all, if you criticise your former boss what would you say about the Interviewer, your potential new boss! Try and be positive and temper any adverse comments.

“Looking at your decision making, would you describe your approach as more collaborative or directive?” followed by “If you had to put percentages against each, what would they be?”

Some people are more directive; others collaborative. This question is similar to “Describe your management style” but focuses upon decision making in particular. There is no right and wrong answer, but the interviewer may be looking for an individual who favours one style more than the other. Follow on questions will try and pin you down so you provide examples of your decision making in action.

“When managing staff, do you alter your approach or adapt your style of management ever?”

Some managers will not alter their style and that may work well for them. Others will adapt it around the individual. What is your own preference?

“What sorts of tasks would you delegate to others?”

Try and think of a few examples and the reasons behind your actions.

Out of the Box Thinking

“If we offered you this job, what is the first thing you would do?” “How would you approach this job?”

To be able to answer this question you need to have a good grasp of the role. If asked this question the interviewer is possibly looking for an action orientated answer and not “I'd learn where everyone sits...”

“On reflection, what would you do differently with your life or in your career to date?”

Be careful as it is a risky question. The best answer is “Nothing”. If it is clear from your CV you have made mistakes possibly admit them.

“What is the most innovative idea you have come up with?”

Think of a good example and be prepared to say why it was so good

“Why should we offer you this job?” “Why do you want this job?”

SKILLS Include in your answer aspects of the role that really appeal. Talk about where you see your career going, what you are looking for in a job, also the variety and interesting aspects of the job in question. You need to get across your genuine interest in the company and role.

“Looking at your current role, what problems have you identified that had previously been overlooked?” “What changes did you put into place in your last role?” “If you had the opportunity, what changes would you introduce in your current business?”

If you identified some changes, talk about them. The natural follow on is to be asked “What did you do about changing things or introducing them?” If you say “Not a lot”, having identified things, the impression is not good. However, if you raised them but were blocked in making changes, it shows how you are looking to add value and improvements to a business, even if you could do nothing with your ideas.

“If you had to invite 10 people to a dinner party, anyone you like, who would you invite and why?”

An interesting question that reveals more about you than you would think. It can bring out family ties, values, political preferences; demonstrate your intellectual ability. Not just a light hearted fun question.

“If you were an animal, what sort of animal would you be?” and “Why?”

A lion, as they are big and strong; a sheep, as I am a follower and do not lead. Some animals are better examples than others.

“Name three people you really admire.” And “Why do you admire them?”

The answer can show how well read you are, and where you place personal values.

“What was the last book you read/film you saw?”

If you say ‘War and Peace’ one image of you is projected, ‘Harry Potter’ a different image, ‘The Dangerous Book for Boys’ yet another, and ‘Teach Yourself NLP’ something different again. Remember the Interviewer may have also read the book/seen the film and trip you up with detailed questions, so you must choose a book or film you have read or seen.

“What is your claim to fame?”

Designed to put you on the spot and test your mental agility.

“What colour is your brain and why?”

Colour psychology and “grey and mushy” is not acceptable.

Performance/Target Achievements

“What would you say is your greatest achievement to date?” “What has been your biggest success at work?”

Your achievements should be included on your CV. Memorise what you have highlighted, and practice describing them. Often the interviewer is looking for strong commitment, initiative, innovation and ideas.

“Why do you want this job?” “What attracts you to this role?”

SKILLS Talk about the job and the parts that appeal to you, you can introduce elements relating to the company.



“What sort of targets have you worked to in the past?” then “Did you achieve those targets?”

Be prepared to quote numeric or activity level targets. If you have not had any formal targets start talking about working under pressure, having to prioritise workload, and achieving deadlines.

“How do you decide what targets to set for yourself and others?”

The question is usually aimed at managers and the interviewer is looking at the reasoning behind target setting. Mentioning stretch targets often gains extra brownie points.

“Can you work under pressure and deal with deadlines?” “How do you cope with pressure?” “What deadlines are you used to working to?”

The Interviewer wants to hear that you can work under pressure and the best way to demonstrate this is to provide examples.

“If you get to the end of the day and there are jobs still to be done, how would you deal with this situation?”

The interviewer is probably looking for an answer focused upon prioritising, but above all that you demonstrate commitment to ensure urgent jobs are dealt with.

“You seem to be a little overqualified for this role; will it really keep you motivated?”

The kiss of death for a lot of people, or is it? What they are often doing is testing the water to see how you react. The devious Interviewer may re-phrase the question as “Looking at your background, would you not see yourself more as a...” Simply disagree with them, but it may be worth first finding out what they are focusing on, “Why do you think that?” Talk about how you see the role as interesting, having its own challenges, the fact, possibly, that you no longer want to be in a more demanding role, but be careful with this last one. Look then straight in the eye as you answer, if you can, as this will convey conviction behind your statement.

“When did you last fail in a task?” “What was it?”

Be careful what you choose. It may show weakness. To say you never fail will not be accepted. One trick is to lay blame at someone else’s door...

“Tell me about when you last missed a deadline?”

Everyone, at some time, will miss a deadline. An easy deflection is to blame lack of input from others but stress “I did all I could to try and hit the deadline.” If you state you have never missed a deadline, expect to be ‘challenged’.

“From what you know of the role, what do you see as the most important Key Performance Indicators (KPI’s)?” “What KPI’s would you set for your staff?”

This question is often asked in a watered down way “What do you think we are expecting from the person who gets the job?” *SKILLS* If you have analysed the role properly you should have an understanding of the key elements and

potentially expectations. You need to apply both your own experience and knowledge of the role to be able to answer this question well.

“How do you organise your workload?” “How do you prioritise your workload?”

The interviewer is looking for an answer which includes identifying item prioritising, possibly delegating items to others, but above all having a structured approach.

General/Background

“What do you know about our company?”

This is covered in your preparation. We would reiterate our previous advice, to take ‘print outs’ from their website and produce them, which often ‘impresses’.

“What do you know about our industry?”

This should really be looked at in your research. If they sell hydraulic valves, find out what they are used for. Roles involving ‘Sales’ will need to identify who their competitors may be, who they sell to, and possibly identify target industries.

“Why do you want to work for us?”

****SKILLS**** A fantastic opportunity to ‘sell’ yourself, but you must be relevant; good company, exciting job on offer, wonderful opportunity to develop. Do not however highlight the training and experience you will gain too strongly as this may imply you are in need of a lot of development. Also – remember an interviewer wants to know that it is the role for you more than the right company, so if you rave about the organisation, rave also about the job on offer.

“Why do you think you are right for this job?”

****SKILLS**** Think of what skills you have that relate to the job and tell them. You can then include personal traits such as ‘hard working’, ‘dedicated’, etc.

“What hobbies or interests do you have away from work?” “How do you spend your free time?”

Remember that if you state on your CV that you are a keen squash player, they will be expecting this to be included. If you have not played squash for 10 years it may be worth removing it from your CV.

“Tell me about your family?”

This can be asked quite innocently to find out more about you. An Interviewer could be looking for a strong family ethos in new employees. Certain cultures place great store on family values and often promote a family atmosphere. Smaller businesses, and those still run by the founder, may also look at your family values to see how they align with their ‘team’ values.

HOWEVER – This question can be ‘loaded.’ Women often get asked this as a way of finding out if they are looking to start a family, or have child care arrangements in place.



“Who has been the most difficult person you have worked with?”

The Interviewer is trying to identify how you deal with conflict. Always refer to an example, but choose it well. If in a management situation, you may provide an example of a staff member who was a problem. It could be a client contact or work colleague, even your former manager could be a good example. They are looking for a positive outcome.

“Why did you study...at....?”

It may be asked to see if you had a different career in mind. There is no problem stating that you studied a subject purely for interest but had no intention of following it through as a career (if you changed direction).

“Why should we offer you this job?”

****SKILLS**** One answer could be to reference to key elements of the role. Another to impress the Interviewer with what you can add to their company, that you have the skills and experience needed. Even highlight extra skills and experience you bring (if you have analysed the job in great detail). You can also talk about commitment, energy and drive.

☞ Each of these questions is, in its own way, very straightforward but is also a potential ‘Elephant Trap’. Think through your answer to each question, relate to your own situation, and write it down. Doing so will start you on the right track and, hopefully, boost your confidence in the interview.

REMEMBER - 95% of the questions are asked to find out more about you, your experience and preferences. Think about the job role and the skills, experience, traits etc they are looking for and relate your answers to them. If you have analysed the job beforehand this becomes very easy.

Do not think you need to prepare answers for all the questions. If a question refers to management or strategic thinking and you are not a manager or, are applying for an operational role, ignore them.

The ‘Out of the Box’ questions are rarely asked, but worth thinking about ‘just in case’. They are mainly asked by MD’s or senior managers who often try to be a little different and less predictable in their questioning.

Questions an Interviewer cannot ask you

Nowadays, legislation prevents Interviewers asking questions in several subject areas. Asking such questions could result in Criminal Proceedings against the Interviewer. These areas are:

- Sex
- Race
- Nationality
- Disability
- Age

If you are ever asked such questions there are several ways of dealing with them:

- Politely state that you feel the question is one you would prefer not to answer, as you do not see it as being relevant to your application.
- Respond as you would anyway and answer the question. An easy way of dealing with many of the inappropriate questions but nevertheless not right.
- Ask a question back such as “If I was planning to start a family would it have any bearing on my application?”
- Point out that, under legislation, the Interviewer has no right to ask that type of question.
- Ask a very direct question back highlighting the area they are discriminating on “I think what you were really asking me was whether I could potentially be taking time off in the near future for maternity leave. Is that correct?”
- Ignore the question and re-direct the conversation.

One thing to consider, regardless of your response, your answer could easily cost you the job. But do you want to work for an individual with such values? Be prepared for these tricky and illegal questions.

Men often think they would not be discriminated against due to having children. But if they are not the main bread winner and this fact is revealed, an interviewer looking to discriminate may assume that they take time off if the children are ill.

We would not condone lying, but one approach when asked one of these questions is to volunteer additional information which may not always be accurate.

For example “Do you have a family?” which could be asked innocently. Answer “Yes, two children aged 4 and 7. The nice thing is that we have good child care arrangements in place to look after them if they are on holiday or ill”. Whether child care arrangements are in place or not who would know. “How old are you?” Totally illegal question! Answer “I’m 63, but financial considerations mean I’m not looking to retire until I’m at least 70”, the last part possibly not being true...but identifying you could be with them 7 and not 2 years.

Telephone Interviews

It is becoming increasingly common for there to be a telephone interview before a face to face one.

If the role is in a ‘Call/Contact Centre’, the purpose is more to hear how you are able to communicate over the phone and express your ideas, rather than exactly what you say.

Other roles may also involve telephone interviews these days. Managers are hard to pin down and it can be a logistical nightmare getting numerous people



together at the same time. The Interviewer is able to ask questions relating to the role, to give them an impression as to just how close the applicants skills and background are to the job/person specification they have. Also, it helps keep travel costs to a minimum, especially when running graduate or national recruitment campaigns.

Treat these interviews with the same importance as a face to face one and prepare for them in the same way. Research the company and prepare your answers to the typical questions and identify skill and experience based questions utilising the technique described previously.

Remember to also try and choose a time when the children will not be screaming in the background, the TV blaring away, or other distracting background noise may be present. Also go into a separate room so you can really concentrate and take any notes with you.

Questions will be direct, usually competence or skill based, and the whole session may last merely 10 or 15 minutes.

TIP – Mind Map the role (page 36), then on plain paper write in a thick felt tip pen each individual skill/experience area identified (so you can see it at a distance). Next under each area think of an example you could provide to evidence your ability, write down some bullet points. Spread the sheets on the floor in front of you during the telephone interview and as the topic area is raised, pick up the sheet, and use it as a crib sheet. Telephone Interview tend to be Evidence (Competency) Based

Second Interviews

If you get a second, or final, interview it is important to remember that the job is not in the bag until the job offer is in your hands. Treat all interviews as if they were your first and expect surprises.

For example, an invitation to come in for a few hours and meet the team could mean sitting in a room, with ten individuals who you have never previously met, being asked a barrage of questions. Not the expected friendly walk around the building and quick hello with lots of coffee!

Meeting the Managing Director

The Managing Director (MD) often wants a quick look at who his managers are proposing as good recruits. Often, only one person will go forward to meet the MD and, as such, confidence in getting the job is high for the candidate.

This is the most difficult of all situations, as you have to re-sell yourself from scratch within 20 minutes. They did not attend the previous interview(s), but they have the final veto and you need to react accordingly.



Simple tips are; be confident, personable and enthusiastic about the role. Review your list of questions, particularly, the out of the box ones, and don't expect to get the role without really selling yourself again.

Panel Interviews / More than one Interviewer

A Panel Interview is where you face a group of people asking you questions, and it can be quite daunting. Usually, one person will ask all the questions, but you may find all of them throwing questions at you.

Address your answers mainly to the person who asked the question, but make sure that you look at each of the individuals present, do not just focus upon the person asking the questions. We recommend looking at the person asking the question 90% of the time, the other panel members by glancing 10% of the time.

Interviewer Styles

Not all Interviewers ask their questions in a nice way, an experienced one will often latch onto innocent comments, throwing things back at you with suppositions attached, just to see how you react.

There are several main types/styles of interview:

The Chat

Although we focus on the questions you could be asked at an interview, most people will only conduct interviews a few times a year and are hopeless at it. As they tend to centre on the obvious easy questions it is more important for you to ensure that you draw your experience into the conversation. They may dwell more on the weather than you. Later we talk about having your own interview agenda which will help with such waffle focused interviews.

Competency Based

This type of interview is now widely used. The definition of a 'competency' is:

The condition of being capable = ability

In simple terms, a competency can be seen as a skill or relevant experience that signifies an individual can perform a job well.

An Interviewer will look at their job requirement, identify the ideal set of skills and experience a candidate should have, then, as part of the interview, ask questions around those skill areas, drawing out work based examples.



For instance: The job we are recruiting for is that of Team Leader, managing 15 staff, some of which are not performing as the company would like. The skills the Interviewer will look for are the abilities to:

- lead/manage a team of 15 people
- handle problem team members and resolve issues
- achieve desired company targets or results
- gain a team's commitment
- motivate individuals in the team
- coach and challenge team members to ensure top performance
- monitor performance and set KPI's

The Interviewer will ask about previous management of teams, how they motivated them, and how they dealt with team members who were not achieving their targets. To get this information they will start most questions with "Can you give me an example of..."

They are attempting to elicit examples from you of what you have previously done, so they can measure your experience and skills more precisely from the content of your answers.

The examples you give will not be taken at face value as the Interviewer will want to delve deeper to identify the thought processes, quiz you on the results achieved, and ask reflective questions such as, "If you had the same situation again, what would you do differently?"

Notice this last question is not "Could you have done anything better?" but an assumption that something may not have been done properly. You can state "Nothing" and, dependent on the Interviewer, this may be accepted at face value or challenged.

These interviews are much more intense and focused, with questions such as:

"Give me an example...", "Tell me about a time when..."

The Interviewer will then explore and drill down into the detail. If we look at the question:

"Who has been the most difficult person you have had to work with..."

A follow on question could be "Talk me through how you won them round?" or "How did you win them over?"

Use the S.T.A.R. Technique as highlighted earlier in the guide as the basis for your answers. See page 36

Challenging Interviewer

One interview technique is to take things you say and throw them back at you, to see how you react to being criticised or challenged. They are trying to see if you get easily flummoxed, possibly even bring out aggression. If not sure how to answer their question, throw it back at them "Why do you think that?" giving yourself time to reflect.

The technique often involves the Interviewer making statements and assumptions aimed at putting you under pressure to see how you react. Alternatively, they could try to get you to agree with statements that will prevent you getting the job. Under pressure, people's answers will often become very honest.

For example, an interviewee who is a manager may state that they have "an easy going and laid back management style". The interviewer utilising this technique may comment "I'd love to work at your place!"

"Thank you" says the interviewee. "Yes, I've always wanted to work in a holiday camp where everyone does what they want..."

Managers are there to achieve results and by negatively interpreting "easy going and laid back" the interviewer is directly criticising the interviewees management style and undermining its effectiveness. This is why it is important to prepare set answers before hand, and think about how others can interpret your answers.

If you spot this style of questioning, stay calm and gather your thoughts before answering. Take time out to think, as the Interviewer will often speed up the questioning and openly interrupt or change direction quickly. A simple trick is to try and slow down the conversation by providing a more detailed answer. But an experienced Interviewer will spot what you are doing and interrupt, focusing you back to the original question.

These really are the most difficult to handle and, no matter what preparation you do, far harder to control. By having thought through your experience, chosen careful examples and prepared for the typical questions, you will be in a far better position than most.

Nice and relaxed conversation

Because of their relaxed style the Interviewer will often attempt to draw you into agreeing with a line of questioning.

A sales person, for instance, may have done some account management in their last role. The role they have applied for is New Business Development which involves a lot of door opening and what is known as Hunting. The Interviewer will explore both sides of the role through questioning, possibly asking "Do you have a preference towards account management or new business sales?" Unless the person states new business the Interviewer may then focus more upon account management experience and eventually state "Looking at your experience I think



your real strength lies in account management, what do you think?" Say "Yes" and you might as well go home now, as the vacancy is new business.

There is nothing wrong with taking the middle ground and stating that you get a buzz from winning new business, but also enjoy account management. There may be another job on offer that you did not know about.

This leading technique has many forms:

"From what you have told me about your experience, I think you would be better suited to... rather than the role you have applied for."

"Looking at your background, I think you would have trouble adapting to..."

What makes people agree with these statements and questions that make them shoot themselves in the foot is the relaxed and very friendly approach the Interviewer takes. The Interviewer's style is to be jovial, very relaxed, and overtly cunning.

Value Based Interviews

Where an organisation is founded upon social, ecological, political or environmental foundations interviews may focus upon company/business values.

In our opinion such interviews are the worst to undertake and are hard to predict. They are difficult to handle as they are competency/example based, but focus upon the business values and require a lot of quick thinking. They may also take into account your views upon political or other issues impacting upon their business. Preparation can help.

For instance a teacher may be asked about their view on SATS testing, a nurse upon current government policies and funding. In both cases their social values may be explored and thus their reasons for following their profession.

More difficult questions are pure value based.

"We believe in valuing people we support and being flexible around their needs. Can you please describe a situation which demonstrates your own ability to value a person and your own flexibility?"

"Integrity in how we support people along with an ability to show compassion is important to our business. Can you give me an example which demonstrates your own ability to show compassion and integrity?"

A company website may provide hints to value based questioning. If there is a mention of the business values, take note, then try and think of examples that could demonstrate your own values are close to theirs.

Value based questions often appear in vocational interviews, so be clear in your motives to become a Doctor, Nurse, Teacher, etc.

Mental Preparation before an Interview

The last factor that can really make the difference is how you feel going into an interview.

The tricks are:

- Try and chill out the previous evening.
- Do not drink too much alcohol as you need to be sharp the next day.
- Go to bed early.
- Concentrate on how much preparation you have done and you will realise that you are well prepared for the interview.
- If listening to music on the way to your interview play something up beat and to get you feeling good. Do not play soothing music as you need to be on top form.

The Interview Day

Simple tips are:

- Arrive with plenty of time to spare and, certainly, not late. First impressions really do count
- Take a comfort break, check your appearance and compose yourself
- Sweaty palms often appear due to nervousness. One tip is to place your right palm face downwards on you skirt or trousers, any sweat will then hopefully be absorbed. As the Interviewer arrives quickly rub your palm on the material to dry it off. Even if you do not think you suffer from sweaty palms, do this to be on the safe side
- Talk to the receptionist, it allows you to clear your throat and exercise your vocal cords. You can also fill in a few gaps in your research
- When the Interviewer arrives, stand-up, shake their hand (firm but not crushing). Try to make some small talk, if you can think of something to say, as they lead you through, "These are nice offices..." etc
- If you are a smoker, had garlic the night before, or have halitosis, chew a mint before hand, but rather than try and swallow the mint as the interviewer arrives, potentially choking due to having a dry mouth, place the mint in the bin in the toilets.

The Interview

Summary of tips (some have previously been touched on):

- Turn off your mobile phone before you go in.
- Don't chew gum in the interview.

- If offered a drink, opt for water. You won't be sat trying to sip a hot drink, nor if you drop it on your lap will it stain, a double benefit!
- Be careful with your body language, in particular crossed arms make you look defensive, so place your hands on your lap or hold your drink in one hand.
- Smile and be positive in your statements and remarks
- Do not waffle in your answers!
- If, when you talk, you tend to use your hands a lot, be careful not to appear like a windmill.
- Do not swing from side to side on your chair.
- Keep calm and try not to be flustered. One trick is to remember that everyone has to use the toilet, picture them sitting on it, but make sure you do not laugh!
- Do not keep interrupting the Interviewer or try to speak over them. In particular, wait until they have finished asking you the question before you answer it.
- Do not monopolise the conversation to such an extent that the Interviewer is unable to ask questions.
- If you are not sure of a question, get the Interviewer to repeat it or explain what they mean.
- Keep good eye contact (if you are able).
- If you are being interviewed by more than one person, direct your answer to the person asking the question but, also look at the other people. Do not ignore them.
- Do not mention salary to them, only talk about the package if they direct the question at you.
- By all means ask about the hours of work etc, but put it in such a way that you are not perceived to be a clock watcher.
- Be enthusiastic about the role and company.
- Remember you are trying to sell yourself.
- Make positive re-assuring statements to things they say "That sounds good."
- Have a list of questions to ask at the end, as they want to see your interest in the role and Company. One trick is to prepare some questions beforehand and write them down on a pad. Open the pad at the required moment.
- Firm handshake(s) at the end.
- Be careful if you are in sales or have learnt how to 'mirror' a person.

Handshakes – A key part to providing a good impression is your handshake. If you are not used to shaking a persons hand, practice with someone you know.

Questions to ask

We cannot give example questions to ask as these differ for each application, but relate them to the Company, Job role and opportunity on offer.

When asked 'Do you have any questions?' the interviewer is not testing your memory, but giving you the opportunity to ask them a few questions having just answered many of theirs. So write down a few on a pad before your interview and take them with you.

One area you should try and avoid raising is salary and package details as this can give the wrong impression, however, freely enter into conversation with your Interviewer when they raise it with you.

When asked "What questions do you have for us?"

Open your folder and ask your pre-prepared questions, if already answered, by the physical process of opening your file, reading the questions, and answering:

"You have actually answered all the questions I was going to ask."

They will know that you had prepared some and thought about the interview. This is far better than the usual "My mind has gone blank, I can't think of any at present..."

One question you **MUST** ask however is:

"What is the next stage?"

If you don't ask about what happens next portrays the fact you are not bothered!

Have your own Interview Agenda

We recommend that you go into the interview with your own agenda.

Having already taken time to identify your own skill set and how it matches the role, list those areas for reference. Interviewers often go off at tangents and, sometimes, all your relevant skills and experience are not drawn out during the interview. By having a check list on your pad, you can quickly scan the list to identify any areas you think the Interviewer is looking for, have been missed, you could then ask:

"I noticed in the advertisement/job description that you mentioned you were looking for someone who could/has experience in/has a background in"...etc, is there any more information you would like me to provide in this area?" (Use language you are comfortable with).

You do not want to appear to be picking up on a poor interview technique. Be careful in your phrasing at this point, one easy way is to blame yourself:

"I noticed in the advertisement that you are looking for someone with... I think we touched earlier on this experience but I do not think I really gave you a full appreciation of my own experience. Are there any more questions you would like to ask me?"



The Interview Close

One of the most common reasons why an individual is not taken forward is that the Interviewer was left with the impression that the individual did not really want the job or was not very enthusiastic about it (The Times Online Survey suggests this covers 20% of rejections).

The Interviewer wants, rightly or wrongly, to feel that the person they recruit is enthusiastic about both the role and their Company. So as you finish by simply stating "Can I just say that I am very interested in this role..." will inform the interviewer of your interest and may gain you the job or a second interview. Nerves may have quelled your obvious enthusiasm for the role.

It is a good idea, if you feel confident, to ask an objection handling questions:

"Having met today, are there any areas which give you concerns regarding my experience?"

"Do you have any reservations about my ability to do the job?"

These questions, if answered honestly by the Interviewer, will either reassure you that you have had a good interview, or allow you to try and tackle any doubts or worries they may be having, whilst you are still with them. It may also highlight an area of experience that you have not covered properly in the interview, giving you the opportunity to re-visit it and state your background. It may simply give you the opportunity to state that, "Although I do not have the experience in that area, I believe I have the ability to learn very quickly and would not see that as being a problem."

In addition, Sales people are expected to go further and ask:

"Will you be offering me the job?" or "Have I got the job?" or "When do I start?"

This sounds very pushy, but that is what Sales people do for a living. The interviewer wants to see the person sell themselves in the interview and would expect them to close as they would in their role.

It really is important at the end of the interview to provide a positive reinforcement statement such as; "Thank you for inviting me along today. I must say that I am very interested in the role" as this really does convey a true interest and commitment to the role.

Tours of the Building

If at the end you are asked if you would like to see the offices or a look round, say yes. It shows interest.

But remember not to let your guard down as you friendly tour guide who may be a potential colleague and not the interviewer may have their own agenda and be part of the selection process.

Psychometric Testing

There are two types of tests which come under this heading:

- Aptitude or Ability
- Personality, which includes 'Emotional Intelligence'

Aptitude or Ability Tests

Unless you get hold of such tests in advance, there is little preparation you can do for such tests.

The tests include:

- *Verbal Reasoning* (Words and the association between words)
- *Numerical Reasoning* (Numbers and mental arithmetic)
- *Abstract Reasoning* (Shapes and the relationship between different shapes)
- *General Intelligence Tests* (Focus upon how quickly you can analyse and interpret information)

Exercises are timed and you are generally not expected to answer all the questions. Also some tests are designed for all educational levels and several questions are expected to be correctly answered by graduates only.

Personality Tests

These try and look at the inner you; your likes, preferences, and working habits. The results of such tests are not used as a deciding factor for recruitment but as a guideline to help bolster the recruitment process and highlight areas for discussion during the interview.

You are given a series of words that could describe you, and you are asked to circle the one that most accurately describes you or, describes you the least.

Many of these tests focus on producing a DISC profile (Dominance, Influence, Steadiness and Conscientiousness).



The results can be quite frighteningly accurate but are not black and white. Our advice is, when completing the test, to answer instinctively and try not to analyse the questions. The tests have built in checks to identify whether you have tried to fiddle, or have an over familiarity with them and the results will reflect this.

Tests such as 'SHL's OPQ' are taken as a guide and there should be a feedback session where a Qualified Assessor provides feedback on what the results indicate and asks questions to try and confirm/validate the profile.

Emotional Intelligence

These tests are designed to ensure an individual is effective and productive at work by looking at their ability to understand and control their own emotions and how they are able to recognise and deal with the emotions of others.

Assessment Centres

Should you need to attend an Assessment Centre, we have a separate guide. For a copy please email info@htr-outplacement.co.uk

Good Luck

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