

VEREDUS



Job Hunting Manual

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Career development – your next step forward

Preface

Veredus came into being when PricewaterhouseCoopers Executive Resourcing was bought by the Capita Group PLC in May 2002. We have been running Job Hunting Workshops since they were started by Price Waterhouse in 1991. They were set up to provide advice and guidance to Directors and Managers who sought a job change. A job change may be merely part of career development or may be enforced through redundancy or reorganisation.

Over the years we have observed first hand what tends to work in job hunting and what does not. We receive literally thousands and thousands of CVs each year and interview many hundreds of people. We are not outplacement consultants, but we are recruiters. So we know how we react to the applications we receive and candidates' performance at interview. This experience and knowledge has been built into both our Job Hunting Workshops and this Manual.

The topics we cover and what we say may not always be comfortable or palatable. Certainly some of our suggestions may appear controversial. There may be some suggestions we make that you question or with which you disagree. That is good. You should continue to question what you are doing and seek to improve your approach. You do not have to follow every suggestion we make, but you should always follow your own commercial judgement.

Many people at Veredus have contributed to the production of this manual, both directly and indirectly. It incorporates the knowledge and wisdom of not only many people, but also the sum of a great many years experience, in respect of job hunting techniques.

No Workshop or Manual can get a job for you - only you can do that. However, the hints and tips in this Manual should help you approach job hunting with the knowledge you need using a structured approach. Many of the hints are simple common sense, yet they still get overlooked time and time again by many of those seeking a job. By ensuring you arm yourself properly for the task ahead and understand what you are doing, you automatically increase your chances of success.

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Introduction to this manual

The responsibility for careers has shifted from the employing organisation to the individual. You will need to invest in yourself by taking responsibility for your career direction – even if that means relying on luck and opportunism.

The aim of this manual is to provide guidance and advice to those who are actively pursuing a new role, either because of their decision to move or because of redundancy. However we hope it will also be relevant to those who have not chosen to move yet but are beginning to think through the implications of a move.

The focus of this manual, therefore, is job searching. We believe that job search can be approached in a logical and systematic manner, and will typically involve:

Understanding yourself

What do you enjoy doing, where are your natural abilities and what is your 'track record'? In other words what have you got that an employer might want to buy?

Choosing a market

Where are your interests, skills and abilities most likely to be needed? Where is there most likely to be a match?

Building a marketing strategy

How can you identify your market, plan your approach, and create or make the most of your opportunities?

Developing selling skills

How can you best present yourself in person and in writing in order to make the most positive impression? Equally, how can you avoid the pitfalls and avoid making the wrong impression.

Deciding

How do you choose from the alternatives?

Getting started

As you begin the process of planning for and finding the right next position, it is vital that you have a positive, action-oriented frame of mind. You have the same reserves of energy, creativity and courage that made you successful in the past. And you will need to draw on them. It is that past success that provides the foundation on which your future career will be built. It is the recognition of that success and your determination that will give you the confidence to make ambitious plans and to execute them with resolution.

For those that have unemployment thrust upon them, it represents a major change in your life. And change is never easy. For most people, being separated from the 'life-at-the-office' routine means a temporary loss of a whole 'support system' that was probably taken for granted. That support system included:

- a daily ritual of getting up, going to work, meeting familiar people, and being part of a team - a sense of belonging
- time-filled activities that stretched your mind, used your energy
- the satisfaction of accomplishment and purpose - a sense of being needed and being useful
- a job that helped shape your sense of personal identity

Interruption of the structured support system often generates strong feelings. You may experience shock, disbelief, anger, anxiety, depression, self-doubt, humiliation, shame, fear - a whole range of negative feelings.

Not everyone will react in the same way. Different people experience different mixtures of these emotions at different times. They may change or recur. Indeed, some people have quite positive reactions as well. Sometimes they feel a sense of relief in not having to face aspects of the job that were unpleasant, or did not provide the expected satisfaction. In some situations it is a sense of escape from a deteriorating environment.

These feelings are understandable and legitimate. They are a mark of our humanity. However, to give way to them for an extended period can be counter productive and immobilising. These feelings need to be re-directed into constructive rather than destructive action.

Take these emotional factors into account. It will help you to galvanise your innate resources and strengths. Your approach must be similar to the one you adopted when facing other challenges in the past.

When finding yourself in the position of having to look for another job, it is all too easy to rapidly prepare a CV and immediately launch yourself into the job market. This may not allow you the chance to pause and consider how you should go about it or what you really want to do. If you take things too fast, mistakes made early on can be difficult to rectify later. For those who are merely planning a job change, the same mistakes can still be made.

Your objective is to obtain, as soon as possible, a rewarding job that will utilise your talents to the fullest. The objective of this manual is to provide assistance, guidance and support in achieving your objective. It is a logical process that should help you avoid the mistakes many people still make.

Chapter I – The Curriculum Vitae

Introduction

The most critical thing to remember is that the CV is the first (and too often the only) introduction to a candidate that an organisation will have and, in the light of this its importance cannot be over stressed. Although only "two-dimensional", it is the strongest and most effective primary marketing tool at your disposal - it is, however, only as "good" as the person whose background it describes and will not be the determining factor in getting you a job. Only you can do this!

There is no single perfect CV. Everyone you ask about a CV will give you a different opinion. It is important that you believe in your CV and that it is your own. Therefore we can give you hints, ideas and items we believe should (and should not) be included. But in the final analysis, you should follow your own commercial judgement on whether your CV is effective.

Viewing CVs is subjective and, for the most part, you will not know what the recipient of your CV feels about these documents. Often you will not know who is reading the CV. This could be someone who is familiar with your industry, or the job you last held; equally, it could be someone who has no knowledge of either. You will need to take this into account and you will undoubtedly need more than one version of your CV, in order to highlight particular aspects of your career and experience when applying for different types of jobs.

Little, if any, recent research has been done into what makes the ideal CV. Our views are based on what we feel as recipients of many thousands of CVs - both speculative and in response to specific job applications.

What does the CV do?

- It presents your background briefly and succinctly
- It refers to your major accomplishments and so identifies what you do best
- It emphasises what you think is important about you
- It is in a format of your making
- It can serve the purpose of your 'calling card' as part of your job search.

As a marketing tool, it is the first "foot in the door" and, in order to progress further, it needs to attract and retain the reader's attention. CVs are rarely read in isolation - the reader, be they a consultant or a prospective employer, will usually be faced with a surfeit of CVs and yours should be sufficiently informative and, more importantly, relevant to merit further action.

The purpose of the CV

Before you can realistically embark on preparing your CV, you should stand back from it to determine what the CV is trying to achieve and whom you are trying to target. As a marketing tool it can reveal more about you than you realise and can provoke preconceptions and even misconceptions. It is important, therefore, to recognise that it should show you to your full advantage in as readable a format as possible. It should be objective - any subjective aspects can be incorporated in a covering letter. The content should be sufficient to evoke interest in the reader (the main objective) and to prompt the reader to take further action by asking you in for interview. This will be your opportunity to add the "third dimension" to your application.

Important principles to remember in CV preparation

- 1 It should be clear, well laid out, and give an air of quality. Remember, you are being judged initially by this document.
- 2 It should be concise. This does not mean only one page (although we would not generally recommend more than four pages).
- 3 It should be a stand-alone document. It may be detached from your covering letter for circulation. It should therefore repeat information such as your contact details.
- 4 Keep it factual. Do not describe your personality by saying things such as "A candidate with dynamism and vision, who is a good leader".
- 5 Keep it neutral or in the first person. Do not write it as "he" or "she" or as "the writer", etc (ie as though you were interviewing yourself).
- 6 Leave 'white space' around each item (no large blocks of text). This makes it easier to read and is more attractive.
- 7 Use headings to aid the reader to find relevant information. At first glance, they may not read the whole document, but only parts of it.
- 8 Use bullet points where appropriate. This focuses the reader's attention on the subject in hand and disciplines you not to "waffle"!
- 9 Remember the 'buyer'. Put yourself in their place and remember to include what they might want to know. This may not always be the same as what you would wish to tell them.
- 10 Do not include salary on your CV. If you are asked to provide salary details, include these in your covering letter.
- 11 If you decide to send an email mailshot, ensure that you send the messages out separately and individually addressed. Emails received as part of a mailing list are unlikely to be very effective.

CVs for different purposes

Depending upon who will receive your CV, you will need different versions. For instance:

Speculative CV to a Consultant	This may be to a general recruitment consultancy, in which you will want to present the information relatively broadly for consideration against a variety assignments they may be handling.
Speculative CV to an employer	You may send a CV to companies whom you wish to target. These could well be in similar industry sectors to those in which you have worked previously. Therefore, more industry specific information may need to be included.
CV for job application	This may be in response to a specific advertisement where you want to ensure that your CV encapsulates and covers all those requirements which were listed in the advertisement. We will cover later on how this type of CV needs to be tailored to the specific requirement.

Recommendations to consider

We list below some of those things that we prefer in CVs:

- Personal details at the beginning such as name, address and telephone numbers. If you are employed but do not wish to be called at work, then do not include your work telephone number. Mobile numbers now tend to be the most commonly used.
- Education, including name of secondary school and university/college if appropriate
- Qualifications obtained – do not forget to spell out your qualifications; you cannot assume that everyone will know what abbreviations stand for. You should include a degree and professional qualifications, if you have them, but O and A levels/GCSE's should not normally be included
- Nationality (or whether you have UK resident status)
- Languages
- Career with most recent job first
- Additional skills - PC skills etc

In the past, we would have advised you to include your date of birth on your CV. However, new legislation to outlaw age discrimination comes into effect on 1 October 2006 (with the deadline for implementation being 2 December 2006). The legislation covers a number of different groups, including people who apply for work. The provisions are complicated but, in essence, it means that prospective future employers will not be able to ask you for your date of birth.

Things to avoid

- Photos (unless specifically asked for)
- Excessive personal details, such as full name of partner, names of each child etc.
- Details of every single training course you have attended
- Bound CVs. The binding is invariably taken off to aid reading and filing
- Copies of references
- Copies of qualifications
- Unclear qualifications. "Finals of Degree in 1979" invariably means failed! "Exams for ACMA in 1985" also often means exams taken, failed and no qualification obtained. Similarly, "Articles with J Bloggs and Son" does **not** necessarily mean you subsequently took professional exams or passed them.

Exceptions

The above comments apply to CVs prepared for the UK market. It is important to remember that in various countries overseas (including various European countries), the format for CVs can be very different. Thus, if you are preparing a CV for another country, check what is considered as appropriate for that country and tailor your CV accordingly.

Equally, when applying for positions in the Public Sector, whether this be Central Government, Local Government, Health, Housing etc, different principles can apply.

Compilation

You will work through a number of stages in writing your CV: assembling the facts, drafting, editing, re-editing and eventually ending up with a document (or documents) with which you are happy.

It is important not to leave key aspects out, nor leave questions unanswered. If you have a significant gap in your employment history, explain why this occurred. If you are currently unemployed, do not show your most recent employment as 'to date' or 'to present'. If you are still employed, then it is perfectly acceptable

Assembling the facts means listing out all your past experience, including your tasks and achievements and identifying clearly your strengths. You will assemble more information than you subsequently use.

When pulling together the information, remember the following hints:

- Your past employers - do not assume that the reader will know who they are or what they do. If a division, unit or subsidiary of a larger enterprise, explain this. Explain what the organisation does (however obvious you might think this is). Remember that if the reader does not know what your employer does, the description of your job is fairly meaningless as it cannot be put in context. So indicate the business, location, turnover, number of employees, etc.

- Job title - what is clear to you may not be clear to the reader. For instance some organisations have strange job titles (or none at all!). In one organisation we know the title of Deputy Chief Manager - Administration was in fact the Head of Personnel. In another, the Financial Accountant was deputy to the Finance Director and more senior than the Chief Accountant. If your title is confusing, explain it by indicating your reporting line and, where relevant, how your division/department fits in with the organisation. If you work in a matrix environment, endeavour to explain how this fits in to the environment and works in practice.
- Validate information - where possible give a value to the facts you are listing. For instance, "experience in mergers and acquisitions" does not say as much as "experience of successfully negotiating and completing 3 major acquisitions at a total value of £53 million". Alternatively "reduced overheads" says little, whereas "reduced overheads by £250,000, representing a 15% saving" says far more.
- Were you successful? If you initiated, developed and designed a new product, was it successful? If you re-organised your department, what was the outcome?
- Progression/promotion - ensure that you show this within an organisation, together with dates.
- Jargon - we all use company or industry jargon, but the reader of your CV may well not understand it. Letter abbreviations for departments should be spelt out. Question the terminology you are using, particularly if of a complex or technical nature.
- Do not forget the obvious. When concentrating on your experience, you may become over-enthusiastic about your achievements, thereby omitting key facts about 'nitty gritty' aspects of your job. You may take these for granted, but the reader will not.
- Explain gaps where appropriate - a recruiter specifically looks for unexplained gaps. If you had a 3 month gap between jobs - do not lie. If you took a year off to travel the world a few years ago, show this. Do not try and hide it within your employment.
- Language fluency - be honest! Do not claim fluency if you do not have it. If you speak holiday French show it as "French (limited)". If, on the other hand, you are bilingual, then indicate this.
- Interests/hobbies - optional for inclusion. The debate on whether interests and hobbies should be included seems to split right down the middle. If you are including them, follow these guidelines:
 - Do not claim a hobby or interest that is untrue - you will probably be found out and it will reflect badly upon you
 - Avoid contentious interests (we normally suggest avoiding religion or politics, unless you feel very strongly about these)

CVs for job applications

In today's job market, your CV must be focused towards the job for which you are applying. This may well mean that you have to re-write or tailor your CV each time you apply for a different job.

We mentioned this earlier in this section, but its importance cannot be over emphasised. A simple mistake that many people make is having one CV which they expect to suffice for every purpose and job application.

You may read a job advertisement with very specific experience requirements. You think to yourself that you have this experience, but your CV is slanted towards other skills or achievements. If this is the case consider writing a new CV (or amending what you have) specifically for that job. You should not consider your CV as a fixed document that cannot be changed. Rather, consider it as something fluid that can be changed, shaped and amended. Whilst this takes time and effort, surely this is a small price to pay if it results in a new job.

In today's job climate, it is not unusual to receive 300-400 responses to an advertisement. Your CV must contain the relevant information if you are to be invited to interview. The interviewer is not likely to waste their time in interviewing you on the off-chance that you have the right experience. Neither are they likely to telephone you if information is missing. You will merely end up on the reject pile.

This does not mean lying! It means presenting the information on yourself appropriately. It may merely mean re-ordering some of your skills or achievements so that those most relevant to the advertisement appear at the top of the list - rather than at the bottom. Alternatively, an advertisement may call for experience of working in, say, a multi-site environment. You may have done this, but it is not obvious from the description that you have given of your employer. Therefore, ensure it is included. In some cases, it may necessitate expanding certain information and contracting other parts.

For CVs that are part of a job application, once again put yourself into the recruiter's shoes. They will probably have a person specification against which they are assessing the CVs. They will be looking for key skills (which hopefully have been outlined in the advertisement). We will refer to this as the 'employment criteria'. They will therefore read your CV to see how you match these criteria. They will be mentally ticking off each item and a clearly presented CV will make this easy to do. On the other hand, if a specific skill is not covered, you will end up being rejected. Do not expect the reader to do all the lateral thinking on your behalf!

Assembling the Information

The following CV outline provides a useful guide to the information you will need to gather and will help you in pulling together the relevant information. However, it is purely a starting point as the information will then need to be refined, abbreviated and put into your own format.

PERSONAL DETAILS

Name: _____

Address: _____

Post Code: _____

Home telephone number: _____

Office telephone number: (if applicable) _____

Mobile telephone number: _____

Email address: _____

Nationality: _____

Languages: _____

EDUCATION / QUALIFICATIONS

Professional affiliations

List any professional memberships (past and present) you have. Give the title (if any) of position you held and year.

Part time or evening education

List evening and business courses taken, giving institution, course name and year in that order.

Education

Start with highest qualification attained, list educational institution, then grade attained, then the calendar year. Work backwards.

EXPERIENCE

Begin with the most recent, but complete for each role you have had:

Organisation:

Dates you were employed:

Job title:

Description

Title of person to whom you reported:

(is it clear where you fit in the organisation?)

What staff were you responsible for:

Main responsibilities in point form:

List main achievements in point form:

Repeat the above for all positions. Do not leave anything out. The CV will be abbreviated later. Include 'reason for leaving' at the end of previous roles. This should not usually appear in the CV; however, you will be asked this question at interview and including it at this stage will help you in collecting your thoughts.

Now look over what you have written and delete anything unnecessary or superfluous; remove as many adjectives as you can. Check the information again for clarity, accuracy, brevity and pertinence. You can then reorganise the information into a CV.

Action words for CVs

Accomplished	Edited	Minimised	Staffed
Achieved	Effected	Modernised	Standardised
Acquired	Eliminated	Monitored	Stimulated
Activated	Employed	Negotiated	Streamlined
Addressed	Enforced	Obtained	Studied
Administered	Engineered	Operated	Succeeded
Advised	Established	Organised	Supervised
Analysed	Estimated	Originated	Supported
Anticipated	Evaluated	Performed	Surpassed
Appointed	Executed	Pioneered	Surveyed
Appraised	Expanded	Planned	Taught
Approved	Expedited	Prepared	Tested
Arranged	Extracted	Presented	Tightened
Assessed	Finalised	Prevented	Traded
Audited	Forecast	Processed	Trained
Augmented	Formed	Procured	Translated
Averted	Formulated	Produced	Vitalised
Bought	Founded	Programmed	Won
Built	Generated	Promoted	Wrote
Computed	Guided	Proved	
Catalyst	Hired	Provided	
Centralised	Implemented	Published	
Collaborated	Improved	Purchased	
Combined	Improvised	Recommended	
Composed	Increased	Recruited	
Conceived	Initiated	Redesigned	
Concluded	Inspired	Reduced	
Condensed	Inspected	Regulated	
Conducted	Instigated	Related	
Consummated	Instructed	Renegotiated	
Controlled	Innovated	Reorganised	
Converted	Insured	Reported	
Corrected	Interpreted	Researched	
Counselled	Interviewed	Resolved	
Created	Introduced	Reviewed	
Cultivated	Invented	Revised	
Decentralised	Investigated	Revitalised	
Decreased	Launched	Saved	
Defined	Led	Scheduled	
Demonstrated	Lightened	Selected	
Designed	Liquidated	Settled	
Determined	Localised	Shaped	
Developed	Located	Simplified	
Devised	Maintained	Sold	
Directed	Managed	Solved	
Documented	Marketed	Specified	

Layout

When you have compiled all your information, you need to consider layout.

The use of headings and sub-headings will aid the reader, but we do not suggest that you need all the headings we have shown since, in many cases, the information should be self-explanatory.

An effective option is to have a career summary on the front page (after personal and educational details and qualifications). Here you can list just the dates of employment, organisation and job title. This allows for the first page to contain a summary of yourself, with subsequent pages containing additional information on your employment.

Try and stand back from your draft document and look on it as a recruiter might. Test it against some advertisements you have seen. Ask yourself - if you had submitted your CV, were all the requirements listed in the advertisement covered?

Remember that often your CV may receive less than 30 seconds of attention at first glance, if it is a speculative application. If it is in response to an advertisement, it should receive a little longer. Is the information clear and easy to find? As long as there is enough of a match with the requirements at this stage, the chances are that your CV will be put to one side to be read more thoroughly. If not, you have had your 30 seconds and will not get a second chance.

The following is an example of a general CV. This style may not suit every purpose, but does address many of the points we have raised in this section. It also allows for tailoring where necessary. Note the use of 'white space' and headings. Note also the description of the employer, where the person fits into the organisation, the skills profile and achievements.

This example CV is in a format which can easily be tailored. It is quite likely that the front page would not need significant change. However, it allows the flexibility of re-ordering skills and experience and achievements under the employment section.

Equally, it allows the chance to exclude certain skills or attributes and replace these with those that are more pertinent to a specific application.

Remember that a common complaint made by candidates about job advertisements is that they contain too little information - the same analogy can equally apply to your CV!

Career Detail

1995 - Date

Blacketts Financial Services Ltd

Financial Controller

Blacketts Financial Services Ltd is a subsidiary of Overleigh Inc, the largest insurance company in the USA. Blacketts are primarily involved in the marketing and sales of pensions and unit trusts through a network of brokers and direct sales agents. The value of product sales is currently around £460 million per year and pre tax profit as at 31 December 2001 was £43.2 million. With 500 employees throughout the UK, the main operating centres are at London and Newcastle.

As Financial Controller I report to the Finance Director and also have dotted line responsibility to the Financial Controller of Overleigh Inc in the USA. I have 3 direct reports (Management Accountant, Financial Accountant and Tax Manager) and have overall responsibility for 15 staff.

Main Role:

- Statutory Accounts
- Management Accounts and monthly reporting package to Overleigh
- Management information systems and implementation of new General Ledger package
- Treasury and Banking relationships
- Credit Control
- Trustee of the company pension fund

Achievements:

- Successfully reduced the size of the accounts department from 26 to 15 in two years with no loss in production and maintaining high morale
- Increased turnaround of monthly reporting package to head office from 10 days after month end to 6 days
- Led the implementation of General Ledger package (SFL3 from Nimrod Systems) with full transition achieved one month ahead of plan
- Successfully stood in for the Finance Director for six months, during his secondment to head office

1986 - 1995

Warburton Haulage Ltd

Chief Accountant

Warburton Haulage is a private company with a turnover of £15 million. It specialises in light haulage covering, predominantly, the East Anglian region. Reporting directly to the Managing Director, I was responsible for 4 accounts staff.

Main Role:

- All financial and management accounts, including statutory accounts
- Company secretarial function including insurances and pension matters
- All budgeting and forecasting, including service costings

Achievements:

- Improved cash collection, thereby reducing bank borrowing by 50%
- Computerised accounts function linking to order and transit systems

1981 - 1986

Persimon Assurance (Head Office)

Financial Accountant

Persimon Assurance was one of the leading life assurance companies, employing some 4000 staff and in 1988 was taken over by Prudential Assurance. Based at a small group headquarters, I reported to the Chief Accountant.

Main Role:

- Financial accounts, statutory accounts (and consolidations) and financial planning and analysis

Achievement:

- Investigated and introduced computerised consolidation package

1977 - 1981

Persimon Assurance - Broker Division

Trainee Accountant

The Broker Division was the largest of all Persimon's divisions, employing some 2500 staff, which included over 1000 sales staff. As a Trainee Accountant, I spent the first three years spending time in each department, including working at a branch office and covering all aspects of financial and management accounting. I also commenced studying for my ACCA, subsequently qualifying in 1983.

Additional Skills:

Computer modelling (including spreadsheets)
Tutoring - coach and tutor accounting trainees in current role

Interests:

Tennis, gardening, school governor (treasurer)

Conclusion

Time invested in the preparation of your CV is not time wasted - this is potentially the most important document you will ever prepare. It must, therefore, be factual, accurate and, above all, relevant in order to have maximum impact.

The 'acid test' for any CV is that it must be reader friendly, easily understood and pleasing to the eye. When you feel you are almost there in your preparation, give it to someone else to read. Ideally, choose someone you know - but not too well. Specifically someone who does not really know your occupation or your employer. If, having read it, they are still unsure about what you do, then unfortunately it is back to the drawing board!

Chapter 2 – The application form

Introduction

Under the chapter covering Public Sector, we address the issue of application forms in detail in respect of jobs in this area. Therefore if you are considering applying for jobs in the Public Sector, it is essential you read that chapter thoroughly.

Application forms are far less prevalent than they used to be, particularly for more senior roles. However, some organisations invite candidates to complete standard application forms even in those cases where a CV has already been provided. It allows the prospective employer to make comparisons more easily between the qualifications and experience of competing candidates. Careful completion of the application form may be tiresome, but is essential since a poorly prepared form can spoil the good initial impression created by your CV. Here are some pointers for completing application forms:

- Read the form through carefully before putting pen to paper to ensure that you understand precisely what is required
- Take a photocopy on which to draft your answers, if you are asked to complete a hard copy application form. Sometimes, you will be able to complete the application on-line, which is much easier
- A well designed form should allow sufficient space under each heading for the degree of detail that the prospective employer requires. As far as possible, tailor your answers accordingly. You should avoid writing too little and therefore leaving gaps. If you feel that the form does not provide sufficient space, continue on blank paper with appropriate references to the additional material on the application form. If you have already provided a CV, do not write 'see CV' even if the repetition of data on a CV seems unnecessarily tedious; the employer may not be working from both your CV and your application form together
- Answer all questions correctly, giving dates and salaries where required
- Check the order in which jobs should be listed ie first job first or last job first. Do not leave any chronological gaps
- Give careful thought to 'open-ended' questions such as 'describe your experience and achievements'. Do not write 'I would prefer to discuss these at an interview' - you may not get the chance. This is your opportunity to relate your experience and achievements to the requirements of the job and will enhance your interview chances if correctly done
- If citing referees, be sure to ask their permission first. (Further information on referees is provided in the appropriate section of this document)
- If you are completing a hard copy form, copy your draft on to the original form, using black ink. The form may be photocopied by the prospective employer and blue does not always photocopy clearly. Sign and date this final version
- Take a photocopy of the final version so that you can refer to it when preparing for an interview
- Submit a covering letter with the application form, covering points that the form itself has not brought out. Remember to keep a copy of the letter!

Chapter 3 – Finding that elusive job

Introduction

If you have followed the earlier suggestions in preparing yourself, you will now be ready to start actively looking for your new job.

The competition for jobs remains very high. This means you have to approach job hunting in a positive manner and demonstrate why you are the best person for the job.

Where are mistakes most commonly made?

Some of the mistakes that make a negative impact:

- Poorly presented applications
- Poor networking skills which alienate those who could help you
- Alienating recruiters - insisting on 'speculative' meetings, ignoring feedback or arguing with those that have the generosity to provide it
- Dwelling at interview on why you might not get the job

Starting out

Treat job hunting as a full time job and set aside specific hours of work. Establish a routine and be organised.

Before starting out, you should prepare yourself in respect of basic needs. This may involve allocating yourself a 'quiet' area at home where you can work undisturbed, a telephone and answering machine, a dedicated diary, and a logical filing system.

Different methods of job hunting

There are five different methods which can be adopted:

- 1) Working in a temporary capacity which might lead to a permanent offer
- 2) Direct approaches to recruitment consultancies
- 3) Direct approaches to organisations
- 4) Responding to advertisements
- 5) Networking

In the following Chapters we will address the last four of these areas separately.

Chapter 4 – Dealing with recruitment consultants

Nature and structure of the recruitment industry

The recruitment industry comprises three basic types of company. In general each is differentiated by the method of generating candidates:

Search/Headhunting: I approach you; I may or may not have heard of you before and I present a potential opportunity. You will have been identified through research or referral. Each assignment is unique and I am paid throughout the recruitment process.

Selection: I advertise an opportunity; you respond. I keep a database but will need the response from the advertisement.

Agency: You come and register with me and I will try to find you a job. I am paid only when you are placed – so I put your CV out to as many organisations as I can.

It is important to recognise the approach each type of organisation adopts – approaching a headhunter expecting to have your CV placed before potential employers will not work. Nor will it do your reputation any good to have so little control over who receives your details (and how they reach them).

Some further points to bear in mind

Identifying the appropriate organisations to contact

It will come as an enormous shock to discover just how many recruitment organisations there really are. Nonetheless, in terms of identifying exactly which to contact, there are a number of approaches:

- Executive Grapevine. This is a Directory of Executive Recruitment Consultants. Website: www.executive-grapevine.co.uk. The Directory is relatively expensive, but does contain very useful information on different consultancies
- Asking friends and colleagues if they know of any organisations
- Personal knowledge of any such organisations
- In the case of selection consultancies and agencies, you can pick up which organisations are handling positions in your field and salary level by scanning the job pages of the national and specialist press
- Use the internet. A refined 'Google' search will produce many appropriate websites. You will also find many organisations that invite you to register your details online

Points to bear in mind when approaching recruiters speculatively

Data gets out of date quickly: Recruitment is a highly transportable skill, and there is a lot of movement of recruitment specialists and professionals between the various firms. Accordingly it is worthwhile checking (via a telephone call), that the consultant is still with the organisation before writing to them.

Beware of 'cowboys': It is relatively easy to set oneself up as a recruiter, as the enormous number of such organisations demonstrates. It is often difficult to differentiate between the poor organisations and the serious professional organisations. Personal experience and recommendations are going to be critical here.

It is also worthwhile remembering that reputable Executive Search and Selection Consultancies and Recruitment Agencies do not charge candidates any fees. These are only charged to the client (i.e. the organisation that is recruiting) and, if any organisation makes an approach to you for money to help you find a job, you would do well to avoid them.

Chapter 5 – Direct approaches to organisations

The large number of positions obtained through direct or personal contact is indicative of the 'hidden job market'. It represents an extensive part of the employment market in which the positions may not yet have crystallised into official openings or been widely publicised. They may exist simply as business needs that have not yet been clearly defined. In these situations, the appearance of an attractive candidate who has something to offer to meet a need or to solve a problem can help to clarify the decision.

Suggested techniques to adopt when approaching organisations directly

Here are some of the steps that we recommend in approaching organisations you regard as your primary targets:

- Using the techniques outlined in the Research section of this manual, compile a list of organisations that you feel could be prospective employers and find out all you can about them

Ensure you are reading all the relevant trade press and business sections of daily newspapers to keep yourself up to date. You never know when a piece or snippet of information could come in useful - be it as a prompt to make a direct approach to an organisation, or be it at an interview.

- Try to discover some significant item of information about the organisation or that particular department to which your background or skills would relate
- Identify the person who would be your boss if you were to get the appropriate job with that organisation.
- Develop a strategy to get a meeting with that person (the hints contained in the Networking section later on may help here). The objective is to become known. Consider whether you have a contact who could make an introduction on your behalf. It is important that you establish visibility for yourself, your skills and experience (what you could do for them), in a manner they will appreciate and welcome.
- If a meeting cannot be orchestrated through an introduction, write to that organisation, ensuring your letter is addressed to the appropriate person (ie that person who would probably be your boss).
- When you get a meeting, we strongly urge you not to ask for a job directly. It is much more effective if they offer it to you as their idea.
- If they do not already have a copy of your CV, always have copies with you to leave behind as your 'calling card'.
- Be prepared if your meeting turns into a job interview so that you can talk easily but specifically about the significant things in your background that apply to this opportunity.

General hints to bear in mind when using this approach on a general basis:

- First rule of cold calling - never write "Dear sir"; always write to a specific individual, i.e. do your research first
- Try to target the letter towards an operational person - perhaps the person who would be your immediate superior. We would not recommend sending letters to Personnel Departments or to departments without a specific name
- If you are aiming to get a Director level appointment, target your letter to the Chairman or Chief Executive, but do your research first to see which is most appropriate
- Try to ensure the opening paragraph of your letter is about them - the organisation. Demonstrate you know who they are, what they do, what they have achieved or their image in the market
- Commonly, letters written on the basis of some knowledge may well stand a better chance of success. For instance you may be aware that company 'X' is believed to be about to take over company 'Y'. Company, 'X' may well want to install its own Managing Director or Finance Director. A letter written to the Chairman of company 'X' could possibly result in saving the Chairman a recruitment fee. Whilst this possibility may be small, it is still worth exploring

Chapter 6 – Responding to advertisements

One of the most traditional approaches to the job market is answering recruitment advertisements. However, it would be unwise to base a job search campaign on only responding to advertisements, or to draw too definite conclusions about the state of the market from the number of advertisements appearing.

At a senior level the majority of advertisements are placed by executive selection consultants and recruitment agencies, with the balance being placed directly by the organisations seeking to appoint staff. The separate section on Research contains information on some newspapers and publications that regularly carry recruitment advertisements.

General guidelines when responding to advertisements

Organise yourself: When applying to jobs in response to advertisements, as with other aspects of your job search it is important that you adopt an organised approach. Read the papers carefully every day, mark the ads which interest you and set aside some time on a regular basis in order to reply to them.

Get as much information as you can: If the advertisement invites you to apply for an information pack, you should telephone or write in for this immediately. This is common practice within the public sector (see separate section on public sector recruitment) and certain private sector employers are now also offering this. Where information packs are offered they should always be obtained and read, before putting in an application. Not only will they provide you with more information (which will help you tailor your application), they are likely to also give more information on how your application should be presented.

Should you telephone?: If there is a specifically stated option within the text of the advertisement to telephone for further information or to discuss the position further, then do so. The benefits are:

- You may gain some additional information about the position which will help you to target your application more effectively
- You may find out certain information which stops you applying thus save yourself a great deal of time
- If you have a good telephone manner, then it is just possible that you may make a good first impression, which just might be remembered later on

Having said that, you should definitely not telephone if there is no number on the advertisement.

How quickly should you respond?

If you are unable to send in your application for 10-14 days after the advertisement appears, it might be worthwhile telephoning to see if it is still worthwhile. If a closing date is indicated within the advertisement, then ensure your application will arrive in plenty of time.

Responding by email: Most advertisers now include their email address within advertisements. Sending in an application and attached CV by email is preferable. However, it is important to ensure that the application is sent as an attachment and is in a generally accepted format (most organisations will use Microsoft Office, so a Word document will usually be appropriate).

Many jobs are now advertised directly on the internet, and often require an online application too. Treat these in the same way as you would a paper application and ensure that you follow the relevant instructions for applications.

Electronic documents tend to make the job of the recruiter much easier, but if you are at all unsure as to whether email is appropriate or not, call the recruiter and check. This will also give you an opportunity to discuss the role and find out any other information that may be available.

Use marketing principles: As with other aspects of the job search, we recommend you use marketing principles - consider the viewpoint of the customer and tailor your approach accordingly. Remember that your application will be in competition with a large number of replies. It is not always realistic to think that someone is going to give a very careful reading to 200 plus applications in order to find the very best on the first attempt.

Your applications need to be geared and constructed with a view to making it plainly obvious that you should be invited for an interview.

Tailor your approach: It is essential that you provide every assistance to the reader to recognise your suitability for the position. You should write a letter which focuses on presenting yourself as the tailor made, custom built product that will provide the most appropriate solution to that particular requirement. Certainly never send a CV without a letter, nor a letter that simply invites consideration of your CV. As we have also stated in the section on CVs, your CV should also be tailored to demonstrate you have the experience, skills and attributes to match the requirement. [see also the separate section on Letters]

Getting through the screening process: The first screening is usually done by matching the qualifications and range of experience outlined in the letter or CV to the requirements specified in the advertisement. If there is a reasonable match the application is retained for more careful reading. Vague letters and unaccompanied CVs are usually set aside and are considered only if there are not enough suitable applicants in the first category. Consequently, your application needs to be properly targeted and address the particular requirements of the position as highlighted in the advertisement.

If an advertisement is being placed by an organisation which is recruiting directly, then (following the guidelines outlined in the separate section on letters), you should send your CV to that organisation with a covering letter explaining why you are interested in that position, what your current circumstances are, and why you feel that you would be particularly well suited to the position. The fact that you may be redundant is not something you should necessarily hide. Indeed this can sometimes be viewed positively by a potential employer as it shows that you would be available to take up a new position quite quickly.

Why do some applications fail to get through the screening process?: The following reasons are the most common:

- Neither the CV nor the covering letter demonstrates how you match the requirements.
- While the covering letter may indicate that there is a match - the CV does not. Each document looks as though it belongs to two different people. For instance if your letter states that 'although it may not be apparent in my CV, I actually did have experience of'. The reader is likely to be left with the impression that if the experience was excluded from the CV, then it cannot be that significant.
- There are unexplained gaps in your employment history.
- Through omission of specific information, you are perceived as a 'risk'.

Dealing with application forms: If you are sent an application form to complete you need to complete every section as fully as you can, paying particular attention to the open questions. Again tailor your responses to be relevant to the requirements mentioned in the advertisement [also see separate section on this topic].

Your primary objective is to gain an interview: It is vital to remember that the reality of job hunting is that in submitting an application in response to an advertisement, your sole objective at that point in time should be towards gaining an interview. In writing your application, keep this thought to the fore.

Read the advertisement carefully: Read the advertisement very carefully and underline the specific requirements that are listed. In particular try and note:

- Are there specific aspects relating to the organisation description with which you can associate or which attract you?
- Does the job description match what you can offer?
- Do you match the person specification?
- Are there any unusual features in the response instructions? Increasingly consultants and companies are asking for more than just a CV - such as 'put a case together on what you feel you could bring to this job?'

Will your existing CV suffice?: Review your CV and decide whether or not it is sufficiently relevant and targeted towards the position in question. It is very likely that a different and more focused version of your CV is required in that particular instance and will give you a better chance of success.

Covering letter: Using the guidelines outlined in the letters section, write a letter providing a detailed response matching your accomplishments to each of the requirements specified. Be as specific as possible and avoid vague claims. Ensure that you do not use the letter as an attempt to re-direct or re-focus a CV that is clearly targeted at a different sort of position (or, for that matter, no particular sort of position at all). On the other hand, do not worry too much about duplicating statements from your CV, since that shows consistency.

Check the advertisement again: Ensure that you have included all the information requested in the advertisement such as qualifications, salary, etc.

The litmus test: Just before you send your application, apply the litmus test for good job applications by asking yourself the following question:

Realistically, is there any way in which this application could have been better targeted?

If the answer to that question is "No" then send it off. If the answer is "Yes", then think about your application again. Remember that the competition is likely to be very severe. Job hunting is an exhausting activity which involves an extensive amount of time and effort. Each application deserves and needs your best shot - every time! There are no prizes for coming second.

Quality is key: Check that everything about your application spells 'quality'. Bear in mind that a well put together application to an advertisement may take several hours. We recommend, therefore, that you only apply to those jobs you believe are a good match with your experience. This may mean that instead of 20 applications each week, you only write 2 or 3. However, if those applications match the requirements, answer all the recruiters' questions and look good, your chances are increased.

Do you chase up?: Remember that the process can become quite protracted and it may be some while before you get a response. Nonetheless, if you have not heard anything after 4-5 weeks, it is quite in order to telephone and ask what is happening, but make sure you do this in a non-threatening way.

Chapter 7 – Networking

Introduction

"Networking" is probably the most important aspect of the job hunting process. People are often reluctant to use it as a method because of its connotations of "using" people, of asking favours or taking advantage of them. In fact, most people like to help others and it is simply using our contacts and talking to people. The secret of networking is to achieve seeking advice and assistance without putting the other person on the spot.

Over the past few years, analysis suggests that something in the order of one third of all positions are filled via networking. It is therefore a technique that can have immense value. Despite the fact that it can be a very frustrating experience, it is a method of job hunting that should not be discarded. Although potentially hundreds of calls might have to be made, remember that it only takes one to work at the end of the day!

Never ask for a job!

Most people you speak to do not have a job to give and it is embarrassing for them to have to admit this and the fact they cannot help you. The result is that they want to avoid that embarrassment in the future and so will stay away from you. They can, however, help you in other ways. While they may not have a job for you, they do have information and contacts that have even more information, and that is how you discover the 'hidden job market'.

Most people will help you once they know what assistance you need. Your objective is to tell them what you have done, what you want to do and how they can help you in your search. If you do that in a clear and concise manner, it also carries an air of confidence that is reassuring to your network contacts. They recognise that you are in control of your job search and looking for specific information - not making some vague appeal for help.

Building the network

Begin by drawing up six lists of people. The lists should be as wide and inclusive as possible and be structured as follows:

List A: The easy calls – these are friends and people that you know will return your calls.

List B: Old colleagues – also easy calls, particularly if you have stayed in touch with them.

List C: Embarrassing calls – these are the people that you meant to call. In fact, every year you write in their Christmas cards - 'we must meet up' but you never quite manage to. Or, you meant to follow up and thank them for something, but you never quite got round to it.

List D: They tried, you didn't. People who called you but you never got back to them; they tried to network but you didn't respond.

List E: Who would you love to network with? These are people who you would love to have in your network.

List F: No names – but positions occupied by people you feel you should be networking with.

Lists A to D will be mainly your "Primary Contacts"; the ones you know directly, at least on a casual basis. They will include, but not be limited to:

- Business colleagues - former bosses, peers and subordinates
- Business associates - customers, clients, suppliers
- Professional acquaintances - solicitors, bankers, accountants
- Members of clubs and associations, Church and community
- Members of professional organisations
- Family and friends.

You should be able to develop lists of names quite easily, but you will find that as time goes by you will add a great many more.

You should set up records to log the names of those you intend to contact and keep these records up to date, noting when you have spoken to (or met) them, together with issues that were discussed, leads provided etc. You may also want to log when a follow-up call would be appropriate.

Try and remember anyone who has networked through you in the past. They may now be in a job and more than willing to return the favour. Likewise, a headhunter may have contacted you in the past for leads on possible candidates. If you can remember who they are - it is now your turn to call them.

The approach

If you see your contact at a gathering or in connection with some unrelated business, suggest a meeting or telephone call at a convenient time. Avoid intruding your concern at an inappropriate time. Assure them that you are not expecting them to offer a job to you nor find one for you. Emphasise that you are seeking advice and information.

However, you cannot rely on meeting all of your contacts on the above basis and will have to start making some calls as well. Some people find this type of call particularly difficult. We suggest you start with the calls that you anticipate should be quite easy. This will then increase your confidence - and you will probably be surprised by how helpful and sympathetic the people will be.

When you call or meet them, keep the conversation brief and to the point.

- This is what has happened
- This is what I think I will do (targets)
- Invite advice and comment about the plan and listen, don't defend
- Provide a copy of your CV (if asked) or possibly invite comments on it
- Ask for advice and suggestions
- Ask for names of people you should contact. These are your "Secondary Contacts"

If you have avoided putting them on the spot, most people will have other names to offer and will think of more later.

Here are some examples of what you can say when calling people for the first time:

For a friend or relative: "You may have heard that following my employer's restructuring I have been made redundant. I wanted to make you aware of the situation in case you tried to call me at work. If you should hear of anything on the grapevine in the future that you think could be of interest to me, I would be very grateful if you would let me know". Obviously, such a call would be interspersed with the usual pleasantries. Also, do not forget to ask them about themselves.

For a business contact: You can use a similar approach to that shown above. Alternatively, you might want to suggest that you would very much welcome their advice (flatter them!) and ask if they would be free one lunchtime, or after work for a quick drink. If you can arrange to meet, it will be more relaxed and you can ask them for advice on who else you should be contacting or, generally, use the opportunity to pick up market 'gossip' which might be valuable in your job hunting.

For any contact: "You may have heard that I have just been made redundant. I am now actively job hunting. I have prepared a CV and, if you have a moment, I would be very grateful if you would look at this for me and let me have your opinion". You may not actually be concerned about what they think of your CV, but by asking them you are flattering them that you value their opinion - and you have inferred you are looking for a job.

Expanding the network

As you share details about your market strategy and identify your targets, the names that your contacts will give you will become more directly related. Your approach should also become more focused. You begin to gather pertinent information about your target business or industry sector. It becomes a research project to discover the potential opportunities and the best contacts. The approach should be that of colleagues with common interests sharing information, rather than looking for a job. The underlying objective is to get some visibility in the industry. The discussion becomes more specific.

- I am interested in this industry. Where do you think someone like me might fit in?
- Here is my CV. Does my background look appropriate and is there a better way to present it?
- I have set this target position for myself. Is it realistic?
- What is happening in this industry? Where are the opportunities?
- Who should I talk to in order to get more information? Do you have any contacts? Can I use your name?

The ideal is to get a meeting with your next potential boss. We recommend that you use this approach even if you suspect that there already is an opening. Let the other person turn it into a job interview.

Always call back or write to express your appreciation for the meeting and, if you have been given other contacts, always report back and say "Thank you". Do not under-estimate the importance of the written "Thank-you". Sadly, far too few people do it when networking. You are much more likely to be remembered favourably and you are acknowledging that someone has done something for you. Indeed, if the letter arrives a few days later, it reminds them of your meeting and may generate further ideas from the recipient.

As mentioned earlier, remember to keep an accurate record of all your contacts with notes about follow up.

Maintaining the network

There is little point in building a network, if you do not maintain it. Those you involve in your network will have other priorities on their minds and your own 'problems' will, in time, be overlooked.

It is a sad fact that people spend an enormous amount of time and effort in building their network, but risk destroying it through poor or badly performed maintenance.

You have to strike a very delicate balance between maintaining your network effectively, yet not pestering those people who can help you - to the extent that they start avoiding you.

To maintain your network, you merely need to keep in touch with those people with whom you have already made contact. However, the way in which you do this is critical. Remember the psychology we have already mentioned. If you keep on calling people within your network to ask them 'Have you heard of anything yet?' you are immediately putting them on the defensive and in a situation where they are probably going to have to say 'No'. This is not your objective. Your objective is to keep your name and your situation at the top of their mind, so when they do hear of something you will, hopefully, be the first person they think of.

For those you know well, this may merely mean meeting up with them fairly regularly for a drink and a general chat. For others, it may mean a telephone call. But, bear in mind the following:

- On follow up calls, asking outright 'if they have heard of anything yet' is actually unnecessary. By merely making the call and having a general chat about the market, what you have been up to, and general gossip, you have already achieved your objective. In other words, you have reminded that particular contact of your existence and the fact that you are still looking for a position
- When making follow up calls, try and have a specific purpose to that call or question to ask, such as "I am going for an interview next week with organisation 'X' - do you know anything about them?". Or "I have heard a rumour that Fred Bloggs at organisation 'Y' is leaving and thought I might approach the organisation - do you know if this rumour is true?"
- Keep the call brief and to the point. By getting through to them, you have already achieved your purpose. If they know you are the type of person who will chat on aimlessly for 15-20 minutes, they may end up making excuses and not take your calls.

General advice with regard to networking

When making calls, either initially or where you are seeking to stay in touch on a regular basis with your contacts, remind yourself constantly that the psychology needs to be handled correctly:

- Your key objectives to initial and follow up calls must be to ensure that your name is fairly near the surface of that contact's mind
- Never put the person you are contacting in the position where they have to be defensive or say 'No'
- If anyone is actually helpful, or agrees to meet and chat, then again, do not forget a simple rule of courtesy and follow up with a letter of thanks. For such little effort, the potential rewards in terms of impact and being remembered can be considerable
- Remember to be pleasant. No-one wants to talk to someone who has a large chip on their shoulder or is particularly aggressive. This applies equally if you have to get past a secretary or receptionist. By being pleasant to the intermediary and making them feel important, they are far more likely to put you through to their boss or make an appointment for you. In most cases, if you are rude to the secretary they will pass this on to their boss. You will have lost credibility and sympathy and probably will get no further with that particular individual.
- Acknowledge that, during the past few years, the same names often appear on contact or network lists over and over again. As a result, these prominent businessmen and women receive very many letters and calls. This does not mean you should ignore them, but you may find more success with some other contacts
- Occasionally consider an unusual networking contact. For instance, you may know people who, whilst not being able to help you themselves, could well know someone to whom they could refer you.

Use the telephone effectively

You will undoubtedly use the telephone a great deal during your job hunting process and particularly when networking.

If your efforts are rewarded, then you will be receiving calls as well as making them and, wherever you are operating from, you will want to ensure that the response to incoming calls is as professional as possible.

Incoming calls

- Ensure that there is a pad and pencil by each telephone in the home for message taking
- Ensure that you have an answerphone at home
- Let everyone in the household know that you are likely to receive important phone calls and ask if they could they please be polite and take careful messages for you if you are out
- When you are out and someone else may answer the telephone, let them know when you will be returning, if you will be calling in for messages or where else you can be contacted etc.
- It might be hard, but try to keep small children from answering the telephone
- Try always to answer calls quickly and apologise to your caller if they have been ringing for long

- Always return calls when you say you will. If you do not, you will soon get a reputation for being unreliable and you are likely to lose good contacts
- If you have teenage children that monopolise the telephone, now is the time to have words with them. Alternatively install a 'call waiting' system and make sure all the family operate this effectively

How do I sound?

Most of us use the telephone regularly for both business and social calls and perhaps this familiarity is why some people don't seem to take enough care about how they sound at the other end of the line.

Think of calls that you have taken yourself when you can tell that the person the other end is doodling, eating or smoking, when they are obviously trying to do something else at the same time or when you can hear distracting background noise.

Some people who have perfectly good speaking voices in a face to face situation seem to speak with a very monotonous voice when they communicate by telephone.

When you are using the telephone in your job hunting process, the way you come across is vital, particularly if you have not met the recipient of your call before. What you have to say could be wasted if you make a bad impression.

Tips for telephone talking

- Plan your outgoing calls in order to ensure that you do not miss out anything you may want to say or forget to ask for an important piece of information
- Don't waffle. Be professional and keep to the point
- Speak clearly and keep the telephone close to your mouth
- Concentrate on trying to sound interested. Give your caller your full attention and ignore distractions
- Smile, it really does come across. You may not feel cheerful but try your best to sound it
- If you feel that your voice might lack interest, try to add a frequent change of tone or speed
- Some people find that standing up helps them to sound better while making telephone calls, but it could be tedious on a long call and it is almost impossible to take notes
- Always be polite. You may occasionally come across someone you consider rude or unhelpful, but do not be tempted to respond in kind as you never know how that call might be repeated
- If you need to write down something important let the other party know and they will usually automatically slow down. It is annoying if you constantly need to ask them to repeat information and remember not to speak too quickly yourself when giving over important information
- If you are fortunate enough to have a secretary or assistant during your job search, NEVER ask them to obtain a number for you. Job hunting is a very personal exercise and using an intermediary to do some of the work for you is likely to be seen as extremely pompous as well as rather old fashioned
- Don't doodle, eat, smoke etc when you are making a telephone call and, if you can control it, keep the background noise down. Switch off the radio or TV, close the door etc.

Sometimes a telephone call might be the only chance you get of a possible opening. Use it well and it can put you across in a better light than a letter or CV, however well constructed and written. Waste it or use it badly and you may have lost the opportunity of a lifetime. Never take the telephone, or your telephone manner, for granted. First impressions count for a lot.

Why bother with networking?

Essentially, networking seeks to maximise all the contacts and friends that you have made, with a view to achieving a number of objectives:

- Alerting people to your position and the type of job that you are looking for
- Ascertaining whether that particular individual knows of anything specifically that could be of interest
- Spreading your network by trying to obtain the names of additional people to whom that person feels you should speak
- Keeping abreast of general developments within the job market as a whole, your own field in a particular job function or market sector, or even general market gossip.

Remember, the process takes time. It does work. The more networking you do, the more personal agents that you have out there working for you in your job search. Maintain a positive frame of mind. With every contact you must come across as cheerful, positive, ready and determined to go back to work and an asset to any organisation fortunate enough to get you!

Networking does not finish when you find a job

Finally, remember that networking does not stop when you have found a job. Firstly, you should contact all those people you have used as part of your network to tell them of your success. These people may find themselves out of work one day and will want to network you this time! Also, people do not like to feel used.

A mistake many people make is to ignore their network once they are employed again. Then, if you find yourself back in the job market in a year or so, you have to re-approach your network with rather feeble excuses as to why you have not kept in touch. Your contacts will feel used and will not be likely to help again. Remember to treat those people in your network as you would like to be treated yourself.

Chapter 8 – Personal Marketing Strategy

Introduction

Your marketing strategy is a direct product of your own personal assessment process which leads to an updating of your career plans. It may be that these plans are now aimed towards alternatives to job-hunting such as taking an extended break, retraining, undertaking further education, working for yourself or other. For the majority of individuals, however, obtaining the right next job will remain the essential first step in fulfilling re-appraised career plans. It is essential, therefore, that the process towards achieving this goal be carefully thought out, prepared and executed with the best skills and commitment that you have to offer.

Why you need a marketing strategy

Effectiveness versus efficiency

The previous sections dealing with how people get jobs underlines the importance of developing a good marketing strategy that gives proper attention to all facets of the job search process. People often confuse the concept of effectiveness with that of efficiency and hard work. Effectiveness refers to the results of all your work. As has been stressed repeatedly, the results should be developing job interviews in order to get job offers. In this context, job offers are the only criteria by which we can judge the effectiveness of a particular marketing strategy.

Efficiency, on the other hand, refers to how well we complete a particular task and the contribution of that particular task to the bottom line. It is possible to spend a lot of time preparing a CV that is a work of art, to fill filing cabinets with research and to keep meticulous records, but never get a job interview because the other aspects are neglected.

Job search is not easy and all of us find parts of it difficult or distasteful, but it is a mistake to overlook or to avoid those parts and to delude ourselves with our efficiency or the fact we are busy.

Treat yourself as a product that you are seeking to sell

You need to develop a personal marketing strategy because, in the final analysis, you are a product that you are seeking to sell, in competition with many other products. You need to plan the best way of setting out your stall. You need to adopt the normal techniques of a commercial enterprise.

If you were setting up a new company to sell toys, or even health foods, it is unlikely that you would simply set up a stall at the corner of some street. It is more likely that you would find out all you could about the competition, the market place, the profiles of potential customers, undertake some cost/benefit analysis, look at the financial returns etc.

The inference is that selling yourself is little different from selling other items such as furniture or foodstuffs. The only major difference is that it is a lot harder, because you will be on your own without the benefit of sales and marketing departments, publicity departments and other support functions.

Consequently, if you fail to treat this enormous task as you would if you were running your own or someone else's business, then in a highly competitive market place, you run the severe risk of the equivalent of going out of business.

Some hints about marketing

Adapting some studies on marketing which were conducted at the Harvard Business School to your particular scenario, we list below (in no particular order of priority) some hints and "truths" which should help get you thinking about your marketing:

- The problem is not usually identifying **more** potential employers: it's finding the right potential employers
- There are lots of "cowboy" recruiters around and there are lots of "cowboy" employers around: be careful
- Some of the most promising leads commonly come from existing contacts: encourage them actively
- The best marketing is visible marketing, and recruiters/potential employers cannot be expected to be aware of you if you do nothing: work at being visible
- It's commonly easier to market yourself as a specialist than a generalist: you've got to have something special to offer
- Most employers and recruiters find it very difficult to differentiate between potential applicants on paper: you need to try and stand out
- First law of selling and developing new business: **target** yourself at something or someone specific. Focus, focus, focus!
- Building a reputation and all marketing are long lead-time activities: don't expect instant returns. You are investing for the future
- Word of mouth referrals work best: help them along
- If you don't explain to a potential employer why they should hire you, then you cannot expect to be hired: have something special to offer
- Selling yourself is something you learn and can get better at: you don't have to be born with the ability
- Try to stand outside yourself: see yourself through the eyes of a potential employer
- Know a potential employer's business: only then can you be truly useful to them.
- It's terribly easy to "miss" obvious marketing opportunities: stay alert!
- One of the features of successful job hunting is to persuade a potential employer that you have a better understanding of their business and real needs than the other candidates
- It is fatal to believe that good work and lots of effort will sell itself; you need to sell yourself, and sell yourself effectively
- All contact points (meetings, general chats, counsellings, interviews, letters and phone calls) are marketing activities: overlook nothing. Every contact point is a potential opportunity
- Treat people as you would wish to be treated yourself: if they are helpful, then be courteous and write a note of thanks
- Adapt for your own use the industrial salesman's "5 steps":
- 1) Generate lead; 2) Qualify the lead; 3) Contact; 4) Make the pitch; 5) Ask for the business.

- It can take 100 leads to get 15 interviews to get onto 3 shortlists
- Market research really helps: you probably know less about some potential employers than you think
- The marketing concept: sell what an employer wants to buy, not what you want to sell.

Before you begin to develop your strategy

Before you begin to develop a marketing strategy, it is important that you complete the personal assessment and career planning phases of this programme. It is true to say that "If you don't know what you are looking for, it's very hard to find it"; this is especially true in job search. Experience has shown that when people have clearly identified what, for them, are the critical fit requirements of the next position, and have done so in the context of a carefully thought out Career Plan, the road to success is better marked and strewn with fewer obstacles.

Fixing the objectives of your strategy

We would suggest that the following are relevant:

- 1) Engineering the maximum number of opportunities for you to present yourself as the tailor made, custom built product that will provide the most effective solution to a particular employer's unique requirements.
- 2) Maximising the return on the effort and energy which you put into the exercise.

Having delivered a good return on your investment, it will then be up to your selling techniques at interview to deliver suitably attractive job offers.

Planning a structured approach

The recruitment market has evolved from being a relatively open market to a highly focused one which in turn requires a more focused approach from you. Organisations have become more specific in their requirements and this should be reflected in your strategy. Whether applying for a job via a recruitment consultant or to an organisation directly, they can afford to be highly selective and you must tailor your approach accordingly.

A job search campaign is a job in itself. It requires a structured and even methodical approach and a substantial degree of planning. Set yourself priorities and deadlines and keep to them. Do not get sidetracked by unimportant issues but maintain a strong sense of focus.

A structured approach – devising the strategy

Review your self-assessment and career plans data and identify any segmentation

Typically, having completed this exercise, you may well find yourself applying for a range of different positions. Even, for example, if you are simply looking for a senior finance role, then it could be within:

- Differing sizes of organisations – large, medium, small
- Differing ownerships – public, private, UK, US, EMEA, global
- Differing industries – services, manufacturing, etc
- Differing emphases – people management, management of change, restructuring, downsizing, acquisition led etc.

The point of listing all the above is to emphasise that, even where you are focusing on certain specific types of positions, there are still likely to be a wide range of "variations on a theme" even within your area of focus. If you are able to identify distinct "segments" within your potential market, then it will probably be both necessary and appropriate to adopt different approaches when marketing in those areas.

Prioritise - where appropriate

Where you have identified a number of potential avenues which you would be interested in exploring, then it will be necessary to prioritise. This allows for your early efforts to be focused towards either your favoured direction, or in an area that is likely to be more fruitful in terms of return for effort and possible interest than others. The realities of the job market may mean that you have to consider making some trade-offs when it comes to putting together both realistic and practical marketing plans.

Determine the appropriate job hunting methodologies and which parts of your portfolio of skills and experience will be relevant for each target job sector

It may well be that different methodologies are appropriate when targeting differing segments within your market. You should assess which of the job hunting techniques to adopt and focus upon in each case. It is also the case that not every part of your career profile will be relevant when marketing yourself towards a particular target job sector. You will need to select the appropriate parts each time.

Spend time to learn the various job search skills that you will need

You may find all of this advice to be fairly obvious and feel pretty confident about the entire process. On the other hand, you may be concerned that your interviewing technique is a bit rusty. Be honest with yourself, and make the time to learn or brush up on any relevant skills or techniques.

Construct a timetable and set targets for yourself

This is a campaign, and you need to set some clearly defined goals or targets, as well as a timetable for your activities. You will need to discipline yourself and ensure that you have completed all the work which you allot for each day.

Be realistic

Job hunting is a punishing enough exercise without burdening yourself with goals and targets that are impossible to attain. Effective research, writing letters and completing applications properly actually takes an enormous amount of time. You will not be able to complete the entire process in a week!

Research is an investment - don't underestimate it

The separate section on research gives guidance in this area. This is a critical component of your marketing strategy, especially when it comes to approaching organisations directly. Effective research is very time consuming, but those who undertake it are usually at a distinct advantage.

Set up an appropriate information, records and data system

It is vital to keep track of correspondence, organise your paperwork and log critical information in such a way that all or any part of it can be easily retrieved at any time. You are likely to be contacting a large number of individuals and meet even more. It is essential to stay on top of this and to minimise the potential for confusion.

Be prepared to react at very short notice

You will always need to have a general CV ready in order that you can talk about yourself fluently and confidently. Treat your CV like a business card, and ensure that you always have a copy on you in case it is needed. You will also need to be ready to deal with and accept phone calls from recruiters/potential employers/contacts at any hour and day of the week.

A structured approach – implementing the strategy

Break the implementation into distinct phases

You might, purely as an example, spend the first phase mainly on a mailshot to recruiters, and then the second phase targeting companies direct. Such an approach will make the entire process much more manageable.

Monitor your progress

Set up intermediate check points and assess what progress you have actually made against that which you expected. Question everything. There should be no off-limit areas. This is your own, built-in, quality control function.

Stay alert

Whatever approaches you are using, keep in mind your career objectives. Be alert. Watch for appropriate advertisements that meet your criteria, but also watch for other news items that may indicate activity in target companies that might make an approach opportune.

Maintain an open mind

Certain jobs may not appeal initially, but you may change your mind when you find out more about them. Be careful about turning down any interviews or opportunities to meet people. Every meeting is an opportunity to impress and sell. The worst that could happen is that nothing comes of it. On the other hand, you never know what might arise. Accordingly, be prepared to discuss your job search with everyone. You will be surprised where you find good ideas.

Keep updating your research material and records

Your knowledge should always be adjusting to additions, changes, etc. You never know when a bit of information might come in useful, be it at an interview, through a casual conversation or when writing a covering letter. Scan read the widest selection of business press and periodicals, keep yourself technically up to date and make notes from your interviews and meetings.

If you are dealing with agencies, stay on top of them

In contrast to search and selection consultants, you need to keep on top of agencies, talk to them regularly, keep them informed about what you are doing and aware that you are still job hunting. However, don't become a slave to them. Ensure that you brief them fully on your goals and expectations to enable them to be selective on your behalf.

Re-visit the timetable

Your timetable for achieving your objectives should be challenging, but neither too easy nor too difficult. If it needs amending, then do so.

A structured approach – maintaining the right attitude

Be competitive and determined to win

The job hunt is not the time to sort out and explore your reactions to being made redundant. That may be easier to say than sustain. Nonetheless, you need to channel your energies into a positive, constructive and even competitive direction. People who go around flaunting the chips on their shoulders radically impair and undermine the effectiveness of their marketing campaign. You have to avoid this.

Believe in yourself

Remain confident in what you are and what you can offer. Belief in yourself and in your value to others is your most powerful asset.

Be realistic

This process could take a long time and require great reserves of stamina. If you are lucky, if you create your own luck, and if you both recognise and seize opportunities as they come your way - then perhaps you will find what you are looking for very quickly. Don't expect miracles though.

Be disciplined

Don't put off until tomorrow what you could do today. There might not be time and you could miss an opportunity. Avoid postponing anything - just do it.

Look good and feel good

You need to be ready to drop everything and suddenly attend a meeting. There won't be time to get that haircut you needed, or get the shoes repaired. Make sure that you maintain a good standard of dress and grooming - it does matter.

Don't cut yourself off from people

The longer that you put off seeing or contacting friends/colleagues, the worse it will get. Redundancy is an extremely common event. You are not unique.

A structured approach – supporting the framework

You need help to get through this and make it work

The support of a partner, family or close friends is absolutely essential to get through this and maintain the implementation of your strategy. You are most unlikely to be able to get through it on your own.

You know the kind of support that you personally will need – help those around you to be able to give it to you

Those who are going to help you through this need to know and understand the process that you are about to embark upon and the pressures that this will place upon you. Only by being open with them and communicating with them will they be able to work out the right kind of support to give you.

Make sure they understand the importance of your maintaining your office/study/desk or centre of operations

Temporarily, you may well be taking over a part of the home that is normally used for other purposes. Ensure that they understand just how important this is going to be to you, whilst the search lasts. Equally, however, bear in mind that if your job search does now mean that you are working mainly from home, then this may mean a period of adjustment for those who are not used to having you around all the time.

Try to share the worries and reactions to your marketing

Probably at no other time in your life will you allow yourself to be on the receiving end of so many rejections in so many different forms. This takes an emotional toll - no matter how inherently confident you are. Nobody is immune. You need to deal with these emotions and release them, not bottle them up, because you cannot afford to come across as deflated or depressed at an interview.

Try not to let this process disrupt your normal family or social life

Temporarily, your job is now to find another job. Insofar as it is feasible, the rest of your life should carry on as normal. You should seek to maintain any existing activities and resist strongly any urges to withdraw or adopt a lower profile.

Conclusion

If you are to market yourself effectively, it seems fairly self-evident that a structured approach - carefully thought out and implemented, will bring manageability to the daunting task of job hunting, and also ensure that you stand a better chance of standing out amongst a very large crowd. Such an approach focuses upon achieving a high hit rate on clear and well defined targets rather than a much poorer hit rate from a wider and less focused campaign.

What investment is your career worth?

The implication of all the comments above is that a structured approach to job hunting requires an enormous amount of work, commitment, time and effort. True - but then, what sort of investment is your career worth? And what sort of effort would you feel is necessary to put into successfully marketing and selling a new product, were you running your own business?

Chapter 9 – Letters of application

Introduction

You will write many types of letter in the course of looking for a new job. Their importance should not be underestimated. However good your CV is, the accompanying letter can make all the difference between you being seen or not.

In this section, we provide some guidelines that apply to all of your letters and then consider in more detail specific elements which, in aggregate, are likely to lead to a more effective "selling" letter.

Here are some general principles and guidelines:

Perspective

It is essential that all letters are written from the reader's perspective. This is vital to the ultimate success of any business letter and, in consequence, this advice is repeated throughout the section.

Consider for a moment a telephone call you may receive from an acquaintance. How many of us receive such calls, when all we have to do is listen at the other end. The acquaintance rambles on telling us about every event in their lives, without once pausing to ask us about ourselves. A telephone call should be a form of two way communication and the same principle applies to letters.

You need to acknowledge the reader and make them feel involved in the communication.

Ask someone to review your letters with this particular point in mind and encourage them to give you frank and constructive criticism of the way in which your letters read.

Length

There are no set rules. However, remember that your letter is likely to be read by a busy person who may lack real commitment to read what you have to say. To be at all effective, therefore, the letter should be to the point and not too long. For speculative applications a useful guide is to try to keep the letter to one side of A4. For letters that are accompanying a specific application to an advertisement, you may need a little more space, but try and keep this to under two pages. Do not try the ploy of using a particularly small typeface to get more words on to the page - this will have the opposite effect to the one you want!

Content

Your letter should be constructed on the "need to know" principle. It should say only what the reader needs to know in order to understand and accept whatever it is that you wish to communicate. It should be as direct and concise as possible.

You should differentiate between the following types of letters:

Specific Applications	These letters accompany your CV when you are responding to an advertisement or against a known job.
Speculative Applications	These accompany your CV and are likely to be written to recruitment consultants in the hope that they are handling a job which could be relevant to you.
Letters to Potential Employers	These accompany your CV and are written to companies or organisations you wish to target as potential employers.

We will look at each of these letters in turn, but first consider some general guidelines.

Format

Use standard size business stationery in good quality and colour (ideally white) with matching envelopes. Avoid coloured paper; while you may feel this will make your letter stand out, remember that it is quite common for both your CV and your letter to be photocopied by the recipient (to pass to a colleague, the personnel department or in the case of a consultant, to a client). Coloured stationery can often come out 'grey' or blurred when photocopied. This defeats your original intent.

Your letterhead should be attractive and should provide your name, address with post code and telephone numbers where you can be reached. Prospective employers (or consultants) want to be able to reach you during business hours, or at least to leave a message. Mobile numbers are now the most commonly used.

Clearly, email is now the most common form of communication and this is fine. However, make sure that you include the letter as an attachment rather than it being the body of the email.

Use short sentences in short paragraphs. White space is attractive and makes a letter both easy and more inviting for the reader.

Address the letter to a specific individual, but make sure that you have both name and title correct. Do not rely on directories for that detail; always confirm it. We receive a large number of letters that are incorrectly addressed, are written to someone who is no longer with us, or are full of spelling mistakes. This does not create a good first impression!

When first writing to a person, do not write using their first name unless you feel this is appropriate. If this is a first contact to someone you have not met, it is safer to stick to Dear Mr... or Mrs... etc. Follow their lead if they write back to you using your first name. It is better to play safe to begin with and you may easily cause offence by using a first name without invitation to do so. We are often asked how to address women. The safe answer is to use "Ms". However, if you want to give a really good impression, then telephone the switchboard of that person's organisation and ask how they should be addressed (or speak to their secretary).

Make sure your name is typed at the end of the letter and, finally, do not forget to sign it.

Specific applications

If you are applying for a particular job, it is important that your accompanying letter complements the CV that is attached.

The two documents (ie the CV and letter) should be able to be read in conjunction with each other and, to some extent, as stand alone documents. Whilst some recipients will look initially at only the CV, others will read only the letter. You are not likely to know which they will do.

Basic guidelines for letters accompanying applications are as follows:

- Opening paragraph - Why you are interested in the job. Is there something particular in that job that appeals to you? If so, state what it is.
- How do you match? - Outline in bullet point how you match the requirements. This may necessitate some repetition of what is in your CV, but is likely to be brief, using one or two lines only against each point.
- Salary - If the advertisement has asked for salary, then you should give this (or show your last salary). If the job is at a lower salary than you were earning in the past, then justify why you are prepared to accept a drop. If the advertisement does not ask you for your last salary, then it is optional whether you include this.
- Relocation - If the new job would necessitate relocation, then include a short paragraph to the effect that you are prepared to relocate.
- Why are you available? - This is a contentious issue, but we believe strongly that it should be included. If you are currently in a job and this new job would be a move up, or develop your career, then say so. If you are currently unemployed, then we believe you should give the reasons. If you do not, the reader may well put their own interpretation on this. They could assume you were fired for incompetence or fraud, which is likely to be far from the truth. By putting in the reasons, you retain control over what is shown and what the reader may think. If you do not indicate why you are available, your application is likely to end up in the 'risk' pile and you may well not get seen.
- Unique Selling Points - If you have something that makes you stand out over other candidates, then include this. It could make all the difference! This may have been included in how you matched the criteria, but equally there may be another factor and you should not ignore this.

Speculative applications

If writing to consultants/recruiters, we suggest the following:

- What you can offer - A brief summary of who you are and what you can offer a potential employer. This may include a brief outline of your skills and also your achievements.
- Why you are seeking a move - As with specific applications, it is important to include this information. Recruitment consultants want to know why you are in the market. However, keep this short and pertinent.
- Your objective - Summarise what you are looking for. This should include the type of job (and responsibilities if appropriate). Ideally it should also contain where you are prepared to work (ie location) and whether you are prepared to relocate (and if so the areas, countries, etc to which you would be prepared to move).
- Salary - This should be included, either in terms of your last salary or, alternatively, by showing the salary range in which you would be interested. It is quite acceptable to give a range (for instance you may put £80-90,000, depending upon package).

Letters to potential employers

These should only be written when you have done your research. In the course of your research, you may well identify organisations where your skills would be particularly appropriate. Over the past few years, the numbers of letters being written by job hunters to potential employers have increased significantly. Equally, many people have obtained work via this method and we touched on this under the Methodology of Job Hunting.

You should try and write to the person who would be your direct boss. Avoid writing general letters to the HR Department or to the Chairman or Managing Director. The only instances when you should write to the Chairman or Managing Director are if you are seeking a position at Board level and, if doing so, you should write to them by name.

We suggest that your letters should include the following:

- Opening paragraph - This should be about them! Comment upon a fact that you know (or your research). Without becoming sycophantic, try and flatter them a little. The opening paragraph is key to getting them to read the whole letter and getting them 'on your side'.

As an example, your research may have shown that they have just taken over another company (in which case they may want to put in new management). Alternatively, you may have discovered they are opening a new operation, or launching a new product.

- What you could offer - As with the other letters, you need to summarise what you can offer them. This needs to be carefully tailored to meet their potential needs. Do not expect every letter to a potential employer to be the same. By highlighting what you have to offer, you will have a greater likelihood of success if it is line with what they need.
- Availability - Indicate that you would be willing to meet them for a 'general chat'. Remember that your objective is to get through the door; an informal chat can achieve this for you.

We recommend that you do not ask for a job in these letters, but rather try to interest the reader in your experience and attempt to arrange an opportunity to meet the reader to discuss a common interest. The reader may become a valuable addition to your network or have an employment opening in the future.

General guidelines

Because you will be writing a great many letters that will be quite similar you will be able to develop some shortcuts in preparing them. Be careful, however, to ensure that every letter is tailored to the intended reader. Anything that has the flavour of a pro forma letter will not receive much attention.

Remember to keep copies - so you remember what you said to each person. Going in for a meeting and saying 'I am not sure if I mentioned this when I wrote to you.....', does not create a good impression.

A poorly drafted covering letter can be extremely counter productive in your job search. You must ensure, for instance, that the covering letter is legible, concise, coherent, and is of genuine assistance to the reader in helping to highlight key aspects of the CV.

A covering letter should never be an attempt to compensate for a poor/inadequate CV. Equally, it should not attempt to redirect/refocus a CV that is clearly targeted at a different sort of position.

As a general rule, in the UK, it is best not to enclose copies of references or qualifications with your CV, as they are sometimes regarded with suspicion. Certainly, do not send original references or qualifications at the outset as these might well go astray.

Remember, it is a matter of choice whether you send a CV with a letter, but never send a CV without a letter. And remember to sign the letter!

Letters of thanks

We mentioned earlier the importance of acknowledging when someone has been helpful in your job search. If a consultant has brought you in for a meeting, or part of your network has been particularly helpful, write and say thank you.

This letter need not be long. However it is likely not only to bring your name back to the top of their memory, but also instil a feeling in the reader that they have not been taken for granted.

Letters saying you have a job

When you have found a job, do not forget to write to all the people you have been in touch with to tell them. Otherwise they may continue looking for something on your behalf and become irritated when they find you have a job and did not tell them.

It is all part of your long term networking - which carries on long after you have a job. You never know when you might need that person's cooperation again!

Chapter 10 – Research

Introduction

During the course of job hunting, you should become an expert researcher. Remember knowledge can give you an enormous advantage and potentially that edge over other candidates. You may use research for the following reasons:

- To help identify organisations you may wish to target
- To 'investigate' organisations with whom you may have a meeting or interview arranged
- To increase your knowledge about your market sector or job function (keep yourself up to date)

As you become more proficient in research, you will learn about many different ways of finding out key information. You will discover which directories can help you identify organisations in different sectors, their location, size etc. Further research will help you identify who the key executives are in that organisation, their turnover and profit record (where applicable).

This section will help provide you with guidance on where you can find this information and set you on the path of being a proficient 'researcher'.

Sources of data about potential employers

Dunn & Bradstreet Key British Enterprises

In six volumes, covers approximately 50,000 top UK firms, giving financial data, trading names, markets, parent companies and trading functions. There is also a fully searchable version available, via subscription, on the internet.

Thomson Extel

Extel provides a statistical card service giving current financial information on 2,500 quoted companies; a selected number of unquoted companies are also available. European, North American and Australian card services give similar information. Other services include records of shareholding, new issues, taxation and bondrating. Information is updated daily and is available via subscription on the internet.

Inter company comparison's business ratio surveys

Financial ratios for several individual companies analysed by over 100 subsidiary sectors. Individual searches of companies registered at Companies House can be arranged.

Jordans Business Surveys and Regional Directories

Jordans publish about 70 business surveys on UK trades and industries, summarising financial data on several companies each year. Surveys on "Britain's Top 2,000 Private Companies" and "Britain's top 1,000 Foreign Owned Companies" are also published regularly. They also publish Regional Directories detailing the top 1,000 companies in specific UK regions. Full details are available on the Jordans website.

Kompass Register of British Industry and Commerce

Covers the UK's leading 30,000 companies. Gives directors, numbers employed, trade names, products, subsidiaries arranged in geographical sections. Tabulated indexes of products and services. Volumes covering Belgium, Denmark, France, Italy, Spain, Switzerland, Sweden, Hong Kong, India, Indonesia, Japan, Singapore, Taiwan and West Germany. The directory is also the official register of the CBI and it includes addresses, telephone numbers, etc. Kompass has a worldwide internet portal, where all their information can be found.

Kompass UK Trade Names

List of about 50,000 active trade names; gives brief description and company information.

Kompass Regional Sales Guides

Seven volumes covering Great Britain and detailing the leading industrial companies by turnover; details include directors, employee numbers, department contacts and product groups.

Stock Exchange Official Yearbook

Provides information on all companies quoted on the UK Stock Exchange, including names of directors and financial data.

Research Index

Fortnightly index to articles and news items appearing in over 100 UK periodicals and newspapers; arranged by company name and by industry.

Times 1000

Annual financial review of 1,000 leading European industrial companies; individual sections on nationalised industries, banks, insurance companies, building societies and foreign banks. Leading American, Canadian, Australian, South African and Irish companies are also listed.

Who Owns Whom

This provides information on UK company ownership detailing 6,500 parent and 100,000 subsidiary companies. Editions are also available covering North America, Continental Europe, Australasia and Far East.

MacMillan Directory of Multi-national Enterprises

Two volumes listing the financial information of the companies that lead the multi-national sector.

Kelly's Business Directory

Includes manufacturers, merchants, wholesalers and companies offering an industrial service. Over 80,000 UK companies listed, giving names, address, telephone number and a brief description. Also details information on the top European manufacturers.

The City Directory

Comprehensive listing of finance-oriented and professional organisations allied to the City of London.

Major Companies of Europe

Lists over 8,000 of Western Europe's largest companies, detailing boards, senior executives, principal activities, subsidiaries, trade names and certain financial information. Editions are also published for the USA, Australia and the Far East and the Arab World.

Best of British - The Top 20,000 Companies

A four volume set listing companies by turnover (giving details of address, fax, telephone, key contacts, sales, profits and employee number); and also by industry, profitability, growth and average wages.

PricewaterhouseCoopers Corporate Register

Published quarterly by Hemmington Scott and detailing key financial, administrative and professional advisor information on all UK listed companies.

Key Business Ratios

Details of the top British companies split into over 270 industry groupings and listing the key financial ratios for each company, (eg asset utility, financial status and profitability).

Other useful research data

Directory of British Associations

Gives details of interests, membership, activities and publications of 6,500 specialist associations in the UK and Ireland.

McCarthy UK Quoted and Unquoted Services

For information prior to an interview, you can receive relevant items about the company in question from a series of card services featuring articles from leading international newspapers and journals. Quoted company details updated daily and unquoted company details revised weekly. Normally available in good reference libraries.

Local Directories

There is an increasing number of directories produced by Chambers of Commerce, local councils and other local bodies.

Specialist Trade Directories

Many directories cover specific trades and industries.

Telephone Directories

Often underestimated as a useful source. Particularly useful are, Yellow Pages, the Greater London Business Directory and local Postcode Directories.

CODOT

(Classification of Occupations and Directory of Occupational Titles, published by HMSO) is a valuable reference book and should be found in most public libraries. As its title indicates, it classifies different occupations and gives details of the duties and functions of over 20,000 different occupational titles.

Current British Directories

This is a directory of directories. It gives details of 2,500 other directories summarising the contents of each.

Targeting organisations for a direct approach

When initially deciding which organisations you may want to target for a direct mail campaign, we suggest you:

- Begin by listing all the organisations that you know personally
- If it is in the same sector as your last employer, list all the competitors, suppliers and customers
- If location is a major concern, obtain an industrial or business guide to the area. If possible walk or drive through the district noting organisation names for further investigations
- Expand your list to other organisations that might be suitable for you

Using the directories start to compile the following information:

- Focus on a specific sector and identify the SIC (Standard Industrial Code) for that industry by looking up a company that you know in that industry and noting its SIC number, and also by selecting appropriate SIC numbers from the list of SIC numbers in Dun and Bradstreet
- Look up SIC numbers in the appropriate section of Dun and Bradstreet to find the names of companies in that category
- Look up each company listed and select according to size, location, etc
- For each selected company list:

- Company name
- Address
- Telephone number
- Name and title of appropriate official
- Size
- Any other useful data

Your target list at this stage may contain more than a hundred names. Using the information that you have gathered and your own criteria for identifying the right next job, rank the companies in a priority list.

Divide your list into three sections, "High Priority", "Probable" and "Some Interest". As you proceed with your research do not hesitate to change the ranking.

Divide your "High Priority" list into groups of five for ease of handling. Start with the second or third group on your list for practice. Concentrate on a group at a time to organise your search.

Using these resources, do in-depth research on each organisation, using:

- Annual reports
- Newspaper and magazine articles
- Who's Who
- Financial Times Library
- Publications already mentioned and those mentioned later in this section.

Annual Reports and other organisation specific information can often be obtained directly from the organisation concerned.

A list of reference libraries is included overleaf.

These are the more formal sources. It is important that you become something of a detective. Do a little creative digging, especially for information on private companies.

- Obtain product catalogues
- Talk to your own contacts (Network)
- Talk to distributors, suppliers and customers

Remember to ask open ended questions to get as much information as possible.

As you conduct your research remember that as well as general information about the organisation, ie, size, financial stability, ownership, product lines, etc, you also want to answer some more specific questions such as:

- Where would I fit in?
- Do they currently have, or is there a need for, someone with my skills and background?
- Are there unrealised opportunities for expansion in products or markets?
- Do they have problems that I could resolve?
- Who would be my boss? Name, title, address and phone number

With this information you can now assess this organisation as a potential employer and plan the best strategy to approach them using the suggestions given in the Market Strategy section.

Start reading the newspapers as never before. Also trade publications relevant to your discipline. Look for information that you can build on such as:

- Company acquisitions or bids
- New product developments or expansion
- New start-ups or foreign companies setting up in the UK.
- Read the job advertisements OUTSIDE your own function. You may spot a clue relating to a start up which has not hit the press formally yet.

All this links in to you becoming a detective. When reading articles - think laterally about what else may be involved. For instance, you may read about a company relocating. When this happens many staff will not want to move. If the organisation is moving to your area, new openings may exist.

Investigating organisations and increasing market knowledge

Many of the principles covered already will be equally applicable if you want to research organisations with whom you may have a job application and/or meeting or interview.

Remember, if you can carry out some research prior to a meeting or interview, that knowledge could make all the difference. You should never set out to 'threaten' the person you are meeting with too much knowledge. Indeed some of the knowledge you have developed, you may want to hold back. Also remember, that some of the information you have obtained could be out of date, so be careful.

Despite this, if you can display some knowledge it demonstrates an interest and enthusiasm and can well ensure you stand out from the other candidates.

Sources of job advertisements

The most traditional approach to the job market is answering newspaper advertisements. However, it would be unwise to base a job search campaign on only responding to advertisements, or to draw too definite conclusions about the state of the market from the number of advertisements which appear.

The majority of newspaper advertisements are placed by executive selection consultants and recruitment agencies, with the balance being placed directly by the companies seeking to appoint staff.

Some organisations place advertisements merely to demonstrate that all steps have been taken to find the best possible candidate. However, for the most part advertisements relate to genuine positions. Given below are the names of the newspapers and publications that regularly carry advertisements:

- Sunday Times** - carries a variety of middle and senior management level positions every week. These will cover all disciplines from general management through personnel, marketing, sales, computing, etc. Has a dedicated public appointments section.

- Daily Telegraph** - carries a variety of positions but tends to specialise more in engineering, sales and marketing. The main appointments advertising is on Thursday, but advertisements are carried on other days during the week. Thursday's appointments are repeated in the following week's Sunday Telegraph. The Saturday edition of the Telegraph also carries a section called "Executive Search".

- The Times** - carries recruitment advertising on various days, although Thursday's edition carries accounting and management positions and the Tuesday edition carries legal positions. Thursday's edition also carries the appointments section of the preceding week's Sunday Times, but if you read them in the Sunday Times - look again as others may have been added.
- The Guardian** - carries recruitment advertising throughout the week and has set days for different types of appointments. On Monday creative, media and marketing appointments are carried. Tuesday is reserved for education; Wednesday is public sector appointments and 'green' issues and Thursday is computing and hi-tech
- The Observer** - This is gradually re-building up a recruitment section for senior appointments. Some of the advertisements included may be repeats from those previously included in The Guardian, its sister paper.
- The Independent** - is now beginning to carry more recruitment advertising and favours a similar concept as that practised by the Guardian in having a different day for different types of appointments. Their order of play is: Monday; computing and telecommunication, Tuesday; media, marketing and sales, Wednesday; finance, accountancy and legal and Thursday; general, graduate and public appointments.
- Independent on Sunday** - is also trying hard to increase its recruitment advertising and has the same arrangement as the Times and Telegraph in that the Sunday advertisements are repeated on the appropriate day of the daily sister paper.
- Financial Times** - carries recruitment advertising on a Wednesday and a Thursday. The Wednesday edition covers banking, financial services and general management appointments, whilst the Thursday edition specialises in accountancy appointments.
- International Herald Tribune** - carries recruitment advertising, normally on a Monday.
- Wall Street Journal (Europe)** - carries recruitment advertising, mainly on a Tuesday.
- Economist** - carries recruitment advertising in two sections, in Executive Focus towards the front of the publication, which concentrates on senior appointments, and other appointments to the rear of the publication.
- Computing, Computer Weekly and other computer publications** - regularly carry IT appointments across all levels.
- Accountancy Age** - carries accountancy appointments, normally at a junior or middle management level although is now tending to carry more senior appointments.

There are other publications which specialise in specific appointments, such as People Management, Marketing Week, Management Consultancy, etc. There are also specialist publications for the public sector and you will find these listed in the Chapter on the public sector.

Many local newspapers carry advertisements and some of these will be at a senior level. All avenues for possible recruitment advertisements should be explored and examined.

The Internet

The resources that the internet offers are numerous, and virtually everything covered in this chapter is available over the network.

If you are not already linked up to the Internet, you should get connected as a priority. You will need to work 'online' to a certain extent in most jobs nowadays, and certainly it will make your search a lot easier. A browser, like Internet Explorer, is the framework which will allow you to access the Internet, whilst Search facilities such as Google, will let you explore the web sites on offer. The following can be found on the Net:

- specific organisation sites, which often contain annual report information, profiles of people working within the organisation etc.
- newspapers, for example, the Financial Times, Sunday Times and the Guardian, have on line job search facilities, covering recent advertised positions
- directories of commercial organisations and internal contacts
- chat rooms
- market information
- many dedicated recruitment websites

The internet contains vast resources of information and opportunities. As a tool it is almost as important as the telephone, and is by far the most convenient way of finding out most of the background information you need before making an approach to a potential employer. If you are responding to an advert on the internet, via the advertising website, be aware that often your 'application' will be forwarded in a very basic form that is not really appropriate for the recruiter. Always make a separate, focussed application, forwarded to the recruiter independently by you, unless you are specifically required to do otherwise.

The following shows different job disciplines and the publications you may want to read plus which day of the week advertisements covering those positions appear:

What to look at and when (newspapers)

Job function	Media	Day for advertising
Accountancy/Finance	Evening Standard*	Monday
	Independent	Thursday
	Financial Times	Wednesday
	Financial Times	Thursday
	Accountancy Age	Thursday
	Sunday Times	Sunday
IT	Independent	Tuesday
	Evening Standard	Wednesday
	Guardian	Thursday
	Computing	Thursday
	Computer Weekly	Thursday
	Times	Friday
	Sunday Times	Sunday
Creative/Media	Guardian	Monday
	Evening Standard	Wednesday
	Marketing Week	Wednesday
	Marketing/Campaign	Thursday
	Sunday Times	Sunday
Engineering	Daily Express	Thursday
	Daily Telegraph	Thursday
	Daily Mail	Thursday
	Sunday Times	Sunday
	Sunday Telegraph	Sunday
Legal	Times	Tuesday
	The Lawyer	Wednesday
	Independent	Wednesday
Public Sector	Evening Standard	Monday
	Guardian	Wednesday
	Opportunities	Friday
	Sunday Times	Sunday
European Appointments	IHT	Monday
	The European	Thursday
	Financial Times	Friday
	Sunday Times	(non - UK edition only) Sunday

Sales & Marketing	Guardian	Monday
	Marketing Week	Wednesday
	Evening Standard	Wednesday
	Marketing	Thursday
	Daily Express	Thursday
	Daily Mail	Thursday
	Sunday Times	Sunday
	Mail on Sunday	Sunday
	Observer	Sunday
General	Evening Standard	Monday
	Most regional daily newspapers	Thursday
	Independent	Thursday
	Daily Mail	Thursday
	Daily Express	Thursday
	Daily Telegraph	Thursday
	Guardian	Thursday
	Times	Thursday
	Guardian	Saturday
	Sunday Times	Sunday
	Observer	Sunday
	Independent on Sunday	Sunday
	Mail on Sunday	Sunday
	Sunday Telegraph	Sunday

* Evening Standard = London Evening Standard

Recommended reference libraries

City Business Library
 1 Brewer's Hall Garden
 London EC2V 5BX
 020 7638 8215/6
 Recorded information: 020 7480 7638

Science Reference Library
 Business Information Service
 25 Southampton Buildings
 Chancery Lane London WC2A 1AW
 020 7323 7494

London Business School
Sussex Place
Regent's Park
London NW1 4SA
020 7262 5050
NB: Open only to graduates of the school

Westminster Reference Library
St Martin's Street
London WC2H 7HP
(Commercial & Business) 020 7798 2034/2035
(General reference) 020 7798 2036

Holborn Library
32-38 Theobald's Road
London WC1X 8PA
020 7323 7494

Statistics and Market Intelligence Library (for overseas companies)
Department of Trade & Industry
123 Victoria Street
London SW1H 0ET
Recorded Information: 020 7215 5444/5445
General Enquiries: 020 7215 5000

Manchester Central Library
St Peter's Square
Manchester M2 5PD
0161 234 1900

Birmingham Central Library
Chamberlain Square
Birmingham B3 3HQ
0121 235 4511

Glasgow District Libraries HQ
The Mitchell Library
North Street
Glasgow G3 7DN
0141 221 9600

Edinburgh Central Library
George IV Bridge
Edinburgh EH1 1EG
0131 225 5584

Export Market Information Centre
British Overseas Trade Board
123 Victoria Street
London SW1E 6RB
020 7215 5444

The Library at the King's Fund Centre
126 Albert Street
London NW1 7NF
020 7267 6111

NB: Large collection of material on health, social service and voluntary organisations

In addition various institutes such as Institute of Directors, British Institute of Management, etc, have libraries or information services that can be accessed (normally for members of those institutes only).

Chapter 11 – References

Introduction

We recommend that early in the job search process, you draw up a list of prospective referees. In the next section, we will be talking about interviews. It is possible that when attending an interview, you will be asked about referees, so you should be prepared.

Think carefully about who you could ask to act as a referee. These might include:

- Your current or most recent boss. This is an obvious choice with an immediate and informed knowledge of your work
- A past boss (but preferably not too far back in your career)
- A major supplier or customer (more relevant if the job you might move into calls for selling, buying or delivering a service)
- Professional associates such as accountants/auditors, solicitors, bankers, etc. These will be people with whom you have worked closely in the past
- If you are (or were) a main board director, there may be occasions when you would prefer not to give the name of the Managing Director as a referee. If this is the case, you may give the name of the Chairman, another main board director, or preferably a Non-Executive Director. However, you will need to explain why you are not giving your direct superior
- In certain circumstances, it can be useful to give an additional reference in respect of extra curriculum activities. For instance you may be a Trustee of a local charity, or sit on a Trust of some description. In these circumstances you may want to give the Chair of the Trustees as a referee.

If you are still employed, providing referees can be difficult. If your boss does not know you intend leaving, then it would not be appropriate to give his or her name at this stage. There may be circumstances when you are employed, but have already discussed with your boss your desire to move on. In these situations, it may be a little easier to give your boss as a referee, but we recommend you keep them closely informed on what you are doing and who might be calling them.

Most employers and consultants understand that references can be difficult to obtain if you are currently employed. However, you must accept that any job offer will probably be made on the basis that it is subject to satisfactory references being obtained. You may also find that there is one person who knows of your desire to look for another job (such as a professional advisor) and on whom you may be able to call if necessary for a reference.

General guidelines on references

- Always ensure the person that you have given as a referee has agreed that they are happy to act in this capacity
- Ensure that when you provide their name, address and telephone number to a potential recruiter or employer, this information is accurate (and up to date!)
- Avoid out-of-date referees. References based on experiences more than five years old are not very relevant
- Do not offer too many referees. Two or three are enough
- Professional references are of far more value than personal referees
- References are usually requested when negotiations are well underway - indeed job offers are often formally made "subject to satisfactory references". Do not offer references until you are asked for them
- Avoid supplying photocopies of "To whom it may concern....." references. These are usually regarded with suspicion. They may, however, be acceptable, if your employment referred to an overseas organisation (from where it would be more difficult to get a reference), or alternatively a past employer went into liquidation.

While it is unlikely that any of your referees will say anything that is particularly negative about you, it is important that they do have some positive things to say that will support your job objectives. Where you have left your last job through dismissal or redundancy, it is important you agree with your boss 'the reasons for your departure'. You will have already outlined these to a recruiter or potential employer. You do not want someone who gives a reference on you to give an entirely different story.

If there could be disagreements about any part of the reference, you should negotiate those concerns with the individual. Personality clashes are all too common as reasons for people leaving organisations. If this was a problem and you are concerned that your boss may raise this within the reference he/she gives on you, then you need to find additional referees. For instance you may want to also suggest professional advisers, other directors (or senior managers) and some of the other suggestions made above. Those who then take up references on you can speak to several people and get a balanced picture. Indeed, if there was a personality clash, one of the additional referees may be able to comment that your boss was 'a very difficult person with whom to work'.

If you know that you will get a poor reference from a former boss, indicate that to the recruiter or employer when you provide the name. This will mitigate the effect of those comments because they come from you first and will hold no surprise when they come from the referee. Then provide additional referees so a balanced view can be obtained.

Do not abuse those who agree to act as your referee. While they may be happy to give a reference on you, their patience may start to run thin if they are being called daily by different people for the same purpose. Whenever you are asked for referees in your job search, you should phone your referees and let them know to expect contact to be made and by whom.

Many references these days are taken up by telephone. The reason for this is that a referee is likely to be more forthcoming on the telephone than they might be in writing. So make sure you supply the telephone number of your referee when asked. Ideally this should be their business number.

Remember that some organisations will only provide written references of a fairly bland nature. This is usually company policy and cannot always be overcome. However, if this does apply, you may find there is someone who is prepared to speak (not write) on your behalf, but it will have to be made clear their views are not necessarily the company's views.

The key points that are usually covered when a reference is taken (either by telephone or written request) are the following:

Credibility

How does the referee know you? Reporting relationship, length of time known, professional and/or personal.

Accomplishments

What were the things you did especially well and what major contributions did you make? There must be a consistency between what is said, your CV and points made in the interview.

Personal Traits

What kind of person are you? Significant job-related traits such as management style, communications and personal work habits.

Relationships

How do you get on with your peers, superiors, subordinates, etc? Are you a team player?

Salary and Employment Confirmation

The person taking up the reference may well want confirmation on your employment dates and salary. Make sure you have given this information correctly as, if you say you were earning £50,000 and your referee says £25,000, serious questions will be asked about your honesty.

Strengths and weaknesses

What are your strengths and what are your shortcomings? This will cover particular skills and abilities that you have demonstrated and also personal traits which are seen as a particular strength or limitation.

Reasons for leaving

What is the official story? Make sure that your reason for leaving tallies with the view of your previous employer. If there are likely to be any substantial differences, then explain the situation to the interviewer. Keep this as simple and as direct as possible. Unless there was a major problem, this is a bigger issue for you than for the potential employer. The more explanation you give, the more "red flags" you raise.

Would you re-employ this person?

This is often asked to ascertain how they really feel about you!

Conclusion

You should regard your referees as a vital part of your job search. They represent not only people who are willing to speak on your behalf but also very valuable contacts in your network. It is important that you keep them informed about your progress and particularly when you are getting close to using them. It can also be very useful to ask them to let you know after they have been called and to get their impressions on the organisation, the potential position and the level of interest in you. Once again, if they have assisted you by acting as a referee, do not forget to thank them.

Chapter 12 – The job interview

Interview

In the section Market Strategy we made the point that the bottom line of all your planning and job search activities is to land job interviews in order to receive job offers.

The interview occupies a key role in the process. No matter how well you plan your search or how well you may prepare your letters, applications and CVs, it all pays off only when you get the job that you have been aiming for. And that decision is made as a result of, and often at, the job interview. That is why it can be such a stressful event.

When you are invited for an interview you know that you have been successful in creating an interest in your qualifications and background. Now they want to meet you, the person behind all that information. This meeting will give you a chance to reinforce the positive impression that has already been created. It will also provide you with an opportunity to learn more about the organisation and the job.

In the next chapter, we will concentrate on preparing for the interview and how you can stand out. In this chapter, we will look more closely at the different types of interviews you might come across.

Interview objectives

From the interviewer's perspective, the primary objective is to determine whether you meet the criteria established for the job. Will you be able to accomplish what is expected and perhaps a little extra?

It is also an opportunity for the interviewer to assess how well you, as a person, would fit into the organisation. A lot has been written about organisational culture and in many cases there is a definite organisational personality. It is important that you fit in if you are to get along with your colleagues and become part of a smoothly running team.

For you, it is an opportunity to find out about the specific position - the responsibilities, the expectations - the way it fits into the larger organisation (if that exists). You can assess whether you have the appropriate skills and a genuine interest in the job. Equally do you sense that the organisation has a culture in which you would feel comfortable?

Types of interviews

You will probably not know what type of interview you will get in advance, but you need to prepare yourself for most possibilities.

Interviews will probably differ between consultants and a potential future employer. Many of the interviews you will come across do not have official titles, but below we divide them into distinct groups.

Structured Interview

A structured interview is one of the most thorough and is likely to be administered by a professional - this could be a consultant or a potential employer. In recent years, many organisations have started to use structured interviews.

A structured interview follows a pattern and list of questions and will be very similar for every candidate seen. These may be designed to help interviewers make comparisons between candidates on predetermined criteria. A structured interview will normally pick up on your career, but will have specific questions that will probe certain skills, competencies or attributes pertinent to the job in question.

A structured interview will likely last 1 - 2 hours, and you should come out of it feeling every aspect was covered. A structured interview also allows those candidates who do not necessarily give a good first impression, to improve. Therefore a bad beginning to the interview can be resurrected.

Free Form Interview

This appears to be more conversational but needs to be handled carefully. There is little structure to the meeting and is most often the style of someone who is not familiar with interviewing techniques.

The interviewer may start with a question such as "Tell me a little about yourself" - So what should you say? Do not just go through your résumé. Try and get some guidance on what the interviewer would like to cover, such as your career, your personal background or why you are interested in that job.

Here are some suggestions you might like to consider if faced with this type of interview:

- Practice giving a run down of your career - in 5 -10 minutes. This discipline can be useful and may well be used in other types of interviews. The first few minutes should be a quick overview of the period from leaving school to about 5 years' ago and the last 4 - 5 minutes on your more recent experience. When covering your more recent experience remember to include why you left one job to move to another and end with why you are now looking for another job.
- On the basis you know what job you are being interviewed for, run through an outline of your experience as it is most pertinent to that job.
- You may want to include aspects of your educational and professional background, what you are currently engaged in and other past experience, which is relevant. This merely puts your background across in a different order.

This type of interview needs managing as there is a temptation for you to say too much. When you have given some information, you could ask a question in return, eg "Is the sort of information you are looking for?"

The Screening Interview

These can take two forms. One type of screening interview is usually conducted by someone from the HR Department. Their objective is to size up your experience and personality and compare you with other candidates. They will interview at least twice as many people as they intend to present for the next stage, trying to determine strengths and weaknesses. Often they will not provide a lot of information about the job and may possibly have no direct experience of the department. It is their job to find candidates

acceptable to the line manager who will make the final choice and so they will try to match you to that individual. This type of interview will usually not be more than 1 hour.

The other type of screening interview may be conducted by a recruitment firm. In this context it will not be against one specific job, but to discover more about you so they can ascertain what jobs on their books it would be worthwhile submitting your CV against. They may well discuss very briefly different jobs and tell you which ones they will submit you against - but do not expect a detailed briefing. For this type of interview remember you are trying to get across the impression that you are a valuable commodity so the agency feels it is likely they can place you.

The 'Counselling' Interview

In the true sense this is not counselling, nor is it an interview to assess you fully and would possibly be best described as a meeting. Some search and selection consultants will suggest a meeting, purely to meet you and discuss your career objectives and job search. It is always worth attending these as they help in getting you known and enhance your network.

Apart from finding out a bit more about you, they will be making a judgement on whether they think you might be suitable for any future assignments they might handle. For this reason first impressions will be important and you will not have the luxury you have with a structured interview, to correct early impressions.

The consultant will ask you fairly specific questions, but this will probably be done in a relaxed atmosphere and will last 30-45 minutes. In particular they may want to know:

- What are the key skills, competencies or attributes you have to offer?
- Why are you available and/or looking for a job?
- What type of job are you looking for (it is useful to have thought this through first and maybe list them in order of priority)
- What geographical area are you considering including your readiness to relocate?
- What was your last salary and what salary range are you now looking at?

Some of those you meet may use the opportunity to counsel you on your CV or give you advice on your job hunting. Whether you agree or not with their comments, it is worth considering their point of view as many comments can be constructive.

Depending upon your seniority and areas of expertise, it can be useful to offer your services to the consultant in the future as a 'source'. They may be headhunting in your industry sector and would welcome talking to you in the future about people you know in that industry.

The Technical Interview

This type of interview will probably be carried out by either your future line manager or a consultant (or specialist) from the same discipline as you. In this instance the consultant is likely to be knowledgeable about your function and/or industry sector. The purpose of the technical interview is to carry out a specialist assessment and evaluation of your actual skills or knowledge. The interview will probe in depth on technical points. Whilst some questions may well be on real life incidents in your experience, others will be hypothetical - for instance "If such and such should happen, what would you do to resolve it?"

There is a danger in the technical interview of which you should be aware. Whilst the interviewer should know their subject they may well NOT be a trained interviewer. This is less dangerous when questioning you about historical real life experience. However, when asking you the hypothetical questions there is a danger that the interviewer may not agree with your answer - or have a totally different view about how they personally would have resolved the issue.

Handling this is not easy. You must on the one hand not be seen as weak (ie only agreeing with the interviewer) but on the other hand you do not want to get into a confrontational situation.

If this should occur, try and stay calm, accept their point of view but explain why you opted for your response - possibly examining the advantages and disadvantages of each.

Panel Interview

As these are common in the Public and charity/not for profit Sectors, you should also read the section on Public Sector in this manual which will explain about panel interviews in this context.

A panel interview tends to be very formal - usually with a big table and the 'panel' on one side, with you on the other. The Chair of the panel will normally introduce the proceedings and may or may not introduce the other panel members.

Questions tend to be put across quite formally and you need to answer them concisely. When answering questions respond mainly to the questioner but try and ensure you make eye contact with some of the other panel members and 'bring them in' to your answers. Keep your wits about you as questions may not follow in a logical order, which makes it more difficult to respond in a structured way. In this kind of interview it is more difficult to make it a dialogue and probably better not to try. You will need to gather information in a different way outside the interview.

Making a Presentation

This may well be included as part of the interview format. You will be asked to make a presentation on a specific subject. The subject matter will probably be given to you, but in some cases you will be allowed to select your own - in which case make it job relevant. If you do have to give a presentation ensure you find out:

- Who will be present
- How long it should run
- What visual aids you can use

Very often a presentation will only be for about 10 minutes, although those you present to may well want another time afterwards to ask you questions about your presentation.

You will be assessed not only on the presentation content, but also on your style.

It is difficult to give hints on what the best style might be. You are probably safest to use a style with which you are comfortable and which suits you best.

Psychometric Assessment

The chapter covering Psychometric Testing will give you more information on this.

It is quite common these days to find that your interview also involves you taking some psychometric tests.

The type of tests, the quality of administration and feedback will vary enormously. Under the guidelines issued by the British Psychological Society, you should always be offered feedback by those who test you. It is worth asking whether you will get feedback, but there is no guarantee you will get it.

Sometimes, you may start with some psychometric tests and the interviewer will then give you feedback and explore in more detail why your responses showed up in a certain way.

Alternatively, you may be asked to complete some psychometrics on line before the day of the interview.

Assessment Centres

Assessment Centres are one of the most comprehensive assessment tools available. They can last from half a day to 2 or 3 days. Normally an Assessment Centre involves a variety of activities and these might include:

- A one-to-one interview
- A number of psychometric tests
- Group discussions (less likely for senior roles)
- A presentation (by yourself)
- Leadership exercises
- Teamwork exercises (less likely for senior roles)

Problems and solutions?

Let us look at some of the problems and what you can do about them

Problem

Solution

They allow too little time. They are running late.

Suggest you would be happy if they wanted to re-schedule the interview to allow more time. If they insist on keeping going, then make sure you keep your responses short and to the point.

The interviewer talks too much.

Look for a point when you can ask them a question. They might well be relieved and were only talking too much because they were nervous. However, if they look irritated, then let them carry on. You will probably impress as a good listener!

You are late.

Apologise, explain why (you will have phoned ahead to warn of the delay) and then keep your responses short.

The interviewer who makes up their mind in the first 3 minutes and has obviously ruled you out.

Don't give up. It is possible you might change the interviewer's mind.

The interviewer knows little about the job in question or the type of person they are looking for

Don't get angry or patronise them. Get the job first, then you can take your revenge!

The interviewer who asks closed questions which only require 'yes' or 'no' answers

This is a poor interview technique, but you will come across it. Therefore it is up to you to do the interviewer's job for them and open the questions up. For instance, you can say "Yes, and this included....." or "No, but....."

The interviewer who tries to put you under undue stress, becoming aggressive or trying to trip you up on your responses.

Remain calm. You do not have to agree with the interviewer, but answer questions calmly and do not get worked up.

It is likely that during your job search you will come across both good and bad interviewers. By being aware of the bad ones, you can behave appropriately and hopefully still get across your 'case' - albeit in difficult circumstances.

Chapter 13 – Preparing for the interview

Introduction

Preparation

Earlier in this manual we demonstrated how a poorly prepared application could do you more harm than good. The same concept applies to interviews. If you are not prepared, it will show. You will end up getting flustered and it will be a lost opportunity.

Through the process covered in this manual, you will already have gained better knowledge of yourself, your strengths and weaknesses, your interests, priorities and short and long term goals. By rehearsing them, you will be in a better position to discuss them at interview and to ensure that you can put them across in a positive and appropriate manner.

Know the organisation

If you are being interviewed by a potential employer, make sure you have researched the organisation and know as much as you can about:

- Organisation size and location
- Products and services
- The reputation, philosophy and culture
- Competitors in the same market
- Financial history and growth.

If you are asked "Why do you want to work for us?" deeper knowledge of the organisation will be valuable in allowing you to respond effectively.

Remember also that under 50% of candidates attending interviews conduct any research at all. Therefore by knowing your facts you will stand out.

If you are being interviewed by an intermediary or consultant you **may** have been provided with some of this information. But you would be making a mistake if you relied purely on the information provided to you. It is feasible that part of their assessment criteria will be based on the initiative you have shown and the extent to which you have done some additional research.

If you are attending an interview for a specific job with a consultant and do not know the organisation for whom they are acting, telephone the consultant prior to the interview to ask. Do not be aggressive, merely say something like "I am coming in to see you next week. Ideally I would like to do some research before I come in. Is it possible to know the client's identity at this stage?"

There will be occasions when, for confidentiality reasons, the consultant cannot tell you. However, they are likely to note positively that you at least showed the initiative to ask!

Cautionary note!

While it is important to do as much research as possible, you must not allow this to be threatening to those whom you meet. You are not intending to dazzle them with your knowledge, merely show you have done some research and can ask intelligent and pertinent questions.

Other things to do

- Be on time - ideally arrive 5 minutes early. Make sure you allow sufficient time for your journey and contingencies. You will put yourself at a disadvantage if you arrive hot and flustered with seconds to spare. Also remember that often the interviewer will have a tight timetable. If you arrive 30 minutes late - your meeting could be cancelled or severely shortened in duration. Likewise do not arrive an hour early as this may make the interviewer feel uncomfortable and under pressure
- Make sure you know where you are going - if in doubt, telephone and get directions
- Be polite to commissionaires, receptionists, secretaries. Remember the assessment of you begins the moment you walk in the door for your interview. Aggressive or rude behaviour is invariably fed back to the interviewer
- Manage the first impression. This is crucial. The first couple of minutes will strongly influence the interviewer's perception of you:
 - Dress smartly
 - Remember to smile as you are greeted
 - Maintain eye contact - but do not stare
 - Use a firm, but not crushing, handshake
 - Look to the interviewer to guide you on where to sit

The Interview itself

Getting it right means striking a balance between getting across all the information and allowing the interviewer to take the lead and enjoy the meeting. Remember that if you make the interviewer feel uncomfortable as a result of your taking the lead or giving too much information, which is not asked for, you will leave behind a negative impression.

The interview is a two-way process. You need to demonstrate you can both speak and listen.

SPEAKING

Keep it jargon-free - your last employer may well have terminology or abbreviations others will not understand.

Be specific about what you have done rather than talk in generalities; "I did " is much stronger than "I would" or "we did".

Use metrics as evidence of successes.

If you are unsure, check what the interviewer means by a question.

If you want time to think, take it but let the interviewer know: "That is an interesting question; I would like to think about it for a moment".

Body Language

Watching the body language and behaviours of the interviewer can help you understand if they are interested in what you are saying or not:

- an interested interviewer is likely to maintain eye contact, make regular notes, nod their head to encourage or indicate understanding, interject with follow up questions
- a disinterested interviewer may put down their pen, fold their arms, stop nodding their head and appear disengaged.

Use a video camera and set up a mock interview, when a friend will ask you all the questions you hate. You can then watch and see how you look.

It is worth also looking at the video in playback at fast forward speed. This will show up all the body language you never thought you had!

It will also show if you tended to waffle at any time during the interview and you can critique yourself answering all the difficult questions.

Provide them with a list of difficult questions (see below) and let them pick questions randomly.

LISTENING

Show an interest in what the interviewer is saying.

Check on what you think has been said - don't be afraid to ask for clarification.

Listen to see if the interviewer understands what you have said.

The interview content

In your preparation you should have thought through some good examples of how your past experience matches what you see as the job requirements.

You should be prepared to answer questions openly and honestly. If an honest reply means you do not get the job then so be it.

However, there is a difference between honesty and bluntness. Try to find a reasonable way to present things. "I am looking for another post with greater autonomy is better than "I've got to get out because my current boss won't allow me to do anything without asking her".

Be positive and enthusiastic about yourself. If you have been made redundant, you need to be able to talk about your current situation in a way that displays no bitterness. Interviewers tend to be very astute at picking up any 'chip' you might be carrying on your shoulder!

When discussing things you have done, concentrate more on the present and recent past - rather than something that happened 10 years ago.

Manage the time effectively. If possible find out beforehand how long the interviewer has allocated. This will allow you to pace yourself. If the interviewer asks you to "Run through your career" ask how much detail they would like. Then aim to do it in 10 minutes or less.

When running through your career ensure you:

- bring out relevant experience to the job for which you are being interviewed, not just run through a 'standard speech'
- cover progression/promotions
- explain why you left one job to go to another
- remain positive about your employers - by all means include problems (we all know that life is never perfect), but do not sound bitter.

You may be asked about your interests outside work. Ensure you cover sensible and balanced interests and hobbies.

At the end of the interview you will probably be given the opportunity to ask questions. Try and keep them pertinent. If you feel a particular aspect of your background and experience has not been covered - mention it. Do it in such a way as not to offend the interviewer.

Other Important Points to Remember

- do **not** read from your CV. You must know your own career in detail
- do **not** take notes, unless asked by the interviewer
- answer the question that is asked. Be crisp and concise on your replies. Do not talk too much. It should be a conversation not a monologue
- if a question is not clear, do not guess, ask for clarity
- be prepared to offer a quick 5 or 10 minute summary of your career in which you condense your early experience and spend more time on your more relevant, recent experience
- be ready to ask the kinds of questions that show that you have done your homework. If it is an interview with a line manager or a fellow professional it lets you establish a rapport in speaking the same language
- try to have a natural dialogue but allow the interviewer to be in control. Remember, the interviewer's role may be as strange and difficult as yours
- try and turn negatives into something positive. Instead of problems, talk about challenges and opportunities. As an example, you may have been made redundant, but this gives you the chance you needed to re-evaluate your career and future and you are now enthusiastic about the direction you are taking.
- look for opportunities to make your points as to how you can contribute
- try and open up and let the interviewer see the real you underneath. If this is your potential employer, they will want to feel they know you and like you
- show some enthusiasm. The job market is tough and there are probably many people after the same job as you. An employer wants to take someone on who really wants the job and will do something with it
- watch your body language
- be open but discreet (if you betray confidences about past employers, might you not do the same in the future?)
- There's nothing wrong with showing a sense of humour where appropriate but equally don't try to entertain the interviewer
- Turn **off** the mobile phone!

Claiming Expenses

Depending on how far you have travelled for your interview, you may wish to consider claiming expenses; however please note the following:

- if your journey is similar to that which you would commute if you got the job, do not expect reimbursement
- if you are attending an informal (ie not specific job related) meeting with a consultant, headhunter or agency, expenses invariably will NOT be reimbursed
- if you are attending a formal interview with either a consultant or an employer where a longer journey or travel is involved, expenses should be reimbursed. At a senior level, expense claim forms are rare. A letter therefore outlining your expenses will often be required

- claim only what is reasonable and what you have incurred. For instance:
 - Car travel - claim for the cost of the petrol only not a mileage rate
 - Trains - claim second class fare, not first class unless this has been specifically agreed before travelling
 - Taxis - if you have to claim these, endeavour to keep to a minimum
 - Tube fares/bus fares - it is in order to claim what is incurred
 - Meals - only claim if absolutely essential. Do not use the expense claim as an excuse to have a 5-star meal somewhere!
 - Overnight accommodation - Do not use it as an excuse to stay in a 5-star hotel. Accommodation is usually only necessary for very early or late interviews when travel to or from home on the same day is impossible
 - Air fares. Assume economy travel unless otherwise agreed.

Remember that how you claim and what you claim says quite a lot about you!

Chapter 14 – The difficult questions (and possible responses)

Introduction

Given below are some examples of the more difficult questions you may be asked with some ideas as to how you can respond. We do not recommend you use these exact replies, but they may assist you in thinking about how such questions can be dealt with.

Tell me about you!

- Keep your answer to one or two minutes; don't ramble
- Cover four segments, ie early years, education, work experience, recent times (with an accent on the latter).

What do you know about our organisation?

- Know some of the following, products, size, income, reputation, image, goals, problems, management talent, management style, people, skills, history and philosophy.

Why do you want to work for us?

- You wish to be part of a particular project, or solve a particular problem
- You can make a definite contribution to specific organisational goals
- You can identify with their culture (ensure you know what the culture is!)
- You admire the way they have developed (make sure you can justify what you mean by this if asked).

What would you do for us? What can you do for us that someone else can't?

- Relate past experience which represents success in solving previous employer problem(s) which may be similar to those of the prospective employer. Use evidence of your track record to date to strengthen your comments.

Are you a good manager? Give an example. Why do you feel you have top managerial potential?

- Keep your answer achievement oriented
- Keep your answer task oriented.

As a manager, what do you look for when you hire people?

- Skills, initiative, adaptability.

What do you see as the most difficult task in being a manager or an executive?

- Getting things planned and done on time within the budget.

What important trends do you see in our industry?

- Keep your answer to two or three trends.

What are the "frontier" issues of your profession?

- Keep your answer to two or three issues.

Why did you leave your last job?

- Keep your answer factual and positive. Don't dwell on the negative aspects of your last job, or be too critical of your last employer
- If you were made redundant, be honest. Don't try and disguise the fact by saying 'I decided it was time for a career change.....'

Why did they choose you for redundancy? (for those who have been made redundant)

- Stick to one response ... don't change answers during the interview!
- Give a "group" answer if possible, eg a number of people were affected following the downturn in the market.

How do you feel about leaving all of your benefits?

- Concerned but not panicked.

Describe what you feel to be an ideal working environment.

- Where people are treated as fairly as possible
- Where people are challenged and stretched and performers are rewarded

How would you evaluate your last employer?

- An excellent organisation which gave me good experience.

Did you help increase sales? Profits? How?

- Describe in some detail, and provide facts, metrics etc.

Did you help reduce costs? How?

- Same as above.

What did your subordinates think of you?

- Be honest and positive.

In your last position, what features did you like the most? Least?

- Be careful, ... be positive!

In your last position, what was your most significant achievement?

- Be specific and try and make it relevant to the job for which you are being interviewed.

Why haven't you found a new position before now?

- Finding a job is one matter, but finding the right job is proving a little more difficult.

What did you think of your boss?

- Be as positive as you can.

Would you describe a few situations in which your work was criticised?

- Be specific but not emotional.

If I spoke with your previous boss, what would he/she say are your greatest strengths and weaknesses?

- Be honest but not too negative.

How do you cope with pressure, deadlines, etc?

- Be positive, but realistic. It is a way of life in business.

How did you change the nature of your job?

- Improved it ... of course, but explain how.

In your last position, what problems did you identify that had previously been overlooked?

- Keep it brief and don't brag.

Don't you feel you might be better off in a different size organisation? Different type of organisation?

- Depends on the job - elaborate slightly.

If you had a choice of jobs and organisations, where would you go?

- Talk about the job you're being interviewed for.

What do you feel this position should pay?

- Answer with a question, ie "What is the salary range for similar jobs in your organisation?"

How much do you expect, if we offer this position to you?

- Be careful; the market value of the job may be the key answer, eg "My understanding is that a job like the one you're describing may be in the range of £_____."

What kind of salary are you worth?

- Have a specific figure in mind ... don't be hesitant. And watch the body language.

Do you have any objections to psychometric/psychological tests?

- No, I don't mind.

What other types of jobs or companies are you considering?

- Keep your answer related to this organisation's field. But be honest.

Will you be out to take your boss's job?

- Not until I get the current job done.

Are you creative?

- Give examples to demonstrate how creative you are.

How would you describe your own personality?

- Describe yourself, but try and be balanced. Demonstrate you know yourself.

Are you a leader?

- Yes. Give examples.

What are your long range goals?

- Avoid, "I would like the job you advertised". Instead, give long range goals.

What are your strong points?

- Try and present at least three
- Relate them to the organisation and job opening.

What are your weak points?

- Don't say you have none
- Turn a negative into a positive answer. "I am sometimes impatient and I get too deeply involved when we are running behind schedule".

If you could start again, what would you do differently?

- Nothing ... I am happy today so I don't want to change my past.

What career options do you have at the moment?

- "I see three areas of interest ..."

How would you describe the essence of success? According to your definition of success, how successful have you been so far?

- A sense of well-being ... Pretty well with the usual ups and downs.

Chapter 15 – Psychological testing

An overview

In addition to the normal interview, many employers are now using psychological tests to help them in the decision making processes of selecting people who are suitable for the jobs they have on offer.

These tests are often referred to as Psychometric tests, Aptitude tests, Ability tests, Selection tests, or just Tests. They can be used alone or as part of a more detailed assessment centre, where in addition to the tests, group exercises, job simulations, presentations and group meetings sometimes take place.

This section is intended to give an introduction to psychometric testing and assessment centres, for those who are likely to undertake such assessments. A lot of benefit can be derived from undergoing an assessment of this nature and the whole process can be a pleasant and rewarding experience, providing it is approached with a positive attitude.

Testing supplements other methods of assessment, but does so in an objective and fair manner. Gone are the old 11 plus type questions associated with testing in the 60s. Today you are likely to face questions that examine the thinking processes required to solve the sort of problem associated with a working environment.

Being able to work through these tests means that you are better prepared for what the future might bring, in terms of demands on your intellectual capacity.

The tests and questionnaires used are usually job related and are relevant to the world of work. Recent publicity has highlighted the fallacy of using tests that are not related to work, good employers and consultants ensure that only valid and appropriate tests are used in the assessment process.

Largely in interviews, we examine experience and attainments and the ability to think through problems and effect solutions. We also get a feel for the candidate's personality and management style but our judgement, in some of these areas, is biased by subjectivity. A means of reducing that subjectivity is by the use of tests.

In structured interviews we make judgements about potential from past performance. The fact that someone has experience and knowledge is important, but with training others may be able to quickly acquire this skill and knowledge - this depends upon the person's cognitive potential. To determine this, we need to examine thinking processes and tests help us in this area.

Appraisal reports assess past performance and set agreed objectives and targets for the future, but they are not effective in predicting future performance. Tests and assessment centres fill this gap.

Finally, personality and motivation questionnaires apply an objective look at personality factors, management style and motivation. These can be used to supplement information collected in the interview.

Interviewing combined with tests improves the predictive validity of the assessment and provides an in depth insight into the candidate's thinking processes. It is also a fair way to select people for jobs.

Psychometric testing and assessment or development centres, are merely a process by which your performance can be observed over a short period of time.

Psychometric testing can last for up to three or four hours, whilst the centre can last from one day to five and might contain; psychometric tests (explained in more detail later), in tray exercises - which simulate the sort of information a manager would receive in his or her work in-tray; they include group activities, presentations and simulated management exercises.

The term 'Assessment Centre' is used when the process is designed to assess or select people for jobs or promotion. Development Centres are so called when the process is designed for assessing training needs or for the personal development of those taking part.

Whatever the tests, you need to be as prepared as possible for the event and this introduction explains the format of an assessment you might, one day, need to attend.

Types of tests

Psychometric tests of ability

People are usually nervous about taking these types of test, because unlike questions on experience and knowledge, or attainment tests such as GCE exams, these tests appear to ask unfamiliar questions. You may not understand what the test is getting at. After all, what have questions about the manipulation of shapes got to do with the real world!

Another example is the numerical reasoning test; we could give you examples of the sort of numerical computation that the job requires, but that may be unfair to those who have never done this type of work before. It would really be a test of attainment, like GCEs and would not tell us whether you have the underlying mental capacity to do the work. It would not tell us about your abilities to deal with unfamiliar things which crop up in nearly all jobs. It would not indicate whether, with suitable training, you could do the job in the future.

Ability tests, as the name suggests, are designed to measure ability and tap potential as well as learned information. They are objective, fair and an excellent means of objectively assessing cognitive reasoning skills.

There are numerous tests to suit particular situations and a collection of them is called a test battery. The test battery can also form part of an assessment or development centre. The ability tests we use, examine cognitive skills in verbal and numerical reasoning, diagrammatic and abstract reasoning. They assess:

- the level of ability a person possesses in logical and deductive reasoning, the ability to relate to and understand others, and how they solve problems
- the ability to negotiate and to weigh up weak and strong arguments
- whether the person can remain neutral and whether they use only the information put to them, or act on feeling and intuition alone
- whether the person is confident with numbers and simple statistics, and how rapidly they learn new information

- whether you have the ability to adopt a strategic overview, and whether you can think at different levels of complexity
- the ability to see opportunities, to apply flexible thinking and to generate ideas.

Examples of psychometric tests of ability

Verbal Critical Thinking Test

This type of test consists of a series of passages of information, which have to be read and understood. Questions are then asked covering; the ability to detect inferences, the ability to recognise assumptions, logical deduction, verbal interpretation and the ability to evaluate the strengths of arguments.

Overall an average to above average score would indicate strong verbal reasoning skills, with the ability to spot problems, solve them and interact interpersonally, in the verbal sphere. The test gives an indication of the ability to communicate, both in writing and orally and to express a correct opinion. It indicates whether you are easily side tracked, jump to conclusions or apply your own values to the information provided. Below we give you a very simple example of what this test might look like.

Verbal Reasoning Test

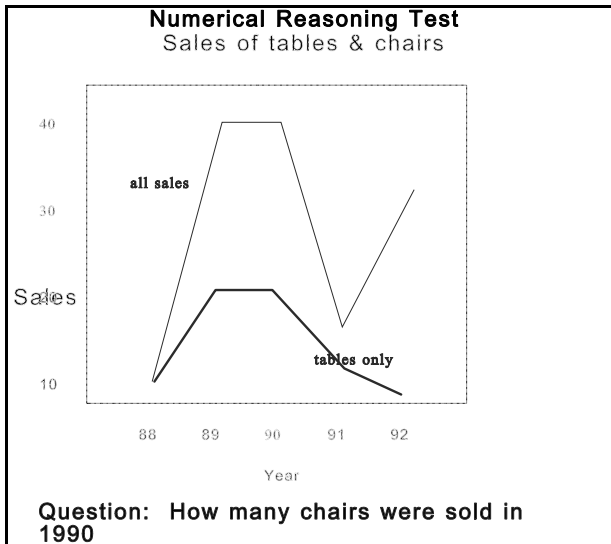
The South American Rain Forests, have many species of wild plants some of which have been introduced by Spain. The plantations contain cultivated crops which are the main source of revenue for the country. There are many emerging industries which are set to build an even stronger economy and provide more work for the indigenous population. This will provide for greater investment from Europe. Car manufacturing seems to be one of these emerging industries.

QUESTION:

The South American economy is reliant on Europe	TRUE / FALSE / NOT ENOUGH INFORMATION TO ANSWER
All the wild plants were introduced from Spain	TRUE / FALSE / NOT ENOUGH INFORMATION TO ANSWER
The plantations are the main source of revenue	TRUE / FALSE / NOT ENOUGH INFORMATION TO ANSWER
European car manufacturers are cashing in on cheap labour	TRUE / FALSE / NOT ENOUGH INFORMATION TO ANSWER

Numerical Critical Reasoning Test

This type of test examines the ability to make correct decisions from numerical and statistical data and examines the ability to cope with numbers in a realistic and practical context. It is very useful in showing the candidate's ability to extract numerical information from reports and at meetings, in order to come to some firm statistical or numerical decision.



From this example you can see there were 40 tables and chairs sold in 1990. Of these 20 were tables, which leaves 20 chairs.

The answer is therefore 20.

The actual numerical reasoning tests you are likely to meet are of course much more complex than this example, but are based on similar principles.

Some allow the use of calculators, so it is worthwhile taking your favourite calculator with you, in case you need it for the test.

The test is usually strictly timed, mainly to ensure standardisation of the test and to ensure that you do not

spend too long on the exercise. Tests of reasoning are "power" tests and the actual amount of time you spend on them is not really relevant. Often candidates say "if only I had more time I would have got a better score"; in reality this is often not true.

Personality Questionnaires

The personality questionnaires are not tests, but reflect the person's interests, values, interpersonal behaviour and management style.

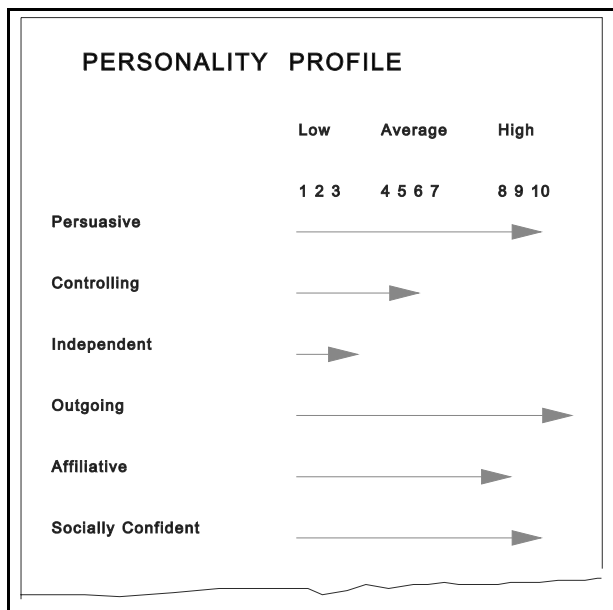
They add information to the assessment process or interview. The ability tests tell us whether or not the person has the brain power to undertake the tasks and personality questionnaires tell us how they will go about it and what they are likely to enjoy doing.

One such personality questionnaire is the occupational personality questionnaire (OPQ), marketed by Saville & Holdsworth Ltd.

The OPQ examines 30 factors of personality, from social confidence and assertiveness, through thinking style, to emotional stability and decisiveness. It compares personality with a reference group, usually the professional and management group.

Personality is compared on each factor and a level assigned which indicates whether you show more or less of the factor being assessed, or whether you are like the average manager in that dimension.

A section of a profile might look like this:



Persuasive

Enjoys selling, changes opinions of others, convincing with arguments, negotiates

Controlling

Takes charge, directs, manages, organises, supervises others

Independent

Has strong views on things, difficult to manage, speaks up, argues, dislikes personal constraints

Outgoing

Fun loving, humorous, sociable, vibrant, talkative, jovial

Affiliative

Has many friends, enjoys being in groups, likes companionship, shares things with friends

Socially confident

Puts people at ease, knows what to say, good with words

and so on.....

On the profile shown, the person being assessed is more persuasive, outgoing, affiliative (friendly), and socially confident than the average manager, but less independent.

All of this information is generated from the use of personality questionnaires which are non threatening and are an immense aid to other forms of assessment.

The other type of test you are likely to meet, deals with attainments. If the potential employer wishes to ascertain your knowledge in a particular area, for example knowledge of a foreign language, they may set an attainment test. This will be questions or a passage of information written in the language to be tested. You would be asked to translate it.

The test results and predictions

To determine whether a test is able to predict performance, the employer needs to analyse the job into its component parts and determine the criteria or competencies required. They then select tests which have been successful in measuring these competencies.

Predictive validity is all about whether an assessment process predicts good performance in the job. When there is perfect prediction, a high performance on the test will mean a high performance in the job.

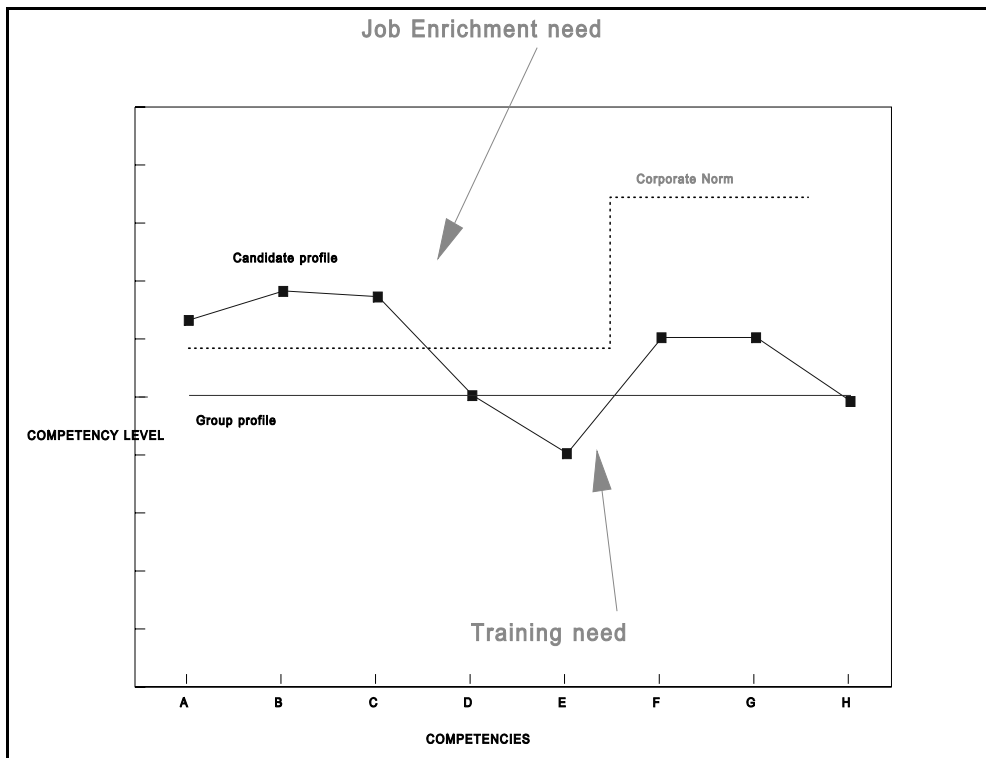
On a predictive scale of 0 to 1, where 1 is perfect prediction, the well-structured interview ranks .2 or .3. Board or panel interviews improve this to .4, whilst adding tests boosts this to .6 and above.

Another form of assessment you might meet, either overtly or covertly is a graphological analysis of your handwriting. Many psychologists are sceptical about the use of this method of assessment and the practice is not yet as popular in the UK, as it is in Europe. If you suspect that graphology may be used, it would be worthwhile getting a book on the subject from the local library, you will then be able to understand the sort of information your handwriting might reveal to the experts.

How the results are conveyed

The results of an assessment described above are usually expressed in narrative terms and a report is prepared on your performance in the assessment.

Feedback is usually given, often at the end of the recruitment assignment, when the busy work of selection is out of the way. The information can also be presented graphically as shown in the diagram.



The results of an assessment

Comparisons are made with a group norm, that norm can be all those who have attended the assessment or development process. Using norms in this way makes the whole assessment fair and valid, since performance is being compared with contemporaries. This then is an overview of psychometric and assessment centre techniques. Used effectively, they can be powerful tools in selection, and in corporate and self development.

How you can maximise your performance

There are a number of books on psychological testing, which have practice examples of tests. Whilst these are likely to be different from the actual tests you will meet in an assessment, they might prove useful in "breaking the ice" and getting you to think in test mode.

Reading, both novels and the press, is a good source of improving your verbal understanding, it also helps you to read faster.

If you think group exercises and presentations are incorporated in the assessment, practice your presentation at home. Get a discussion going with a group of friends and make sure you have your say. Listen to the feedback they give to you.

Before the actual session get a good nights sleep, no alcohol at least 24 hours before the session and arrive in good time.

If you wear glasses for reading, or use a hearing aid, make sure you have it with you. Take a calculator to the session so that you do not have to master one they might give to you.

At the test session, make sure you listen to and FULLY understand the instructions, BEFORE you start the test. Do not feel intimidated, if you do not understand, ASK.

Work as quickly and as accurately as you can, on timed tests do not spend time checking your work, there may be an opportunity to do that when and if you have answered all of the questions. Remember too, that most tests that are designed are not speed tests, so very few people will complete all of the questions. Therefore do not become dispirited if you do not complete all of the questions in the test. One test used by psychologists has 23 sections; getting as few as 10 sections correct can give you a very high score indeed. If you think you know the answer put it in. Do not spend too much time on any one question, leave it and go on to the next, avoid wild guessing, but answer as many as you can.

Honesty is the best policy when it comes to personality and motivation questionnaires, if you give the answers you think the job needs, they might be inconsistent with the information collected from other sources. You might not be able to subsequently justify them, if asked. You will not know the type of profile being sought and might distort your answers in the wrong direction. Many personality questionnaires can pick up distortions and this might taint the opinion the employer has formed about you.

It is also a fact that if your personality does not fit, you might not be happy in the job. This could lead to early termination and another job on your CV which you have to account for.

So be prepared, be honest, ask for feedback and take note of what other's say about you. We can all learn from a psychological testing experience, however painful it might have appeared at the time. In our experience most people prefer to be assessed in a fair and open manner than to rely on the subjectivity of the lone interviewer.

Chapter 16 – Public sector

Introduction

Within this manual we have continually made reference to changes that arise in applying for jobs in the public sector. For those of you currently in the public sector, you may well have read about the general practices we have covered, that commonly operate in the private sector, with some surprise. However, the increased understanding you will now have about private sector job applications will help tremendously.

Exactly the same applies in reverse. If you are applying for some of the very attractive jobs that have become available in the public sector, you must understand the different processes that will probably be adopted and what is expected of you.

A point of warning at the outset: as a private sector candidate applying for a job in the public sector, expect to be given no favours, allowances or special treatment. The bottom line is that if you are serious about pursuing opportunities in the public sector, then a great deal of preparation will have to be done in order to stand a chance of sounding credible when you reach the interview stage.

What is the public sector?

As with any market towards which you may wish to direct applications, you must research it. In this context, we are classifying the public sector in its widest sense as including:

- Central Government, including agencies
- Local Government
- Quangos
- Health sector, including NHS Trusts
- Education sector, including universities, and further education
- Housing
- Other 'not-for-profit' organisations, intra-governmental organisations and the voluntary sector

There will be other organisations which could probably be classified as public sector, but in general we are looking at those that have accountability to the general public, probably have central funding and will (by and large) be run on a not-for-profit basis.

Why should you consider roles in the above?

The past few years have seen some enormous changes within the public sector, with moves to run services along commercial lines. Whilst not run for profit, the emphasis has moved very solidly towards achieving cost reduction, a major focus on quality, more customer or user emphasis and maximum value for money. To illustrate just a few of these changes:

'Next Steps' Agencies	Central Government Departments have now established a vast number of Agencies under which their business is conducted in specific areas. This has called for greater accountability, efficiency and management expertise and a number of people have been brought in from the private sector to supplement the existing skills.
Civil Service	A number of mainstream civil service appointments are put out to open competition - so those from the private sector and elsewhere can apply alongside existing civil servants.
Local Government – re-organisation	The process of review of the organisation of local government has led to some significant restructuring in certain parts of the country and most of the senior posts in new or successor authorities will be advertised openly.
Local Government - Contracting out	Increasingly services within local authorities are being contracted out to outside suppliers. This has sometimes created the need to bring in specialists from the private sector who have more experience of writing the specifications for and managing such contracts.
NHS Trusts	Recent NHS restructuring, including the SHA and PCT reorganisations and the establishment of Foundation Trust, for Acute and Mental Health Trusts has led to a large volume of NHS staff being placed at risk. Despite this, there remains a need for specialist skills and different approaches to be introduced into NHS Trusts, particularly within Finance, IT and Commercial roles.

There are many non-executive roles within the public sector, ranging from Chair positions on very high-profile commissions, to member roles on local bodies. More and more private sector people are sought for these sorts of roles and the opportunities are very interesting. Likewise, there are numerous Commissioner positions within government bodies and the Civil Service itself.

There are some fascinating jobs within the public sector. The size and scale of many of them comes as a great surprise. Not only are many of the jobs complex, but the budget size and staff responsibility will be equal to a large public company.

However, with some individuals a degree of arrogance may exist.

There are some within the private sector who are arrogant enough to feel that the public sector must 'need people like me' or 'I would be doing the public sector a favour by offering them my services'. Others feel that most of the people who work in public sector organisations are of poor quality and so the competition, when it comes to applying for the senior jobs, will be pretty poor. A few ignore the offer of information packs when the jobs are advertised; are patronising when they get to interviews; and commonly prepare, at best, very mediocre standards of applications, which may fail to follow the response instructions or address directly where they meet the appointment criteria as outlined in the person specification. Those who feel like this tend not to understand the size and complexity of what they might be taking on, the sophistication of the recruitment process, or the fact that the general level of talent within the public sector is extraordinarily high – and we say this having recruited in and across both public and private sectors!

On the other hand, there are those in the public sector who feel, somewhat arrogantly, that no-one in the private sector could possibly understand them or cope with the jobs in question. The political dimension, the scale of change and the aspects of public accountability are sometimes considered to be too alien to private sector applicants for them to be serious contenders for the top jobs. This too is far too simplistic a view and just as arrogant and narrow minded an attitude as we have criticised some private sector candidates for adopting towards the public sector in general.

The truth is that there have been some very successful transitions from public to private sector and in reverse. There have also been some monumental failures. We believe that in the future there will be more transition and the barriers to an understanding between public and private sectors will inevitably and gradually be eroded.

Researching the public sector

Because of the open nature of the public sector, access to information and thus research is relatively easy.

If you are looking at Central Government or Agencies, then HMSO will have an abundance of literature available on the specific government department (such as an annual departmental report) or the annual report for the Agency itself (NB they now produce annual reports along professional lines similar to public companies).

Equally the press contains a great deal of information about what is happening in different departments and agencies, all of which you need to follow.

In Local Government, you should ensure you regularly read relevant publications such as Local Government Chronicle and Municipal Journal. Equally, individual local authorities will issue an abundance of literature about their organisations, the different directorates etc. Most of this is readily available – after all, these organisations are publicly accountable. The relevant local libraries will have copies of all Committee Papers, or you can call the relevant council offices to see what you can get.

If you are looking at jobs in the health sector, then you must make sure you regularly read the Health Service Journal. If education, then you should be reading the Times Educational Supplement.

Most of the major national newspapers also have specific days when they cover the public sector though both advertisements and relevant editorials.

Of course, the other major source of information is the internet. Each government department and agency, as well as almost every local authority, now has its own website. However, despite the ease of access to information on the net, nothing compares to direct, personal contact with an organisation.

Equally, you need to develop your networks to cover those areas that you are intending targeting to ensure you build up your knowledge base as far as possible.

An excellent way of finding out more information is to watch the media for advertisements within the public sector. A vast majority of these offers an information or briefing pack, so request one: - they will help enormously in your education. You do not necessarily have to subsequently apply for the position just because you received the information pack, but the breadth and openness of information contained within them will be very surprising to those of you who have not seen them before!

How does the public sector recruit?

Recruitment procedures are often remarkably thorough. They are also, in the main, abundantly fair. The adherence with equal opportunity policies and open competition means that all recruitment decisions have to be capable of being justified wherever necessary, and this is usually taken more seriously than within the private sector.

Whilst many of the senior appointments will use headhunters to generate additional candidates, even so, these positions are invariably advertised as well. Thus, even if a headhunter might not initially consider you as a candidate, you are still free to apply through the advertisement.

Advertisements

These may appear in national, local or specialist publications. National newspapers such as The Guardian carry a wide range of public sector appointments (Wednesday being the key day for senior level public sector appointments). The Sunday Times has a specialist public sector section although some public sector organizations will specifically avoid advertising in the public sector section in order to attract as many private sector candidates – so read the whole Appointments section carefully. You will also find appointments being advertised in other national papers from time to time.

In the London area, local papers tend to carry the junior appointments, but will from time to time carry senior appointments as well.

Outside London, the local newspaper for the area will invariably carry advertisements for many public sector appointments.

We have already mentioned some specialist publications such as Local Government Chronicle, the Municipal Journal and Health Service Journal. There are also others such as Inside Housing and Community Care. There will also be a number of well known minority group publications which will carry advertising such as The Voice and the Pink Paper.

In most cases, the advertisement carries an offer to apply for an information pack either by telephone or more likely simply by downloading one from a website. These information packs carry an enormous amount of information. For instance:

- Annual reports or perhaps business plans
- Budgets
- Statements of mission, core values, etc
- Organisational structure
- Copies of relevant reports
- Job Description and Person Specification
- Details on how to apply
- Application Form (in some cases)

If you follow all the advice we have given you so far in this manual, it naturally should follow that if you have access to the type of information we have just listed, you should be able to prepare a very powerful and highly focused application - providing, of course, you match the specification.

We recruit for a large number of appointments in the public sector and it never ceases to amaze us that some private sector candidates never bother to ask for the information pack at all - they merely send in a standard CV. This immediately puts the candidate at a disadvantage because:

- the information will allow you to understand far more about the job and the likelihood of whether you will be a viable candidate and therefore whether it is worth applying in the first place
- the pack should also give instructions as to how to apply and any closing date for applications (along with the subsequent recruitment timetable).

Applying

When applications are reviewed and 'sifted' for public sector appointments, this tends to be carried out very thoroughly. Whilst some may complain of over regimented approaches, in fact the sifting is very fair with each candidates' application being measured against the employment criteria.

In some cases a matrix chart will be produced with the employment criteria (qualifications, skills, experience, etc) across the top and candidates names down the left side. Ticks and crosses will then be filled into the relevant boxes against each of the appointment criteria to ensure total fairness. Only those candidates who wholly or most closely satisfy the criteria are called in for interview.

It therefore follows that your application must be closely targeted to that appointment. If an application form is used, you should still follow the advice given under the chapter covering application forms. Equally, you should remember:

- where insufficient space is available, you can use extra pages, but make it all clear that there is a continuation page
- there will probably be a section asking you how you match the employment criteria. This is an important part of the form and you will need to set out clearly how your experience and/or skills match each requirement. This may actually mean writing some paragraphs against each and every criterion – and if this is the case, then so be it. Remember that structuring your application in such a methodical manner makes it a lot easier for the reviewer to rank your application on the matrix form against each of the relevant criteria.

It is important that you cover everything that is asked for in your application. If there is no application form, then follow the detailed response instructions. It is likely that a full application should be submitted which will probably include a tailored CV, plus a cover letter or supporting statement that addresses clearly how you match the employment criteria. Do not be surprised if an application to a public sector appointment stretches to several pages in order to cover everything fully.

Preliminary Interviews and Assessment

For the most part, the final stage of selection is very formal with an interview panel (or board). However, during the early stages of selecting candidates, practices differ enormously. For instance:

- where an external consultancy is used, the chances are you may be invited to attend a preliminary interview. This preliminary interview could be a highly structured and in-depth interview, possibly also incorporating technical assessment
- an assessment centre which might occupy a full day or even two days. There is more about assessment centres in the chapter on interviews

- a preliminary meeting with a representative from the personnel function of the organisation concerned
- an informal meeting with the Chief Executive or departmental head
- in some cases the final shortlist will be selected purely from the written applications submitted

The information pack (and specifically the recruitment timetable) will normally explain what procedures will be adopted. However, you should **never** turn up for a meeting with little knowledge of what is going to take place, if in doubt call and ask.

Your aim is obviously to get to the shortlist. The recruitment process in the public sector is not usually highly protracted (as can be the case in the private sector) but it can be a different kind of experience – and this is all the more so at the final stages when one meets the interview panel or board. It is the board that selects the shortlist of candidates.

Shortlist Panel

Attending an interview panel in the public sector can be a very daunting experience for those that are not used to it. The numbers on the panel may only be around four (eg some civil service appointments and the health sector), but equally we have known one (in local government) that had nearly thirty people on the panel - plus hangers on! Certainly, panels in double figures for senior local government appointments are very common.

Particularly for the very senior appointments, you may well find that you start the interview by having to give a presentation. This will normally be on a pre-assigned subject and you will probably only have 10 minutes in which to present. This will be followed by questions on your presentation from the panel, before they move into more general questioning.

N.B. Remember if you are making a presentation to a panel that you need to ensure the presentation is as clear as possible to all those present. If the room is large and some are sitting at some distance (which is possible), Power Point or overhead slides (if you are using them) need to be uncluttered and the text large enough to be read at some distance. All the normal rules of making a presentation then apply:

- learn your presentation and use the minimum of notes or none at all
- engage with your audience and do maintain eye contact
- try and be innovative and raise some challenging ideas
- don't change the title of what you are asked to present
- don't hand out notes of your presentation (if you have prepared them) at the outset – the Panel will read them instead of looking at you – hand them out at the end of your presentation, if you want
- don't mumble
- don't talk to the screen

You will normally be aware of who is Chairing the panel. You should also have been told how long your interview is to last. Forty-five minutes is not uncommon for some panels. If you know you only have this long, you will need to ensure you can give short, pertinent answers to questions. Wafflers or slow talkers tend to score badly on these occasions.

What to watch out for at the panel

Some panels are run extremely well. In such cases, those sitting on the panel have been well briefed and know their subject. Equally some are run less well and although unlikely you may find occasions when equal opportunity policies are taken to an extreme. Worst case scenarios could include:

- when you make your presentation, none of the panel shows any reaction at all - for to do so would be to treat you differently from other candidates. The problem is that, whilst 'fair' in theory, in practice it is very hard to make a presentation to an un-reactive audience
- a member of the panel may ask you a question which you do not understand. You ask them if they could explain the question. If strict equal opportunity guidelines are being followed, then they can only repeat the question since to give you more information would potentially give you an unfair advantage over other candidates. Again, whilst technically fair, this does seem a bit rigid to the uninitiated

The above are extreme examples. Nevertheless, you should be aware that this can happen. Accordingly, the best advice we can give is to ask the people with whom you are dealing with at the employer, or the recruiting firm, what that particular organisation's recruiting processes are like.

How to score at the panel

You need to try and do the following:

- as far as is possible, research who will be on the panel in advance. Try and find out as much about each panel member as possible - this may help enormously in framing answers if you know their particular specialisms or interests
- remember to engage with all members of the panel throughout the course of the interview
- don't try to 'blind them with science'. Some of the panel may not be specialist in your area. Equally, do not under any circumstances talk down or underestimate them
- if you have done your research prior to attending the panel, you will hopefully know the issues that might come up
- do watch out for the convention used as to how the person chairing the panel is addressed, eg Chair, Chairman etc. These conventions are important and your adherence or otherwise will be noticed
- panels are not the time to ask questions relating to the remuneration package: have one or possibly two questions ready to ask if you are offered the chance, by all means, but not too many. You will not score points by doing so. Responding that you have covered most of the issues that you wanted to in advance is perfectly acceptable
- a final question that the panel may ask could be 'if offered the job, will you accept?' Do not be thrown by this – but there is a general assumption in the public sector that by the time you get to a panel interview, you are sufficiently committed to the role that, subject to reasonable negotiations, you would be likely to accept it if offered and that most of the key concerns/issues you had have been dealt with at an earlier stage
- smile, it will help bring across your 'human side'
- above all, panels like to meet candidates who are keen and enthusiastic for the job and show character and energy.

After the panel

The outcome of the shortlist panel is often decided very quickly. In local government and health, it is often the same day, although for some of the other parts of the public sector it may take a little longer.

If you do not get an offer, then it is possible that you may be offered feedback. This is certainly worth taking as it might help a great deal with future applications. If you originally applied through a consultant, then it is likely it will be the consultant who will feed back to you the outcome and how your performance was perceived.

Some people get quite upset at feedback. For instance they may be told that the panel felt they avoided eye contact, or only spoke to the Chair, or rambled in their responses. The candidate may get upset at this and say it was not true. Remember that if it was the perception of the Panel that the candidate behaved in this way - then their perception is their reality. There are rarely second chances at a panel.

Conclusion

There are some very interesting and challenging jobs in the public sector - but they are no pushover. Many are highly complex with added complications of public accountability and dealing with politicians. If you are thinking about applying for jobs in this sector, we would strongly encourage you to do so. However, this should only be after having done your research and with your eyes wide open.

Chapter 17 – How to cope

Introduction

At the beginning of this manual, we talked about the trauma of change and how your mood and feelings would fluctuate. It is important to remind yourself throughout your job search that you will experience a number of highs and lows.

At no time during your life will you experience so much rejection as when you are looking for a job. You might well have expected to find a job within a few weeks. Suddenly a number of months have passed since you were last employed and you look into the future with despondency.

You may have to learn to put up with being given the 'cold shoulder' by consultants and staff within potential employers. Telephone calls you have made may not all be answered or returned. Some so called acquaintances may no longer be interested in having a drink with you.

At the same time, you are going to encounter enormous understanding and generosity from people. You will find there are people out there who want to help you and who will do everything they can for you.

You are going to have to learn how to cope with all of this. You will have to learn how to get rid of any bitterness you might feel towards your past employer. Importantly, you are going to have to learn how to be positive and come across as someone an employer would want to employ and work alongside.

Don't try and do it all alone

You can probably not do all of this on your own. You will need to get the help and support of those closest to you. You must find someone you can talk to and open up about your feelings.

If you have someone to help you through this on an emotional level, you need to be clear and tell them what you want from them. You will know if you are the type of person who needs pushing or encouraging from time to time.

You should sit down and talk about your situation at the beginning. Warn them that there may be times in the next few weeks that you will not be the easiest person in the world to live with.

If you need outside help - get it

You may find there are times during the process of finding another job when you feel your emotional stability is stretched to the limit. Do not be afraid of consulting your Doctor - they will understand and may be able to offer help through a sympathetic ear, or advice regarding counselling.

Stop the world for a day

Alternatively, you may just be the type of person who occasionally needs to 'stop the world for a day and get off' to recharge. If this is you, do it - providing the next day you are ready to get going again with your job hunting.

Many interviewers can see through you

An experienced recruiter (be they employer or consultant) can usually spot a tired or bored job hunter at fifty paces. You will need to come across as fresh, enthusiastic, positive and realistic. A potential employer will not want to work with someone who is negative and pessimistic - so how you come across matters a great deal.

Keep yourself up to date

Through your networking you can keep yourself informed on what is going on in your business sector. Equally, you should be making sure you read all the relevant newspapers, journals, etc about either your job discipline or market sector. This is all part of coping and getting you to feel you are still involved. You cannot afford to let this type of knowledge slip - or you will lose your edge and marketability.

Look after your health and fitness

Even though you should devote the proper amount of time to your job hunting, it is also important you look after yourself and your health generally as well. Your physical wellbeing can be as important as your mental wellbeing. Therefore if you enjoy playing sport, or keeping fit, you should set aside time to do this - in exactly the same way you would if you were working. The social interaction can also play an important part and may even help with your networking.

Talk to your friends

Do not ignore your friends. Unemployment is a little like a bereavement. No-one knows what to say to you and may end up avoiding you for that reason. It is not intentional - they merely do not know what to say to you. You may find you have to make the first approach to help put them at their ease. Once they know your unemployment is not a 'taboo' subject, they are more likely to be helpful.

You are far more likely to find others will help you if you are seen to be helping yourself. If people know you are doing all you can to find another job and keep your spirits up, they are likely to be there for you when you need them.

Avoiding the inevitable

Some people subconsciously try and avoid finding a job through other activities. For instance, they suddenly decide this is the time to re-decorate the house. Alternatively they decide to go back to school to learn some obscure subject (that will add no value to any future job search).

By using their time in another physical or mental pursuit, they have an 'excuse' as to why they have not yet made any progress with their job hunting. You need to know and understand yourself well, as this is a trap into which it is very easy to fall.