



THE WINDMILLS GUIDE  
TO FINDING A JOB



# OVERVIEW

This practical resource has been developed by The Windmills Team to help you maximise your chances of gaining the job you want. It consists of three self-contained sections:

## 1 – Master the ART of jobhunting

Are you going the right way about finding a job? Most people aren't. This section will open your eyes to how the jobs market really works and give you ten vital tips to help you unearth the opportunities the crowd usually overlooks.

## 2 – Create a CV that works

Once you have located an opportunity, you can target the employer with a CV that really sells your skills for the job. This simple four-step guide helps you understand both what you have to offer and what the employer is actually looking for. You'll then have a CV that gives you the best possible chance of gaining that vital interview.

## 3 – Make a success of interviews

This final section follows the same four-step process to help you succeed in a face-to-face situation. It shows how to match your own skills and abilities even more closely to the employer's needs. It will also ensure you make that all-important personal impression that is the ultimate key to success.

NOTE: This process is designed for people who have a clear idea of the job title and sector they want to target. If you need to create a clearer picture of the kind of work that would be right for you, you can find detailed help at [www.windmillsprogramme.com](http://www.windmillsprogramme.com).

The clearer  
you are on  
where you  
want to go,  
the quicker  
you'll get there

# 1 – Master the ART of job seeking

The Windmills process has now helped over 20,000 people to develop their career and find the job they really want. Now the team that developed Windmills have used these people's experiences to help you focus on the key factors known to bring success. We also highlight the ten top tips to help you in your own job hunting.

Some of these will match your situation more than others and you'll soon spot the ideas you feel can be useful to you personally. Don't worry if this seems daunting or complicated.

The fact is that just one single tip could be enough to put you on the road to success.

## Start in the right frame of mind

Finding a job is a job in itself and the way you approach it has a dramatic effect on your chances of success. You need three key qualities – they're easy to remember if you think of them as the ART of job-seeking. You need to be:



### ACTIVE

You need to make things happen. You have to get out there and keep searching, discussing and creating opportunities. Commit quality time to get things done and go on developing your jobhunting skills.



### REFLECTIVE

You need to keep thinking how you can do it better. Look on mistakes, rejection and feedback as an integral part of the process. Handle rejection positively and use feedback to improve.



### TENACIOUS

You need to stick at it. You have to move forward by showing courage, resilience and determination in the face of rejection, disappointment or doubts. Recognise it's a long-term investment and remember that a little tenacity can go a very long way.

You can start right now by deciding:

- How much time you will devote each week.
- How you will deal with and learn from rejection.
- How you will keep on going, even with setbacks.

'It's easier to act your way into a new way of thinking than think your way into a new way of acting.' – John Webb

## Make sure you get help

Looking for a job can be a lonely process and really difficult on your own. We all need a little help from our friends. Think of yourself as managing a project team whose task is to support your job search. While you may have particular skills, don't be afraid to ask for help in areas you feel there are gaps. These may include help with networking itself, advice on future directions, feedback on techniques used and help with self-promotion.

## List everyone who could help

- List everyone in your network who could help you locate employment opportunities or market you to employers
- Plan what you are going to say and how these people can help you.
- Tell them about the position you are seeking, your key selling points for the role, even companies in which you are most interested
- Don't be afraid to ask for help, particularly from close family and friends.
- Give them a phone number where they can reach you, follow up regularly





‘We spend more time planning our holidays than the rest of our lives.’

### THREE MISTAKES YOU DON'T NEED TO MAKE

Our experience with the thousands of people who have been involved in the Windmills process reveals certain common mistakes which occur over and over again. You can avoid these by following these three simple rules:

#### 1. UNDERSTAND THE JOB

Far too many people chase jobs without ever understanding what they really involve. Make sure you get behind the actual job title and discover just what the work really entails before you spend precious energy chasing it.

‘If you don't know where you want to go, you'll probably end up in the wrong place.’

#### 2. THINK LIKE AN EMPLOYER

There's one simple way of ensuring the job you're looking for is the right one – just put yourself in the shoes of the employer.

‘If you don't know what an employer is looking for, how do you know you can provide it?’

#### 3. GET THE EVIDENCE

Make sure you have evidence and examples - in terms of your life story and achievements – that show you're right for the job. And practice communicating this information in a way the employer understands.

‘If you don't provide all the evidence of what you've achieved, you're in danger of selling yourself short’

## SUCCESS OR FAILURE – THE CHOICE IS YOURS

Success is a seven-letter word – but so is failure. The simple chart below spells out the difference.

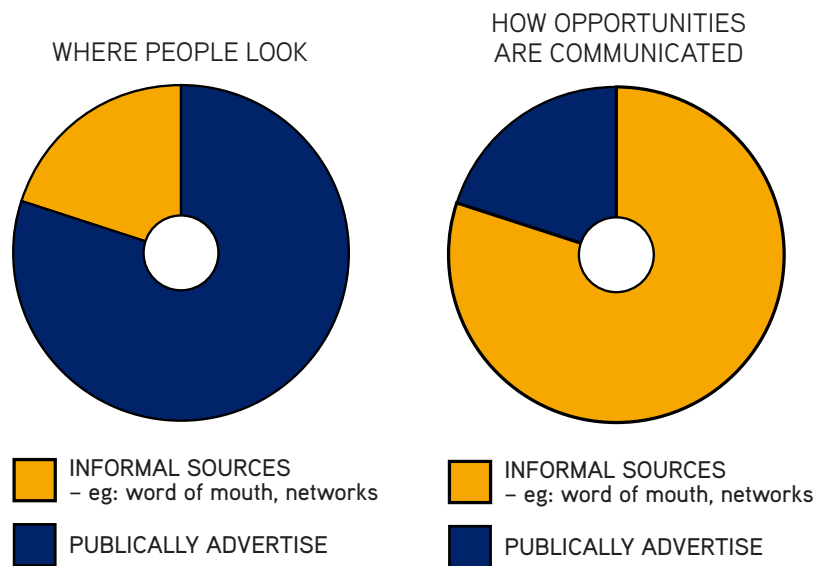
<div>F</div> <div>FOLLOW</div>	<b>FOLLOW THE CROWD</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Wonder why you are doing it</li> <li>• Search where everybody else does e.g. papers and internet (less than 10% chance of success)</li> <li>• Aimlessly firing off lots of vague, unfocused CVs</li> </ul>	<div>S</div> <div>SELECT</div>	<b>SELECT A CLEAR TARGET &amp; STRATEGY</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Understand clearly what/who you are going for</li> <li>• Talk to as many people as possible</li> <li>• Produce personalised cover letters and CVs tailored to the job</li> </ul>
<div>A</div> <div>ASSUME</div>	<b>ASSUME THINGS ABOUT</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The job market based on ignorance, hype or bad advice</li> <li>• Base assumptions on limited experience or second hand information</li> <li>• Assume all employers need same skills</li> <li>• Focus solely on large companies</li> </ul>	<div>U</div> <div>UNDERSTAND</div>	<b>UNDERSTAND EXACTLY HOW</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The market works and what employers need</li> <li>• Speak directly to employers about future needs</li> <li>• Know how they prefer to recruit and their criteria</li> <li>• Explore massive growth opportunities in small businesses (less than 20 staff)</li> </ul>
<div>I</div> <div>IGNORE</div>	<b>IGNORE HELP AND ADVICE</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Isolate yourself from your support community</li> <li>• Unaware of help available on your doorstep e.g. family, friends, professionals</li> <li>• Fail to act on feedback</li> </ul>	<div>C</div> <div>CREATE</div>	<b>CREATE A SUPPORT COMMUNITY</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ask for leads from family, friends, colleagues</li> <li>• Actively seek encouragement, support, advice, and guidance from people</li> <li>• Listen continually to feedback and improve</li> </ul>
<div>L</div> <div>LACK</div>	<b>LACK OF MOTIVATION</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Wait passively for things to happen then react</li> <li>• Put in an hour a day – at best - half-heartedly</li> <li>• Go through the motions for the sake of it</li> </ul>	<div>C</div> <div>COMMIT</div>	<b>COMMIT TO MAKE THINGS HAPPEN</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Take proactive approach to create new opportunities</li> <li>• Show commitment to hard work, realise job search is a job itself (put in 35 hours a week)</li> <li>• Use energy wisely – target jobs you find exciting</li> </ul>
<div>U</div> <div>UNDERSELL</div>	<b>UNDERSELL YOURSELF</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Fail to spend quality time reviewing what you offer</li> <li>• Unclear where you are going and why you want the job</li> <li>• Little experience of self promotion, e.g. never stood up in public</li> </ul>	<div>E</div> <div>ENJOY</div>	<b>ENJOY PROMOTING YOUR ABILITIES</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Have clear view of own strengths and the skills you love using and are really good at</li> <li>• Clarify your vision and have strong rationale based on far deeper self-knowledge</li> <li>• Develop confidence - keep stretching yourself</li> </ul>
<div>R</div> <div>REACT</div>	<b>REACT BADLY TO REJECTION</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Take rejection personally</li> <li>• Blame yourself not your technique</li> </ul>	<div>S</div> <div>SHAPE</div>	<b>SHAPE YOUR OWN FUTURE</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Gain and learn from feedback</li> <li>• Use a technique that works and change if required</li> </ul>
<div>E</div> <div>END</div>	<b>END THE PROCESS TOO EARLY</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Stop when the going gets tough</li> <li>• Finish it when you find a job</li> </ul>	<div>S</div> <div>SUSTAIN</div>	<b>SUSTAIN IT OVER A LIFETIME</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Recognise job search means rejection.</li> <li>• The most successful are often rejected the most</li> <li>• Go on looking even when in the new job</li> </ul>

## TOP TEN TIPS FOR SUCCESS

These tips contain a wealth of ideas and some will apply to you much more directly than others – so feel free to pick and mix them as necessary. And just remember – any single one could hold the key to success for you.

### TIP 1 – UNDERSTAND HOW THE MARKET WORKS

It's crucial you first understand the 80:20 rule. You may be amazed to find out that 80% of the job-seeking population are competing for 20% of the opportunities.



This is because the vast majority of jobs are simply not advertised publicly. And even when they are, an 'inside market' has already been created by internal candidates or highly proactive people who get the position before it's even advertised.

On the other hand, most jobhunters follow the crowd and focus mainly on newspaper and internet adverts. The way to tap into this internal market is to look at things through the employer's eyes – see Tip 2.

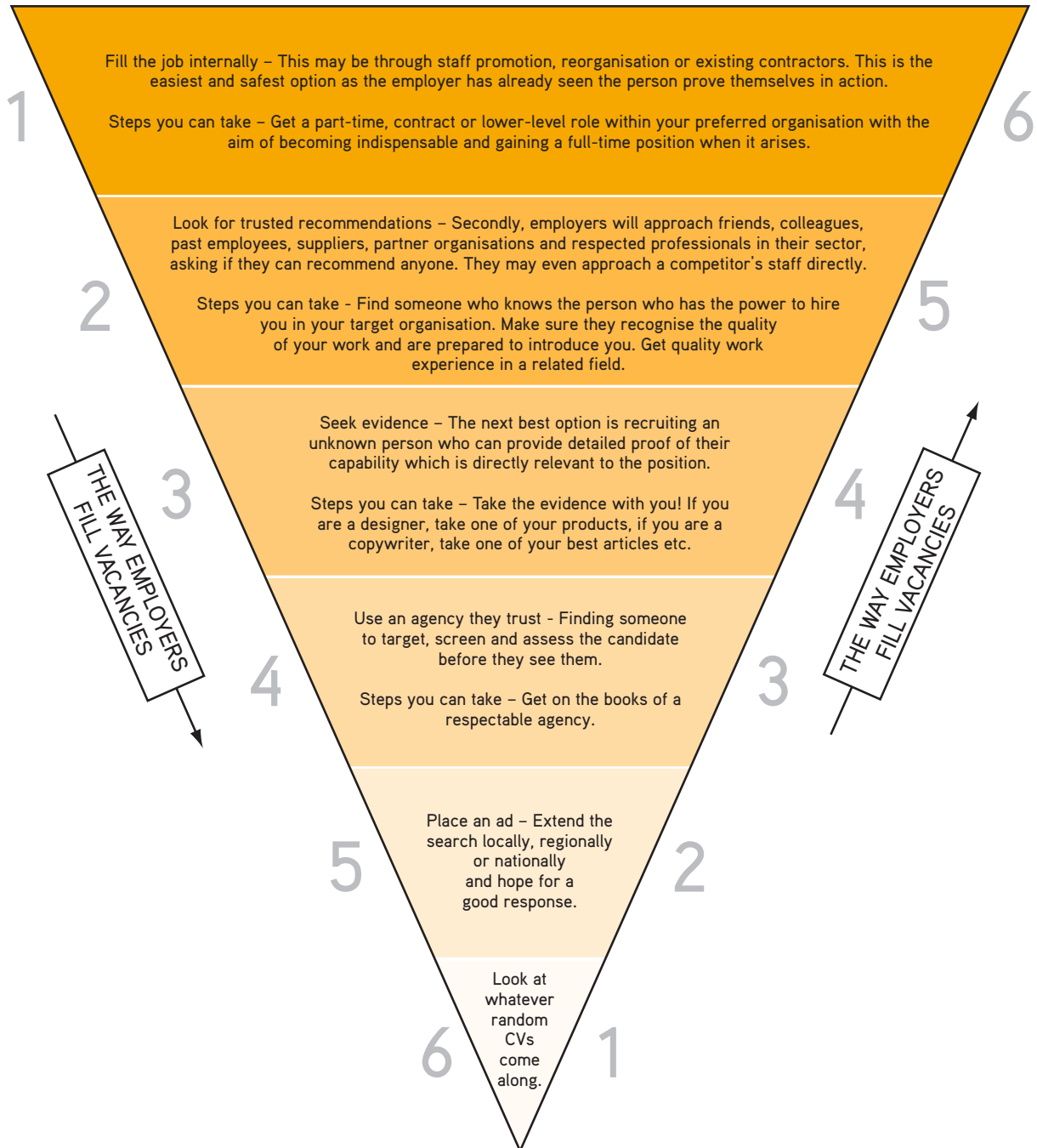


'Put yourself in the employer's shoes'.



## TIP 2 SEE IT FROM THE EMPLOYER'S ANGLE...

You need to understand the huge contrast between the way employers fill vacancies – and the way most people look for them. These are literally complete opposites. Individuals start from a passive, paper-based approach while employers prefer to use an active, people-based approach. Once you understand this, you can match your approach to the employer's. So take action now to change your approach to mirror the way employers recruit.



Above illustration developed from Dick Bolles, What Colour is Your Parachute

### TIP 3 – ASK FOR AN INFORMATION INTERVIEW

The information interview is one of the most effective tools you can use.

Most people enjoy talking about themselves and their jobs - and love giving advice. Some just want to encourage newcomers to their profession while others may be looking to fill future vacancies. Professionals often exchange favours and information, so don't hesitate to call people.

**Remember: Never abuse their indulgence by asking for a job. This process is primarily about information gathering.**

### THE PROCESS

#### Make contact

Firstly identify companies in your field and write a letter requesting a brief information interview. (Explain the purpose and make it clear there is no job expectation). Then follow up with a phone call to make an appointment.

The best method though is to be referred from one professional to another – this becomes easier as your network expands. Use your contacts to make targeted calls and set up an appointment.

#### Find out what you need to know

Prepare for an information interview exactly as for a job interview. Polish your presentation and listening skills, and do some research beforehand on the individual and the organisation. Think carefully about what you need to know and make a list of questions.

#### Conduct the interview – Questions you can ask include:

- What do you do on a typical day in your job?
- How did you find this job?
- What special knowledge, skills or experience did you have or need?
- Has the work changed recently due to technology, competition, etc?
- Is there a demand for people in this role?
- What do you like least/most about your job?
- What opportunities are there for advancement in this field?
- What part of this job do you find most satisfying? Most challenging?
- What personal qualities or abilities are important to succeed in this job?
- What special advice would you give a person entering this field?
- What types of training do companies offer new entrants?
- Which professional journals and organisations would help me learn more about this field?
- With the information you have about my education, skills and experience, what other fields or jobs, should I research before making a final decision?
- Can you suggest any other people who love their job in...? When I call him/her, may I use your name?

#### Remember

- You requested the interview – so be concise and don't waste their time.
- Allow the person an opportunity to provide additional information
- Be prepared to provide a '30-second commercial' about yourself. It is likely that you will be asked about your career interests and goals
- Use a paper or electronic diary to keep track of your contacts and to make notes during your meetings. (You can continue to use the same log when you network)
- If you have not already seen the work area, ask for a tour
- Add more information to the notes you took during the interview

#### Follow up

Always remember to send a thank-you letter or call to every person who gives you their time. This shows professionalism and leaves the door open for future contacts.



### Develop your grapevine

Continue to build your network and map out the information and connections you are uncovering from your information interviews. Keep the process alive and refine your technique based on ongoing feedback.

### TIP 4 – TAKE THE INSIDE TRACK

We know the vast majority of jobs are filled well before they go public. Take steps to get in via the back door as the front door is always jam-packed.

**Keep in touch** with people in your chosen field/organisation. Tap into their information networks, e.g. Internal vacancy lists, newsletters, press announcements etc.

**Volunteer** to work unpaid or on a trial basis (particularly useful in small businesses, which see recruiting new staff as risky). Use any opportunity (e.g. a specific project) to show your abilities – and make sure the organisation spreads the word to colleagues and their networks.

**Try work-shadowing.** Find out about firms' open days/visits and look for opportunities. Find out where they promote their products or services. Use careers fairs and employer presentations to find out what job roles involve.

**Use stepping stones** to reach your ideal job. Be prepared to accept a temporary or lower-grade job to create the right networks. Remember it's easier to get a job when you're in one already.

**Keep in touch** with changes in your chosen field by reviewing journals, trade magazines, newsletters, electronic media – databases, teletext, internet, CD-Roms and attending conferences and trade fairs. The information section librarian can prove an invaluable ally.

**Get people looking** for you. Sign up with a recruitment agency, let previous employers and current contacts know you're available and send out targeted letters to as many people as possible.

**Enrol in a class** or join a network related to your field/industry. You will not only learn new things but also build new contacts. Try to link into different types of networks.

**Catch opportunities early** before they go public. New contracts, people retiring or leaving their jobs, market changes, new regulations, company relocation, entry into new markets and increasing share prices are all signs of potential new jobs.

**Find a forum for meeting new people** who can help your job search, e.g. join a professional association, volunteer for community, civic or professional projects and extend your social network. Tap into new networks.

## TIP 5 – THINK WIN-WIN

The aim is to ensure benefits both for you and your potential employer. Take a broader look at that employer. Think beyond the job you are going for to the needs of the whole organisation. You can do this by using internet research and information interviews to discover:

### What the company needs...

- The organisation's priorities over the next few years
- Its growth areas
- How customer needs are changing
- New markets and competitors
- The priorities of other departments
- New products or processes
- New skills required

### ...and how you can provide it:

Analyse the information you gain and study the job specification to ensure you have a clear view of how you can add value. Then list:

- What you have to offer (with clear evidence)
- Why you want the job (showing real motivation and clear match of skills)
- Where you can make the biggest contribution (be clear on the specific needs you can meet)
- How you can make a difference (give examples of things you could do)

You should also try to predict the ways in which you too will benefit – and then assess how this opportunity will help you move towards your vision for the future.

Finally make sure you understand clearly where you'll be working – and the people you'll be working with. Also check who your boss will be and what he or she is like.

## TIP 6 – SEE THE BIGGER PICTURE

Many people fail in their jobhunting because they are too narrow in their approach. You need to look ahead and broaden your horizons – as well as keeping the whole process in perspective.

### LOOK AHEAD

Make sure your jobhunting has a clear purpose and will take you towards where you want to be in the long term. Just imagine you're up in the air trying to spot that destination in the distance. You could:

**Scan the papers** and cut out job advertisements that would really appeal to you in three to five years time. Keep a scrapbook.

**Put yourself in the employer's shoes.** What skills and experiences are they looking for in these jobs? Now look at where you are now and imagine what experience the employer would expect from you.

**Ask friends and colleagues** what they see you achieving in career terms. This may open up new options you haven't thought of. Often other people see our talents and potential better than we do.

**Think of people you admire** (whether it's their jobs or lifestyles) and discover how they've managed their careers.

## BROADEN YOUR HORIZONS

It's a big world out there – so don't always fish in the same small pool. To broaden your horizons you could:

**List 20 areas** that interest you when you leaf through Yellow Pages. Condense the list to 10, then five and end with your top three.

**Take three things** you are passionate about and think about jobs linked to them: (e.g. horse riding might suggest horse racing, riding stables, activity holiday companies, riding equipment manufacture etc).

**Find three friends** in jobs that appeal to you.

**Watch the news**, listen to the radio and read papers to find three topics that really interest you and seem to be growth areas.

**Get an atlas** and pick three geographical areas you would love to live and work in.

**Try the 3x3x3x3 approach.** This involves taking three work areas (from above). Find three specific names in each area. Call each person and ask them three key questions about how they got into their role - what the best and worst bits are and where they see their field going in the future. Ask them for the numbers of three other people who could advise you. (If this is daunting, start with three people you know are already keen to help you).

**Tell other people** what kind of work you are looking for (once you've decided). The more eyes and ears looking out for you the better. If you're still employed, remember to be discreet.

**Keep going** – you'll find things start to snowball. Just imagine the possibilities if one lead creates another three ideas and so on.

## KEEP THINGS IN PERSPECTIVE

Don't lose sight of the fact that you're just trying to generate ideas and that lots of people are bound to reject your suggestions.

**Stay positive** – the worst thing they can say is no.

**Be realistic** – you're going to get rejected more times than you're accepted.

**Understand why** you failed first time around – and address it.

**It's not personal** – remember most successful people are busy and in demand.

**Mix with positive people** – they will keep you going.

**Keep moving on** – "As you are so busy, perhaps you could suggest someone else?"

**Never finish** on a negative note – you never know when you'll meet again

**Be persistent** – really important people may need half-a-dozen different approaches

**Put things into perspective** when depressed by volunteering to support others – lots of people have to cope with tougher challenges than you.

**Remind yourself** that many people who seem loud and self-confident may be quite fragile deep down.

**Keep reflecting** on your ABC (Attitude, Belief and Commitment).



'It's up to you to take control.'



## TIP 7 – GET THE BASICS RIGHT

**Be positive** and realistic. Dedicate time to the process and recognise it's a long-term investment.

**Develop key skills** such as telephone technique, researching and networking. Take bite-size chunks – you may feel daunted at first. Make things easier by breaking your tasks into manageable steps. Remember:

‘Yard by yard, life's hard. Inch by inch, life's a cinch.’

As well as being proactive, it's vital to ensure you make the most of traditional options too. So don't overlook the visible job market. Key tips include:

**Find out** which days your local and national newspapers advertise particular kinds of jobs.

**Don't be put off** by job titles and salaries – look at job adverts in detail to find out exactly what they entail. If in doubt, ask for more information.

**Use the careers service** (private or local university) or JobCentre. Make specific contacts and develop relationships with staff. If they can't help you, ask those who can.

**Get on mailing lists** – as many as possible.

**Keep up to date** with the directories, publications, journals and magazines through which employers recruit, and make sure you surf the internet.

**Investigate** a possible personal or career development course.

**Draw up a hit list** of organisations to target. Get names from Yellow Pages, trade association directories, professional journals, Chambers of Commerce and local business associations. Make a speculative application or give them a phone call.

**Always do your groundwork** before sending off speculative letters. Know whom you're targeting and what you're asking for. Develop a persuasive covering letter and follow up with a phone call. Be persistent and play the percentage game.

## TIP 8 – TRY SOMETHING NEW

To go somewhere new, you need to try something new. If you carry on doing what you've always done, you're likely to end up getting what you've always got.

**Advertise yourself** – e.g. write articles for the local press, business magazines, professional journals, the internet, or promote yourself at trade fairs – anywhere businesses may look.

**Offer your services** as a consultant or freelance. If you can't get a job, get a client. This year, you may only have one client, next year two... and so on. Keep your CV up to date and adapt it as needed for different jobs.

**Get out and about.** Walk or drive round your local business park, office complex or neighbourhood. Check all the business opportunities on your doorstep. Pick up any relevant information (promotional literature, brochures, chat to receptionist etc) and use this to make a speculative phone call or application.

**Use professional journals.** Pinpoint three or four and contact authors of any interesting articles for an information interview. Also look for companies appointing staff – it may indicate expansion (but regular ads may mean high staff turnover!).

**Identify one or two sectors** in which you would ideally like to work (hopefully growing ones) and do market research. Look beyond the big names to their suppliers, distributors, customers and competitors. In particular, look at the small businesses growing within these sectors.

**Get in first!** Scan your local paper for signs of growth, e.g. companies that are expanding, new developments, government tenders or awards. Make contact before new jobs are advertised.

**Push yourself.** Challenge yourself to try harder and see what you are really capable of – stop playing it safe.

## TIP 9 – LEARN TO DEAL WITH REJECTION

Dealing with rejection letters and hearing critical feedback is an integral part of the jobhunting process. The problem for most of us is that being rejected for a job or failing to gain an interview can be enough to keep us trapped in the relative 'safety' of a job we no longer enjoy. The big danger is not losing the job - but losing your self-esteem. So here are ten ways you can manage rejection and boost your morale.

**Get used to it!** Just accept that jobhunting is an exercise in rejection (on both sides).

**It's your technique – not you!** That's the real reason for being rejected. Employers can spot a poorly prepared application in less than five seconds. Make sure you've done your homework. Ideally you have spoken to someone in the organisation, understood clearly what they are looking for, tailored your CV to the job and provided evidence of your suitability and interest.

**It's the wrong job.** Rejection can be a great thing if you're not really suited to the position. It's always better to quit an unfulfilling or over-stressful job before starting it.

**Keep moving on.** Recognise that rejection directs us down the road we need to take – there is a more suitable position around the corner.

**It's their loss!** Ask yourself if you want to work for an organisation which does not value you for what you are!

**Understand the reason.** A job may have been earmarked for an internal candidate. You could be over-qualified or competing with someone with 10 years more experience. If you got an interview, an employer has recognised your skills and qualities match the position. It's simply a matter of time and persistence before the right opportunity comes along.

**Gain feedback.** And respond positively. It's not always easy to get but there is no excuse for not asking.

**Avoid generalisation.** A couple of rejections don't mean there are no jobs in that line of work. Find a careers specialist or critical friend to give you feedback if you cannot get it direct.

**Find positive people.** You need people who are prepared to encourage and support you when things do not go as planned.

**Have an alternative.** Don't put all your eggs in one basket. Remember life is full of Plan Bs.

## TIP 10 – TRUST YOURSELF AND KEEP GOING

**Look at the little things.** If you feel powerless in every situation, find some you have power over. If you cannot influence the 98%, focus on the 2% you can.

**Know what you want.** We all have special needs in jobhunting. They make up who we are. Be aware of them and do not let them get in your way.

**Make it fun.** If you focus on what excites and energises you, you'll enjoy the process. There's no point in spending hours going for something you are only half interested in.

**Remember you're unique.** Employers are always looking for your particular skills and experience - what you are looking for is looking for you.

**Get out and about.** And make sure you tell as many people as possible. Sitting passively in your room won't bring employers knocking on your door.

**Take a lower-level position.** It's easier to find a job when you are in a job - as long as you're heading in the right direction.

**Be prepared to compromise.** You may have to take a 'survival' job to pay the bills but this gives you flexibility and you can use your prime time to work on achieving your dreams.

**Ask for what you want.** Remember it's easier to ask for forgiveness than permission.

**Go with your heart.** Your gut feeling is usually right.

**Don't stop.** Remember the jobhunting process does not end when you find a job. It's only just begun!

Get beneath  
the surface  
of what you  
really enjoy  
and are  
good at

## 2 – Creating a winning CV

### OVERVIEW

Your CV is a vital tool for jobhunting and it has to promote you as powerfully as possible. That means it must be targeted to your chosen area of work and – ideally – customised to each particular job you chase.

A CV usually gets no more than 30 seconds attention. In that time you have to gain and hold an employer's interest. You also have to convince them that you're offering quality, professionalism and real benefits to their company.

When jobhunting it's sensible to keep a CV targeted to your chosen market always ready and up to date. But the time you'll really need it is once you've targeted a suitable job and, ideally, spoken to, or met, someone in the company.

### Getting started

Writing a CV takes time and possibly several drafts. Visual layout, presentation and choice of words are all vital components. You may not know where to begin, or feel daunted by the idea of unscrambling the past to list your career to date. Don't worry – that's natural. The hardest part is getting started!

Although there is no set format for a CV the following simple guide will help you compile a 'life story' that clearly shows the benefits you have to offer.

### STEP 1 - WHAT CAN YOU OFFER?

It's vital to make sure your CV will stand out from all the others. The first step towards this is to analyse your skills and list all the qualities, skills and experience that make you a unique individual and can be of real value to an employer.

### Take a fresh look at yourself

You'll soon discover you have far more skills than you imagine. Have a look at 'My Skills Portfolio' overleaf and tick all the skills you've developed to date. We tend to think work is the only place that we use skills and gain experience. But this is far from being the whole picture. You probably have lots of skills you're barely aware of which you've developed as part of your learning, playing or giving in life. Here are some examples of activities and the skills and qualities that they develop:

WORKING	LEARNING	PLAYING	GIVING
<b>Working as a receptionist</b>	<b>Learning to play a musical instrument</b>	<b>Captain of a five-aside football team</b>	<b>Volunteer for help-line work</b>
SKILLS DEVELOPED: Communicating Organising Relating Listening Networking	SKILLS DEVELOPED: Learning Adapting Planning Performing Entertaining	SKILLS DEVELOPED: Leading Teamworking Co-ordinating Motivating Coaching	SKILLS DEVELOPED: Listening Caring Relating Problem-solving Administering

It's likely you have skills developed outside of work that could also be useful to employers.



Celebrate all your achievements – big and small.

# My Skills Portfolio

## PEOPLE SKILLS

### RELATING

- ☐ Welcoming
- ☐ Building relationships
- ☐ Empathising
- ☐ Valuing others
- ☐ Thanking

### COMMUNICATING

- ☐ Talking
- ☐ Presenting
- ☐ Teaching
- ☐ Using languages
- ☐ Listening
- ☐ Liaising

### HELPING

- ☐ Caring
- ☐ Supporting
- ☐ Volunteering
- ☐ Sharing
- ☐ Giving

### EMPOWERING

- ☐ Encouraging
- ☐ Guiding
- ☐ Developing others
- ☐ Coaching
- ☐ Inspiring
- ☐ Mentoring

### MANAGING

- ☐ Realising potential
- ☐ Optimising
- ☐ Co-ordinating
- ☐ Delegating
- ☐ Facilitating

### UNDERSTANDING

- ☐ Having perspective
- ☐ Understanding different cultures, styles and views
- ☐ Empathising
- ☐ Valuing differences

### TEAMWORKING

- ☐ Working collectively
- ☐ Sharing skills
- ☐ Balancing interests
- ☐ Resolving conflict
- ☐ Developing processes

## PROCESSING SKILLS

### PROCESSING

- ☐ Carrying out procedures
- ☐ Following instructions
- ☐ Combining/blending
- ☐ Working structurally and systematically

### ADMINISTERING

- ☐ Overseeing
- ☐ Completing
- ☐ Delivering
- ☐ Administering

### MAINTAINING

- ☐ Controlling quality
- ☐ Checking/inspecting
- ☐ Managing information
- ☐ Safety and security
- ☐ Updating

### COMPUTING

- ☐ Word processing
- ☐ Utilising up-to-date IT packages
- ☐ Technical IT skills
- ☐ Setting up IT systems
- ☐ Programming
- ☐ Managing hardware

### WORDS & PICTURES

- ☐ Describing
- ☐ Writing
- ☐ Detailing
- ☐ Proofing
- ☐ Drawing
- ☐ Translating

### REVIEWING

- ☐ Progress
- ☐ Performance
- ☐ Evaluating
- ☐ Action planning

### FINANCES

- ☐ Budgeting
- ☐ Costing
- ☐ Planning
- ☐ Accounting
- ☐ Auditing

## ENTERPRISE SKILLS

### LEADING

- ☐ Directing people
- ☐ Planning and targets
- ☐ Driving change
- ☐ Evaluating

### NETWORKING

- ☐ Support community
- ☐ Support others
- ☐ Growing relationships
- ☐ Sharing your talents

### STRATEGISING

- ☐ Forecasting
- ☐ Anticipating
- ☐ Researching
- ☐ Financial and business planning
- ☐ Planning scenarios

### SELLING

- ☐ Negotiating
- ☐ Persuading
- ☐ Influencing
- ☐ Meeting needs
- ☐ Closing sale
- ☐ Following up

### SELF-MANAGING

- ☐ Motivating self
- ☐ Managing change
- ☐ Enterprising
- ☐ Seizing opportunities
- ☐ Promoting self
- ☐ Managing rejection

### CHAMPIONING

- ☐ Advocating
- ☐ Pioneering
- ☐ Persuading/influencing
- ☐ Promoting new ideas
- ☐ Sponsoring

### MARKETING

- ☐ Assessing needs
- ☐ Generating possibilities
- ☐ Analysing competitors
- ☐ Positioning offer
- ☐ Enhancing profile



## PRACTICAL SKILLS

### OPERATING

- ☐ Precision working
- ☐ Using machinery
- ☐ Using multi-media
- ☐ Typing
- ☐ Controlling
- ☐ Driving

### CO-ORDINATING

- ☐ Multi-tasking
- ☐ Planning
- ☐ Organising
- ☐ Balancing
- ☐ Delegating

### SENSING

- ☐ Hearing
- ☐ Seeing
- ☐ Touching
- ☐ Smelling
- ☐ Tasting

### FIXING

- ☐ Servicing
- ☐ Repairing
- ☐ Re-building
- ☐ Maintaining

### WELL-BEING

- ☐ Exercising
- ☐ Eating healthily
- ☐ Engaging in sport
- ☐ Relaxing
- ☐ Thinking positively

### PRODUCING

- ☐ Manufacturing
- ☐ Crafting
- ☐ Making
- ☐ Constructing
- ☐ Assembling

### NURTURING

- ☐ Plants/Animals
- ☐ Tending
- ☐ Minding
- ☐ Growing
- ☐ Fostering

## EXPLORING SKILLS

### EXPLORING

- ☐ Investigating
- ☐ Opening up new avenues
- ☐ Identifying possibilities
- ☐ Generating alternatives

### INTERVIEWING

- ☐ Questioning
- ☐ Listening
- ☐ Probing
- ☐ Summarising
- ☐ Selecting

### OBSERVING

- ☐ Assessing people
- ☐ Comparing
- ☐ Compiling
- ☐ Learning from data

### LEARNING

- ☐ Studying
- ☐ Reflecting
- ☐ Experimenting
- ☐ Reviewing
- ☐ Refining
- ☐ Improving

### RESEARCHING

- ☐ Gathering information
- ☐ Planning
- ☐ Collecting and recording
- ☐ Collating
- ☐ Drawing conclusions

### SOLVING PROBLEMS

- ☐ Analysing
- ☐ Appraising
- ☐ Diagnosing
- ☐ Seeing patterns
- ☐ Prioritising
- ☐ Developing solutions

### REALISING POTENTIAL

- ☐ Uncovering Personal strengths passions and purpose
- ☐ Creating alternatives
- ☐ Making choices
- ☐ Seeking feedback
- ☐ Taking action

## CREATIVE SKILLS

### THINKING Laterally

- ☐ Taking fresh perspectives
- ☐ Using intuition
- ☐ Suspending judgement
- ☐ Seeing new angles
- ☐ Injecting new ideas

### DESIGNING

- ☐ New ideas into practice
- ☐ Developing products
- ☐ Drafting
- ☐ Drawing
- ☐ Programming

### MEDIA

- ☐ Using multi-media creatively
- ☐ Exploiting different media e.g. music, dance, pictures
- ☐ Art and design

### ADAPTING

- ☐ Recycling
- ☐ Re-modelling
- ☐ Enhancing
- ☐ Translating
- ☐ Combining

### CONNECTING

- ☐ Drawing elements together
- ☐ Seeing links
- ☐ Synthesising
- ☐ Sequencing
- ☐ Building on ideas

### CREATING

- ☐ Originating
- ☐ Inventing
- ☐ Innovating
- ☐ Developing
- ☐ Conceiving

### VISIONING

- ☐ Imagining the future
- ☐ Going beyond limits
- ☐ Seeing the whole picture
- ☐ Developing scenarios
- ☐ Turning failure into success

## DEVELOP A SKILLS PORTFOLIO

You need to create a skills portfolio by listing your skills and how you use them. If you do this the right way, you can transfer the details straight into your CV - so it's worth the effort! The two key elements of your skills portfolio are the skills you love using and are good at (your prime skills) together with evidence of how you have used them in a particular situation. Here is an extract from one person's skills portfolio. It will help you to describe the skill in enough detail for the employer to understand the level of your impact:

SKILL AREA	EVIDENCE OF WHEN/HOW USED
TEAMWORKING SKILLS	Worked as one of 12 customer advisors within a customer service team, sharing knowledge and supporting each other to respond to daily enquiries. Worked together to maintain high standards and exceed team goals
SELLING SKILLS	Exceeded sales targets by 27% for the Birmingham centre, during the last financial year. Generated new business leads by successfully opening an average of 130 new accounts each month
CUSTOMER SERVICE SKILLS	Achieved high levels of customer satisfaction within the team, and received an award for consistently exceeding customers' expectations and offering excellent service

## TIPS FOR DESCRIBING YOUR SKILLS

**Be detailed.** CVs are rejected if they are vague and leave an employer wondering.

**Be clear** and specific to make yourself stand out from the crowd.

**Show your impact** by using qualitative and quantitative data to illustrate your skills.

Employers who use a competency framework will look at the level to which you have developed a skill. A CV gives a brief description but an interviewer will look for more detail. For example, there is a vast difference between the level of communication skills required in a shop assistant compared with an interpreter. You'll find more information on competency-based interviews later on.

### Try it for yourself

Take a pen and paper and list your skills and how you have demonstrated them. Look at the example shown above and give as much detail as possible. Don't forget to describe the skills you have in your learning playing and giving areas too. Think about the way you use your skills – how would you demonstrate them to an employer? Once you have tried the exercise and feel satisfied with your description of each skill, use the method to list your skills and create a final version.

You now have a skills portfolio you can use for both CVs and interviews. Make sure you keep this information safe. If you can create your skills portfolio electronically on a PC, it will really help when we come to create the CV. Keep reviewing and improving your portfolio – once you have started it, you can keep it for your whole career.

**TIP: You can use the same approach for recording the experience that you offer –store the information safely, as it is vital for the next stage.**

## STEP 2 – WHAT DOES THE EMPLOYER NEED?

You have now done some preparation work and should be clear about the kind of skills and experience you have to offer. At this point you can start researching the organisation or job role and deciding if you have the skills or experience required.

### How the jobs market works

Many jobs are not recruited through advertisements but through the ‘hidden’ jobs market’. The reality is that most vacancies are identified and filled long before they need to be advertised. And there’s nothing to stop you from tapping into this hidden jobs market once you understand how it works. What it takes is some effective research, the use of networking to make contact with the people responsible for recruiting and the effort of making a connection that will reveal a suitable vacancy.

### Researching the organisation

To research an organisation, you should use a filtering process to help you home in on specific details. You’ll then be armed with lots of information which you can use to tailor your CV to match the job and show how you’re suited to it.

Industry/sector	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• How well do you know the business area?</li><li>• Boosting your knowledge here will help at the interview (Think positively!)</li></ul>
Company history	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Research the background of the organisation</li><li>• How did it start, how big is it?</li></ul>
What kind of organisational culture?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• What kind of terminology do they use?</li><li>• What is important to the company? What are the goals of their operation?</li><li>• What are the organisational values?</li></ul>
What skills and experience are needed?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Is there a competency framework?</li><li>• Are core competencies or key skills required?</li></ul>

### Researching the job role

If you are targeting a specific job, find out as much as you can at the research stage. This will help you tailor your CV for the job application and prepare you for interview. It will also help you decide if this is the right job for you.

Other ways to research:

- Company literature or website
- Journals or publications at your local library (Business news, etc)
- Through the agency or contact that you learned of the role through
- Through any contacts that have dealings with the organisation, e.g. competitors, clients and suppliers
- Information interviews

As you can see there is plenty of preparation to do in this step, even before the CV is started! But you will soon see the benefits of your research. Knowing you have done the background work will make your CV look good. And you’ll feel positive and confident, just knowing how much work you have done.



Job seeking is a  
marathon not a sprint

## WHAT IS THE EMPLOYER LOOKING FOR?

### Advertised vacancies

If you have seen a job advert you want to apply for, you can focus on this to give specific attention to the skills and experience the employers are looking for. Remember the advert is just the tip of the iceberg - you need to dig deeper to establish the bigger picture of the employer's needs.

### Essential or desirable?

Make a note of any qualifications or specific skills or experience the employer wants. Note if they are described as essential, desirable - or possibly neither.

If a qualification is important (e.g. in the medical profession), it will usually say so. However, unless it is described as absolutely critical, don't let it put you off. Your skills or experience could be stronger than another applicant's and outweigh an area originally seen as essential.

- Some needs are obvious and others are hidden, so go through the ad with a fine tooth-comb to discover what the role really requires. Make a list as in the example below.
- List the skills and experience required. Not all will be listed - some may be implied. For example, the advert below asks for good skills in selling, teamworking and customer service. What underpins all these are good communication and self-management skills. You may find 'My Skills Portfolio' (xx) a useful checklist for this.
- Use this example as a guide and try the exercise for yourself:

## Do you have what it takes?

**Sales and Service Team Leader – Manchester Office // Salary 22k**

We are looking for a talented and enthusiastic individual with at least 2 years within a customer services environment. The right person for this role will have experience of working within a call centre industry, and will be well organised and a great team player, able to deal with people effectively and resolve customer queries.

An NVQ qualification in customer services would be desirable, as would the ability to plan and organise daily activities.

### EXPLICIT SKILLS REQUESTED:

Sales skills  
Team working skills  
Customer services skills  
Organisational skills

### IMPLIED SKILLS:

Communication skills  
Negotiation skills  
Self-managing Skills

### EXPERIENCE:

2 years experience in customer service background  
Established sales and customer service background  
In call centre industry

### QUALIFICATIONS:

NVQ in customer service (desirable)

When you have listed the details of the job advert, you then need to ask yourself the following questions:

- Do I have the qualifications? (if essential) ☐ Yes ☐ No
- Do I have the experience? ☐ Yes ☐ No
- Do I have the skills? ☐ Yes ☐ No
- Am I a good match for the job? ☐ Yes ☐ No
- Will this job take me closer to my ideal job? ☐ Yes ☐ No

Your responses here will determine whether or not you apply and tailor a CV to match. You need to make sure you can fulfil the needs of the employer before you move on to apply. The next step in the process will help you see if you can match what the employer is looking for.

## STEP 3 – MEET THE EMPLOYER’S NEEDS

So you’ve done your research, understood what the employer needs and created a skills portfolio to show what you can offer. Now it’s time to create a CV that demonstrates how suitable you are. You need to match what you have to offer to what the employer wants – linking your skills and experience directly to the requirements of the job. Now you are aware of all the skills at your disposal, you need to take another look at the job description and compare it with your skills portfolio. Then ask yourself again:

- Do I have the skills the role requires?
- Can I show the evidence?

If the answer is yes, you’re ready to create a CV to match the job advert. You’ll find this relatively easy thanks to the hard work you put into steps 1 and 2.

### Tailoring your skills

Your CV always needs to reflect what the prospective employer is looking for. Take a fresh look at yourself, as if through the eyes of the employer, and focus on the skills and experience that are vital for the role. Ask yourself:

- What key features of my CV will make me really stand out from the rest?
- What would the employer be trying to find in my CV?
- What format or style will make most impact?

## HOW YOUR CV SHOULD LOOK

### Visual impact

No matter how well your skills and experience match the employer’s needs, you could fail if you make it hard for readers to take in the information – or if you simply fail to catch their eye. To be marketable, you need to invest in yourself.

### Choosing paper and envelopes

Use good quality A4 from a stationer. Neutral colours are best as a rule. Two pages is the limit – if it’s longer, you probably have too much detail.

For occupations calling for great detail (e.g. research papers, technical information etc) use a separate Addendum as necessary. Buy good-quality A4 envelopes and stationery for forwarding the CV.

### Choosing a typesize

Too large a font wastes valuable space. Too small and it becomes difficult to read. As a guide, use 10-12 point type for body text and no more than 16 point for headings. Make sure you are consistent and keep headings of the same importance the same size. Selective use of bold text and capital letters will also help the reader pick out key information.

### Selecting a typeface

Keep it simple – you won’t impress the reader with fancy fonts. Also if you email your CV you cannot guarantee the recipient’s PC will be set up for non-standard typefaces. A standard face is also best if your CV is to be electronically scanned.

### Using templates

Many computer packages include standard templates for CVs. These take some of the hard work out of preparing a CV and are worth considering. But make sure the template does not prompt unnecessary information and remember that standard templates can be very ordinary – your CV needs to be unique and eye catching.



## WHAT YOUR CV SHOULD SAY

Your CV needs to be both informative and relevant for the role. The format can vary a little, but always include vital information the employer needs. Choose a style with impact. Look at the examples on page XX and see what would work for you.

**TIP: There are lots of CV styles, but the key is finding a suitable style for you and the job you want. If you need more help, try referring to one of the many books available.**

### Personal details

Here you can choose to have just your name at the beginning, or to have your name and address, including postcode and contact details, eg: telephone and mobile numbers and e-mail address – they need this to be signposted clearly and accurately – no abbreviations!

### Personal profile

This is a businesslike statement which captures the essence of you and what you offer in about three or four lines. It needs to be powerful, as it is the first information that an employer reads about you. Tailor the content to suit the employer and inspire them to keep reading. It should be written in third-person narrative and the rest of the CV needs to reflect the claims it makes about your skills and approach to work.

Eg: “Self-motivated and pro-active sales advisor, with established sales and service skills, able to offer a flexible, resourceful approach to achieve results within a customer service environment. A dedicated team-player with a natural aptitude for communicating and negotiating to resolve problems and maintain high standards.” Check that your personal profile covers the following key points to match the job advert:

- What you do/have done (jobs or study)
- Your key strengths
- Background experience
- What benefits you would bring

### Key skills

This is an important section, and needs to reflect the main skills needed for the job. It may be presented as a series of punchy bullet points, or can be linked to each role you have had to date – use your skills portfolio to pick the best examples to match the job description. Try to cluster your skills under headings which describe the common links and reflect the needs of the role: e.g. teamworking, customer focus and communication skills could all be classed as ‘people-focused skills’.

### Employment history

Here you need to list your different roles and employers, starting with the present/most recent. Make sure you leave the most room for what you do now. Avoid any time gaps that could leave the employer wondering. Include the dates, job title, company you worked for and your major achievements in each role. Use bullet points to highlight achievements relevant to the role. You can identify these from your skills portfolio.

**TIP: Remember to present the skills in the order listed in the job advert. This will create an immediate impression of directly matching the role.**

Use positive, active words that will make an impact, eg:

#### **SALES AND SERVICE ADVISOR**

Loyal Insurance Contact Centre, Birmingham – April xxxx – Present date

##### **Key achievements**

- Achieved high levels of customer satisfaction within the team and won award for consistently exceeding customers' expectations and offering excellent service
- Exceeded sales targets by 27% for the centre in 2002. Generated new business leads by successfully opening an average of 130 new accounts each month.

##### **Professional qualifications**

(List qualifications and membership of any professional bodies, starting with the most relevant. Include qualifying dates and any necessary explanation).

##### **Education and qualifications**

List attendance dates and qualifications gained. Remember to state the awarding body/place of study and the grade or classification obtained if relevant.

##### **Hobbies and interests/achievements**

This section is often overlooked, and yet it gives employers a real flavour of who you are, and tells them more about your broader skill set. It should be brief 'one liners', with not too much detail.

Examples of what can be included here:

- Voluntary work
- Sports activities
- Interesting spare time activities, e.g. Painting, theatre, hill walking, etc

##### **References supplied on request**

This is usually your current and previous employer, although you may offer a character reference. It saves room on your CV for the important areas that will market you.

## **MAKE EVERY WORD COUNT!**

As you have seen, your CV provides a vital opportunity to make a positive first impression on the employer and gain that all-important interview. It's essential that the language you use makes the right impact and ensures your CV makes you stand out from the rest.

Remember to:

- Check your spelling – just one error could land your application in the bin!
- Be succinct and don't ramble – you can go into more detail at the interview
- Use active, achieving words to describe yourself

Here are some typical 'impact' words – try working some of them into your CV:

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

Don't panic! There are examples of CV layout styles on pages XX-XX – you can see how the process works before you do it for yourself. Now it's your turn to bring all your ideas to life. Choose the style that feels right for you and build a CV that achieves results.

**Spend time on it** – don't expect your first draft to be a winner. It can take time to but it's well worth the investment.

**Create a rough version** first and review how it reads before typing it up. Make sure it flows and that there are no gaps or repetition.

**Be positive and confident** – don't play down your strengths. This is no time for false modesty.

**Play around with language** – use a dictionary or thesaurus to find the words that will make the right impact.

**Ask a friend to scan the CV** and check it reads well. Make any changes needed and avoid letting any spelling mistakes slip through the net.

**Keep a copy** of the finished version, together with the job details – you might need it for an interview.

## SENDING YOUR CV

Once you are happy with your CV's content and appearance, you are ready to send it to the employer. Whether you send it by post, by hand or electronically it needs a covering letter. People often underestimate the impact of the covering letter but it's vital for creating an immediate first impression with the employer. Following are some ideas and an example that will help. Remember, you've taken care to build an excellent CV – so don't let yourself down by treating the covering letter as an afterthought!

CV DOs	CV DON'Ts
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Address the letter to the right person (did you do your research?)</li> <li>✓ Use a professional layout – look at the example shown</li> <li>✓ If you have already discussed the vacancy, start with 'further to our conversation'</li> <li>✓ Use it as a chance to mention any background research</li> <li>✓ Summarise the key skills you have as they appear in the advert. Cross-reference to your CV</li> <li>✓ Use lively, active language and check carefully for accuracy</li> <li>✓ Refer specifically to the role advertised and show the employer that this is a unique application</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✗ Start the letter with 'Dear Sir/Madam' or address it to the wrong person</li> <li>✗ Use a haphazard approach to layout</li> <li>✗ Generalise without any focus – it gives the impression of a multiple, speculative approach</li> <li>✗ Write the single line: 'Please find enclosed my CV'. Use the chance to sell yourself and make an impact</li> <li>✗ Forget to refer to the skills you have that match the advert</li> <li>✗ Overlook the quality check; it may have spelling or grammatical errors</li> <li>✗ Send a bland, general letter that suggests that this application is one of many</li> </ul>

## EMAILING YOUR CV

E-mailed job applications are becoming more common, and many agencies will look at your CV in an electronic format in the first instance. It's therefore vital to look efficient and make an impact.

If you're specifically asked to send your CV as an attachment, follow the rules to ensure it arrives in a legible format:

- Go for a standard typeface, e.g. Times New Roman
- Keep the point size between 10-12; any larger or smaller and it may not scan accurately
- Save bold type for headings and avoid decorative styles – keep it simple!
- Be concise – use common headings as in the examples shown earlier
- Ensure that you format the CV so that it prints out accurately

**Remember to call and check your application has been received safely – this will put your mind at rest and make contact with the employer**

## SAMPLE LETTER

Below is an example of a typical covering letter. Use it as a guide to the kind of style and content you should be aiming for.

Mr C Marquand  
Director  
Marquand and Fynch Ltd  
2 Temple Square  
Liverpool  
L1 2ZZ

44 Wylie Drive  
Southport  
PR7 3BU  
Tel: 01722 123456  
Date:

Dear Mr Marquand

Following our recent discussion about the exciting new developments in Marquand and Fynch I am extremely keen to apply for the position of Management Trainee.

As you will see from my CV, I have specialised in management and e-business and can offer valuable skills and knowledge that will contribute to your stated aim of being at the forefront of the financial services industry.

I have also carried out projects in enterprise development, financial management and marketing which have developed my commercial awareness and knowledge of best practice in today's successful companies.

My enthusiasm, commitment and high level of self-motivation allow me to contribute effectively in situations requiring initiative and flair and I can demonstrate considerable ability as a team player with leadership qualities.

I am confident that the opportunities provided by Marquand and Fynch as a key player in the financial services industry are ideally suited to my knowledge, ability and career direction.

I look forward to having the opportunity to provide further evidence of my suitability for this post at a future meeting.

Yours sincerely  
John Stevens

## EXAMPLE OF A GOOD CV

### **Albert Miller**

49 The Grove, Troughton Chester CH13 9LB  
Tel: 01234 456 789 Email: albymiller@fsnet.co.uk

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

### **PERSONAL PROFILE**

A hard-working and dependable business graduate with the ability to work well both independently and in a team. Extensive experience of working with the public, open-minded and flexible. Established IT and management skills and confident and determined approach.

### **ACHIEVEMENTS**

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

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

### **KEY SKILLS**

#### Team Player:

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

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

#### Co-ordinator:

- Organised work placements and residential week for team members while assistant team leader with the Prince's Trust
- Fundraising and awareness-raising prior to doing VSO exchange programme raising £750 and obtaining radio and newspaper coverage
- Co-organising a residential team weekend with a £1,200 budget for the VSO

#### Communicator:

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

#### Analysis & Research:

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

#### IT:

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



## EDUCATION

University College Cork  
Degree & Grade:  
Major:  
Other significant subjects:  
Accounting, Economics, Corporate Finance, MIS  
Secondary School Education  
Leaving Certificate/Matriculation Results  
(ie university entry exam)

1992 – 94 (gap year). 1995 – 1998  
Bachelor of Commerce (1H)  
Management

1986 – 1992

Six Honours including:  
English (B), Mathematics (C),  
French (C), Business Studies (B),

Geography (A), and  
Home Economics (A)

Provides a summary with essential information in but not wasting space listing irrelevant information. Has included links to career aim again by listing other significant subjects

## WORK HISTORY

International Volunteer for Voluntary  
Services Overseas (VSO)

April 1999 to October 1999

Volunteer and Assistant Team Leader for the  
Prince's Trust Volunteers

November 1998 to April 1998

Book salesman for South Western Company UK Ltd

June 1998 to July 1998

Store associate for Wawa Food  
Markets in New Jersey, USA

June 1997 to September 1997

Library assistant for Boole Library UCC, Cork City

November 1996 to April 1997

Current affairs presenter for  
Campus Radio 97.4 FM, UCC

October 1996 to April 1997

Store assistant for Joe Murphy Ltd, Fermoy, Co Cork

October 1996 to December 1996

Helper on family farm in Araglin, Kilworth, Co Cork

June 1996 to October 1996

Fundraiser for Irish Trust for the Prevention  
of Cruelty to Animals, Dublin

June 1995 to September 1995

Tester/debugger for SCI (Ireland) Ltd,  
Fermoy, Co Cork

September 1994 to December 1994

Summary of work history including titles and durations – may wish to tailor this further to job and cut out non-relevant work history

## INTERESTS

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

Broad range of interests

## REFERENCES

Voluntary Service Overseas  
317 Putney Bridge Road  
LONDON, SW15 2PN 2

**Date of Birth:** 27/07/74

Dept of Marketing and Management  
UCC, Cork City  
REPUBLIC OF IRELAND

**Nationality:** Irish

References included by names taken off – may instead decide to put references, available on request. Personal information at the end.

## EXAMPLE OF A GOOD CV

### Janet Hughes

#### PROFILE

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

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

#### PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE

20XX – to date

##### **Training and Development Consultant**

Training and Development Solutions

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

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

19XX – 20XX

##### **Advertising Executive – Recruitment**

Royal Navy and Royal Marines, Portsmouth, Hants

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

19XX – 19XX

##### **Training Manager**

North West Museums Service, Newcastle

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

19XX – 19XX

**Training and Development Consultant**

Train for Life, Manchester

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

19XX – 19XX

**Lecturer**

International Business and Management Centre, Wirral

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

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**EDUCATION AND TRAINING**

19XX – 19XX

**International Business and Management Centre, Wirral**

Chartered Institute of Marketing Diploma – part qualified.

Included Marketing Communications and Planning Strategy

Summary of education – focus  
on professional examinations

19XX – 19XX

**University of Teeside, Middlesbrough**

BA (Hons) Public Administration and Management – Upper Second Class.

Majored in Marketing, NHS Management, European Politics

19XX – 19XX

**Wirral Metropolitan College, Wirral**

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

19XX – 19XX

**Plessington High School, Wirral**

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

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**INTERESTS AND ACTIVITIES**

Keen interest in photography and film-making. Currently renovating and redecorating my house.

Member of local gymnasium.

---

**PERSONAL INFORMATION**

Date of Birth: 18 November 1969. Full and clean driving licence

---

**REFERENCES**

Available on request

JANET HUGHES

228 WOODEND

PRENTIN

CH22 2LY

TELEPHONE: 0123 4567 890

EMAIL: jhughes@aol.com

MOBILE: 07796 123456

## STEP 4 – FEEDBACK AND FOLLOW-UP

By now you will have learned whether you have been selected for interview, or missed out on the opportunity. That means you either need to get ready for that big interview – or find out more about what went wrong.

### If you gained an interview:

Congratulations! All that hard work paid off and now you can take the final step towards securing your dream job. The good news is that all that time you spend preparing your CV has made preparing for interview much easier. Now go straight to ‘Succeeding at Interviews – Page XX’.

### If your application was unsuccessful:

Of course you’ll be disappointed but it’s part of the process so try not to take it personally. The important thing is to seek feedback about what didn’t work. This can highlight areas of potential weakness in the CV that you can work on before your next interview. Many people are not selected for interview because they:

- Fail to identify and demonstrate what the employer is really looking for.
- Undersell or underestimate what they have to offer
- Fail to provide the right evidence to support the skills they need to demonstrate.
- Fail to tailor the CV in a way to that particular job

**Remember** that rejection is an inevitable part of the journey to finding your ideal job – even if it does feel like the end of the world!

**Keep things in perspective**, and realise that not everyone can be selected for interview – tell yourself, “next time it will be me!”

**Stay focused** and motivated by going back to Stage 1 and tracking down another opportunity – persistence pays off.

**Use this experience** to prepare for the next opportunity that comes along. Follow these tips to make the most of the situation and turn the negative into a positive:

### Five ways to get feedback

1. Call the company and ask for some feedback about your application; prepare specific questions and have a pen and paper/notebook ready to make some notes. Be persistent, as it can be difficult to get time for feedback from the employer, but it is well worth the effort
2. Ask for particular detail about what was good and what wasn’t as strong as others – you might be pleasantly surprised at how close you got to being short-listed!
3. Be polite and thank them for making the time to talk it through with you; you may decide to reapply and they will remember your courtesy next time
4. Looking at the feedback, ask yourself if there are areas that you can improve or any gaps that you can fill – start preparing for your next application by thinking of ways to fill any gaps or trying a different format
5. If you want to make any changes, do them now while your mind is fresh – it will also help you to stay active and positive and be prepared for your next application

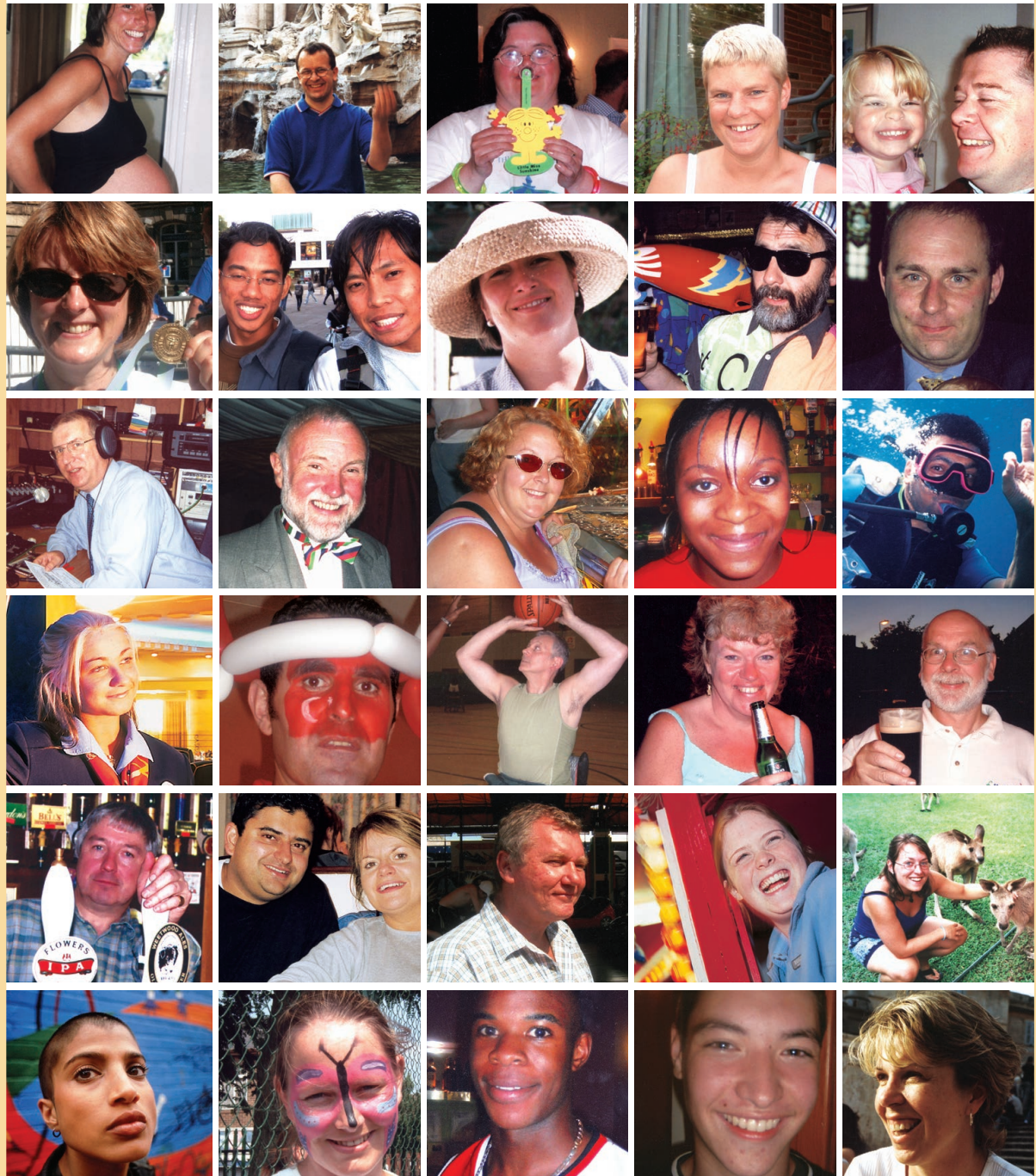
### Five ways to stay motivated

1. Don’t give up – and get it in proportion. There are many reasons for not getting an interview. It may not be your CV – just an overwhelming response to the advert.
2. Ask yourself honestly whether you could improve on that application. Was it rushed? Too brief? Too wordy? What could have been done differently?
3. Use your support community to stay motivated and share your disappointment – that’s what friends are for!
4. Be realistic – it can take time to clinch an interview, and rejection is part of the process.
5. Trust the process. It’s better to go to an employer who wants you than end up in a job that’s wrong for you.

Now go back to Step 1 and start the process again; keep trying, as in time the process will become natural to you.



'Remember to promote the whole of your life  
– your working, learning, playing and giving.'



You're  
never fully  
dressed  
without  
a smile



## 3 – Succeeding at interviews

Congratulations! You've now created a CV and job application that have gained you an interview. This in itself is valuable feedback – it proves that the CV and application demonstrated you have the potential for the job.

And there's more good news. Because you put so much effort into the previous stage, the interview process is a natural follow-on. In fact you've already done much of the hard work!

### STEP 1 – WHAT CAN YOU OFFER?

By now you'll be feeling more confident knowing your skills match those required for the job. The next step is to revisit your skills portfolio and expand on the various examples you gave. You'll then be equipped to make the maximum impact at interview.

#### Revisiting your skills portfolio

- Go back to the skills portfolio you created in the CV section and focus on the most important areas for the interview – which skills will count most and how can you answer any likely questions?
- Once you've selected these crucial skills, you should come up with detailed examples that show the interviewer how competent you are in each skill and answer their questions

Recalling your past experiences – not only in your working life but also learning, playing and giving – will help you think of situations that demonstrated your skills. These examples will also be useful for answering any questions.

#### Interview practice

- Once you've written out examples of your skills in detail and assessed likely questions, you can practise talking through the examples/answers with a friend
- Ask for feedback about your performance:
  - What went well?
  - What didn't go as well?
  - What was your body language like?
  - How enthusiastic and professional did you seem?
- Get lots of practice – the more you run through the activity, the easier it will be on the day! Rehearsal is the first step to a successful performance!

Once you have revisited your skills portfolio, you can prepare for the interview stage more fully. Remember that some interviews will be short and succinct while others may be more demanding and call for more detail.

#### Situational or competency-based interviews

In some organisations, the interviewer will want in-depth detail about your skills and experience. Often they will ask about a situation where you demonstrated a particular skill in a powerful way. This is because past performance is often a strong indicator of future performance. These situational or competency-based interviews are popular because they give the interviewer lots of information about how you dealt with a particular situation and reveal a clear level of detail about your skills.

#### How to prepare for situational interviews

Try the STAR method of talking through a situation. It's an easy way to remember the situation and what happened in detail:

- S SITUATION** Brief background – putting the situation in context so the interviewer understands the circumstances
- T TELL** More detail – telling how often, how many, how much you did. This is where the interviewer probes with questions that give increasing levels of detail
- A ACTION** What you did – describing the steps you took to resolve the problem or to move forward. (What you did – rather than others)
- R RESULTS** The outcome – describing the positive results of the steps you took and their impact

Below is an example of preparation for a situational interview. Choose a relevant example for each skill you are demonstrating – one that puts a real spotlight on your competency in this area. The interview is your opportunity to show how well you can perform. Use a template like the one below to plan out how you would answer:



- Brief introduction to situation – the more recent the better
- Give a brief overview of the background
- Give the interviewer the context
- Scope the situation out – give the perspective e.g. In my last job I was asked to work on a team project that was really running behind schedule.



- Give more detail – how often? How many? Quantify your input
- Be specific about what you said and what you thought
- Be prepared for the questions – interviewers will probe deep and establish your skill level e.g. The first thing I did was to organise a project meeting to discuss the problem and what was happening and why. We then came up with some new ways of approaching the project and schedule.



- Be clear about the part you played in the process – don't dilute the impact that you had by saying 'we' instead of 'I'
- Describe clearly what you actually did to remedy the situation or move things forward – how did you act? e.g. I set up a system so that each person could track his or her own progress – through data entry and frequent meetings.

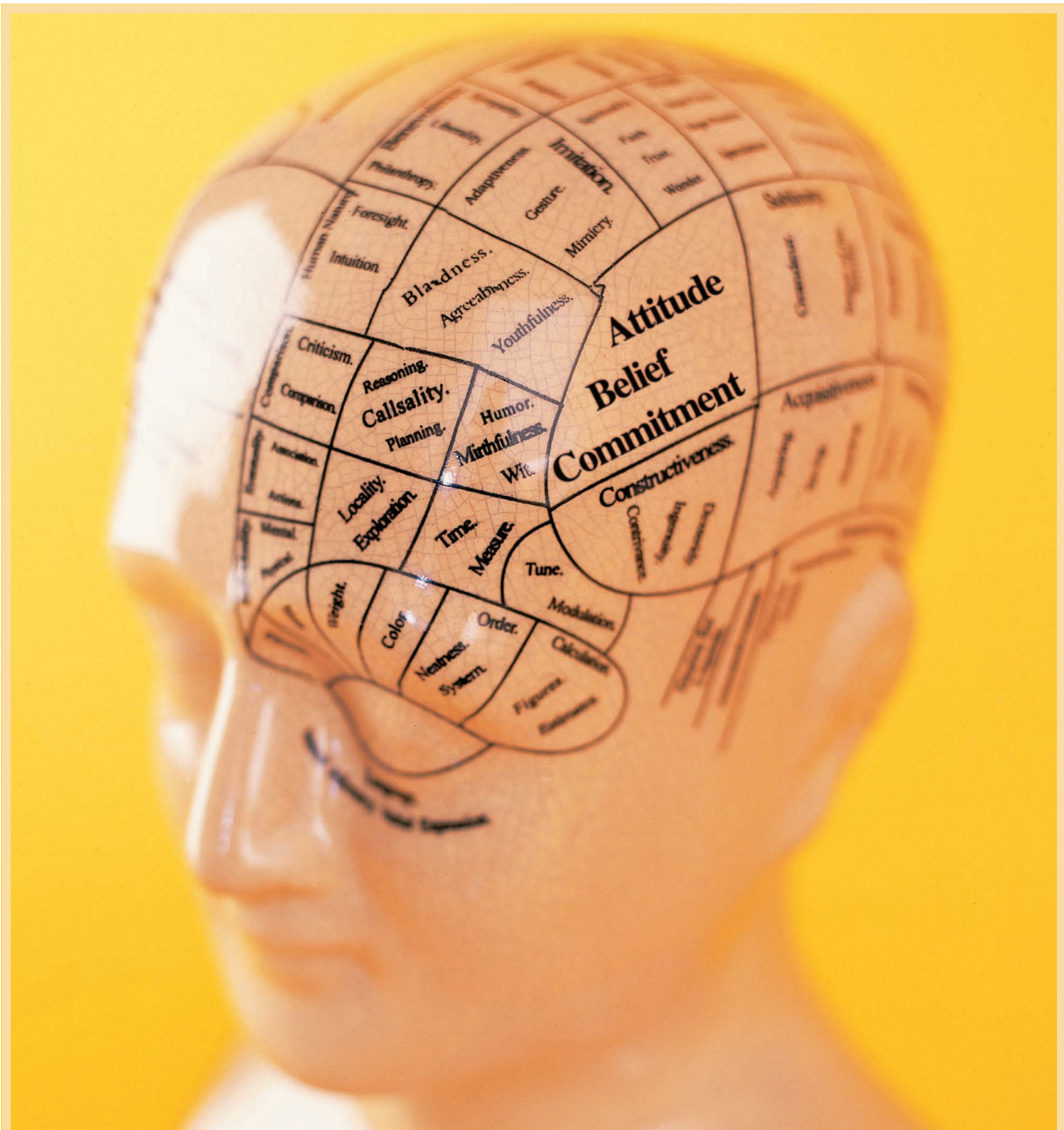


- Make sure there was a positive outcome that you contributed to
- Quantify it appropriately (e.g. how many people benefited?)
- What were the immediate and long-term benefits?
- What were the key learning points for you? e.g. This made a big difference as each person felt they were making a contribution to a bigger project. Within a week the improvement was noticeable with the project back on schedule

### Practising for a competency based interview:

Once you have built some examples, talk them through in your head first. Familiarise yourself with the language and expressions you need to use to make an impact at the interview. Then:

- Ask a friend to 'role-play' the interviewer ("Could you give me an example when .....") and talk the situation through, as with the interviewer. This is fantastic practice for the real thing
- Ask your friend for feedback about your responses:
  - How relevant was your example?
  - What sounded positive and convincing?
  - How could you improve your responses?
  - What was your body language like?
  - How enthusiastic and professional did you seem?
- Listen to the feedback and adapt your approach accordingly
- Keep practising until you feel confident talking the examples through



The first three steps to a successful interview lie in your head. You can achieve and bounce back from anything with the right Attitude, Belief and Commitment.

## STEP 2 – WHAT DOES THE EMPLOYER NEED?

Now we need to look at things through the employer's eyes.

So in this stage we'll be going back to your original CV and job application to discover which points are likely to provoke more interest or call for clarification.

You also need to know what format the interview will take and how the employer aims to find out more about you and what you offer their organisation.

Once you know this, you can prepare accordingly. You'll then face fewer surprises and feel a lot more confident.

## 'Failing to prepare means you are preparing to fail!'

### First steps – Understanding the interview format:

Before you do anything else, pick up the phone and:

- Call to say that you will be attending the interview. This is polite and gives you a chance to introduce yourself and ask any relevant questions. You could also offer to call in for an informal chat prior to the interview.
- Check the format – will it be:
  - One-to-one interview
  - Panel interview
  - Assessment centre
  - Competency interview
  - Aptitude tests
- Ask if you need to bring anything with you (e.g. copies of qualifications)
- For an aptitude test, request some practice papers
- For a presentation, request a brief? What equipment do you require? Who is the audience?
- If unsure how to get there, ask for a map

Once you have these details, you can start to prepare for the big day – Step 3 will examine techniques for the day in more detail.

### Revisiting the application

The best way to prepare for the interview is to go back to the original job details and the CV and application you sent in response. This will re-focus your attention on the most important areas for the employer and highlight why your application succeeded.

You can use this information to

- Identify areas the interviewer will focus on
- Prepare answers to questions – your previous research will help you prepare for likely questions
- Build your confidence, knowing that you have prepared thoroughly and have a good understanding of the organisation
- Prepare questions to ask at interview – what would help you decide to work there?
- Refresh your memory – you may have made several applications or it could be some time since you applied
- If you have a presentation to prepare, lots of useful information could lie in your research – give yourself plenty of time to put it together, and follow any instructions carefully!

### Review the CV and job application from an employer's point of view

- What main themes and achievements will the employer focus on?
- What will they ask to find out more? (List the questions!)
- Which areas of your application are most relevant?
- Look at the key areas of the job and see how you matched it with the application – this is why your application stood out and made it to the interview stage
- Look at how you described your career – familiarise yourself with the language and style so you can build on it for the interview. The employer will be looking to find out more so be ready to expand!

### The interview is your chance to ask questions too. You might ask...

- How will the role develop – do they foresee much change and how will that impact on the role?
- What kind of training and development can you expect?
- Where does this job fit in the overall structure?
- How is performance measured?

The answers may help you to make up your mind about working for the organisation. After all an interview is as much about you taking on the job as it is about the interviewer deciding on the candidate. You need to be sure you want to work there and that the people and environment are right for you.

### THE THREE BIG QUESTIONS

Remember, no matter how sophisticated the interview technique, employers are ultimately looking for the answers to three important questions:

Can you do the job?

Are you motivated and enthusiastic?

Will you fit in with the organisation?

Think hard about these questions – the employer will be focusing on them too.

### Preparing for the interview day

Many interviews go wrong because people fail to make a good first impression from the outset. Possible causes include:

- Being late
- Dressing inappropriately
- Being unprepared
- Displaying bad manners
- Feeling nervous

To avoid failing the interview before it's begun, make sure that you follow these rules:

- Do a trial run – Plan your journey in advance to find out how long it will take. Aim to arrive about 15 minutes before your appointment time.
- Make sure you have a suit or similar smart outfit clean and ready – don't forget to shine those shoes! Looking the ideal candidate is the first step to being the ideal candidate!
- Be prepared – spend time revisiting the advert and looking at it from an employers point of view
- Be polite – treat all members of staff courteously and with respect – from the receptionist to the interviewer
- Smile – first impressions count!





If Only I'd Known you can do anything in life if you're passionate and motivated enough about it.



### The night before...

- Practise talking through your skills and dealing with questions. Don't fret about it - just casually re-read your notes so they are fresh for tomorrow.
- Check your clothing is ready and your alarm is set.
- Visualise success. Imagine yourself making a great impression, answering questions with ease and feeling and acting confidently – allow yourself to get excited about the prospect!
- Relax - Allow your mind to switch off and re-energise with a good nights sleep.

### Boosting your confidence

Because interviews are unnatural situations, they can be the cause of stress and anxiety. Try these tips for focusing your energy on the positive aspects of the interview.

- Remind yourself that it's your CV and job application that have been selected. This is a great achievement - most don't make it this far so you're already ahead.
- You've done a lot of hard work preparing for this role and the interview is your opportunity to demonstrate all the skills and talent that you can bring!
- Don't let past failures stop you succeeding this time. Think back to the exercise in Stage 4 of the CV section – and keep believing in yourself. The employer wouldn't waste time and money interviewing you if they didn't believe

## STEP 3 - MEETING THE EMPLOYER'S NEEDS

If you have completed your preparation, you have every reason to feel confident! Take a deep breath and use this section as a guide for the day itself! Feeling nervous is natural and even helps many people to perform well on the day; . Being too relaxed can fail to generate the energy to perform so try and see the pressure as positive. Remind yourself of all the time you invested time in researching the organisation and the job. This will make you feel more confident and better equipped to give the interviewers the information they are looking for.

### Rules for the interview day

First impressions:

- Arrive on time! Aim to be there 10/15 minutes before
- Smile and be polite (even if you don't feel like smiling at the time!)
- Give a firm handshake to all parties that greet you for interview
- Be friendly and build rapport right from the start. This will relax both parties

### Making an impact

Focus on building a rapport with the interviewer, and imagine what they are looking for. Remember they are probably as nervous as you (research shows 70% of interviewers have no training in it). If you've prepared well, with good examples, and make a positive, lasting impact, you should succeed in proving that you suit the role.

Your opportunities to make the right impact will depend on the format of the interview day. Overleaf we look at some of these formats and explore different ways of making a positive impression.

## Telephone interviews

Telephone interviews are an increasingly popular way to 'screen out' unsuitable candidates and avoid the time and expense of a full interview. They are often used to create a short-list of likely candidates.

Here are some handy tips for responding to a telephone interview:

- Keep a copy of your CV/Application details handy
- If you get any details beforehand, ensure you practise your answers
- Keep focused – ensure there are no background noises or distractions
- Check it is appropriate to take the call – ensure you have time and privacy
- Project yourself and sound bright and positive – speak clearly and don't rush!
- Be succinct – don't ramble! Answer concisely.

## Assessment centres

Assessment centres give a broader perspective on a candidate than an interview.

You participate in a number of activities focusing on different areas of your capability.

The benefit is that you're assessed from different perspectives, rather than just from an interview.

The key issue is to be yourself – don't pretend to be what you are not. This can only backfire and the assessors will notice!

Here are some typical exercises and ways that you can make an impact:

## Group exercises

In these exercises, the assessor may be looking for evidence of:

- Communication skills – Speak clearly and assertively. Avoid talking over people or not contributing.
- Listening skills – Listen to and understand the opinions of others
- Teamwork – Encourage quieter members and focus on working together, not in isolation
- Persuasiveness – Don't be pushy. Be subtle and use logical, objective reasoning
- Decision making – Consider all the options before deciding. Look for consensus

## Role-play exercises

These are useful exercises for seeing how you cope with real-life situations. You will be given a verbal or paper brief that outlines the scenario, usually with a strict time limit.

Depending on the role you are applying for, the exercise will be looking at your interpersonal and other relevant skills, eg customer service, sensitivity to others and action planning. With role-play exercises the important thing is to act naturally; focus on the outcome you want to achieve, and remember to listen carefully to the instructions and the person playing the part. Make sure that you express yourself clearly and you are understood.

## The presentation

Some people dread presentations. However, with plenty of preparation, it can be a satisfying experience, and an opportunity to make a good impact on your audience. Make sure you stick to the brief carefully and you get your message across throughout the presentation.

Other tips:

- Pitch your message at an appropriate level for the audience
- Avoid using too many statistics or details – it can be overwhelming
- Use a simple structure for the session so you can pinpoint where you're up to.
- Make sure your materials are finished to a good standard
- Make time for a practice session first – even if only in front of the mirror

## Aptitude tests

Aptitude tests look at your ability so your confidence level influences how well you do in this part of the day. But there are ways to maximise your chances of making a good impression:

- Do practice examples before the day – buy a book if necessary
- Work quickly – the test may measure your accuracy and speed
- Move on to the next question If you get stuck, and try and come back to it
- Give yourself time – the questions may get progressively harder
- Don't double check answers – it slows you down and cuts your overall score
- Don't panic – this is only part of the day!

## Panel interviews

These interviews are quite structured, and each member usually has questions. Aim your response at the person who asked the question but also seek eye contact with the rest of the panel. Use the same guide as for interviews and face the interviewers as they ask you the question.

## Understanding the question

Because you've spent plenty of time revisiting your CV and job application and researching the organisation, you should have a good idea of likely questions and can prepare answers or examples about your skills or competencies. However, understanding the question is the key to providing the right answer:

### Types of questions and why they are asked:

#### OPEN QUESTIONS

- Begin with what, why, where, when, who and how
- Encourage the candidate to give a descriptive answer, and talk through in detail
- Eg. 'Why are you interested in this position?'

#### CLOSED QUESTIONS

- Questions that are specific and are used for confirmation or a yes/no, and closure
- Limits the candidate from elaborating
- Eg. "Do you have a clean driving licence?"

#### PROBING QUESTIONS

- Often used in a situational/competency interview – the interviewer is searching for details (STAR)
- Eg. "Tell me about.." or "What happened next?"

#### LEADING QUESTIONS

- Here the interviewer is leading the candidate to answer a specific question – handle carefully!
- Eg. "So you didn't enjoy working in a team?"

#### HYPOTHETICAL QUESTIONS

- Here the interviewer is trying to get a feel for how you might react/behave in different situations
- Eg. "What would you do if..?"

## Answering questions

The key to answering questions competently is to understand exactly what the interviewer is asking and why they want to know this. This will guide you to the right example answer that you've prepared and trigger all the positive information attached to it.

### When answering questions:

- Maintain eye contact – not fixed or staring, but steady and natural. Make sure your body language is open and emphatic where it needs to be.
- Listen carefully – and ask yourself precisely what they are looking for. Don't be afraid to ask for clarification but avoid asking about anything you should already know.
- Speak slowly and clearly – give yourself time to think. Ask them to repeat the question if necessary, or say 'that's a difficult question' (if it is) to allow a second to think!
- Avoid rambling – watch the interviewer's body language to know when you need to say more or stop talking. Avoid going off on a tangent or offering too much detail.
- Express yourself in an animated, enthusiastic way – don't act like a robot! If you need to admit to a weakness, say how you learned from it, and stay positive!
- Don't dwell on a question that you feel you didn't answer too well – stay positive. You can recover and still make a good impression.

### Closing the interview

At the end the interviewer will probably ask if you have any questions. This is your opportunity to ask about the organisation or role in the way that you prepared. When the interview is over, beware of feeling so relieved that you forget to make the right final impression. This is an important moment so seize it and create a final positive impact on the interviewers.

- Avoid feeling too relaxed – stay professional!
- Maintain the rapport you have built up – stay positive and enthusiastic
- Avoid the stock closing statement, "thank you for your time" – use the opportunity to sell yourself
- Show you are enthusiastic right to the end. Try saying "I've really enjoyed today – I hope I am successful" or "Thank you for today – I really would like this role"
- Give a warm, firm handshake at the end of the interview – it's your last contact
- Be sincere and positive, no matter how the interview went.

By the end of the interview, you will be feeling stretched and tired. Try to relax when you get home, and don't analyse the day in too much detail yet – this can drain your energy even more. Congratulate yourself on getting through the process!

## STEP 4 – FEEDBACK AND FOLLOW-UP

By now you will know if you have been successful or not. If you were offered the job – congratulations! Your hard work and commitment has paid off, and you've proved you're the right person for the job. If you weren't successful, try and remember that there will be other opportunities. So polish up your technique and move forward to the next application.

### If you gained the job

The offer of a job is the ultimate feedback, as it reflects the effort that you've put in. It shows the employer is confident that you are capable and motivated for the job and that they feel you will complement the organisation. Even if you are successful, you should still ask for feedback - there may have been gaps in your performance or key strengths that came through and clinched your success on the day. Knowing what the employer particularly valued is useful for knowing the best way to make an impact when you start the job. It will also help in applying for future jobs.

### Negotiating a package

The offer stage of starting a new job is the best point to negotiate the kind of package you can expect (if you haven't already done this). Start by looking at your own salary requirements then research how much your skills are worth in the current employment market. Consider what else is important to you e.g. training opportunities, health plan, pension scheme or flexible working hours. If something is important to you, be prepared to negotiate. This is a sensitive stage as you want to maintain the rapport with your new employer while ensuring the job gives you what you need.

### Issues to negotiate:

- Start date
- Salary and benefits
- Job description and key responsibilities
- Training needs (if appropriate)

At all stages of negotiation, remember to show that you understand the employer's objectives. However, know your market value and negotiate according to what is most important to you in this role (think about how close it will bring you to your vision).

### If you were unsuccessful

Rejection is a natural part of the process of finding the right job. After all, you wouldn't want a job where the employer didn't think you were suitable! Remember that practice and determination are the keys to succeeding next time. Make the most of the Interview experience by asking the employer for feedback about your performance; this will help you next time and shed light on any issues you weren't aware of. When you call the company, make a note of what they tell you so you don't miss important issues or filter the conversation so you only hear what you want to hear!

Below are some typical reasons why people fail at interview:

- Not answering questions fully enough for the interviewer to assess their skill levels - or unable to answer questions
- Talking too much (or not enough) during the day (including group discussions)
- Choosing wrong or irrelevant examples in situational interviews
- Failing to sell their key strengths or the value they could add to the company
- Dressing or behaving inappropriately for an interview
- Lacking confidence, enthusiasm or passion for the job – making negative impact
- Failing to follow instructions/brief (eg. presentation, group discussion, role-play)
- Lacking ability to develop rapport or create lasting impact (others were stronger).

Ask yourself whether any of these apply to you, and if so, plan how you would approach the interview differently next time to avoid making the same mistake twice.

### Using feedback to improve

List the key areas of feedback, and reflect on your own experience of the day. Create a simple list of the areas you want to work on, and how you plan to improve. Set a time-scale and create a realistic plan of action (as shown below) - not just a plan that's never achieved! Keep a record of your feedback so that you can see yourself improve – it's motivating and reminds you of how far you've come!

FEEDBACK AREA TO CHANGE	CHANGES I NEED TO MAKE	BY WHEN
My answers did not include enough detail	Need to find better examples of times I have demonstrated skills and prepare a fuller explanation of how I used them	2 weeks
Very nervous during presentation	Will research tips and ideas in local library to improve my presentation skills and practice a dummy session to build confidence	3 weeks
Low marks for aptitude test	Will search the internet for practice websites and aim to improve scores and increase speed for next time	4 weeks









You've got the whole world in your hands.



# ‘When the wind blows, some people build walls – others build windmills’

Windmills is about dealing positively with  
the winds of change in your life.

## THE WINDMILLS PARTNERSHIP

Windmills is a partnership between The University of Liverpool’s GIEU (Graduate Into Employment Unit) and Dr Peter Hawkins. It has evolved from extensive delivery programmes funded by National LSC, NWDA, Greater Merseyside LSC, IAG Partnership, ESF, DfES and GONW.



### DR PETER HAWKINS

Dr Peter Hawkins is a Fellow of The University of Liverpool and a world expert on career and life management. As a visiting lecturer at Harvard University and advisor to UK Government, he writes, speaks and consults on an international basis.

Peter is the author of seven books, including the acclaimed ‘Art of Building Windmills’ and enjoys working with a range of partners including VSO, KPMG, Unicef, European Commission, BBC, DfES and the Association of Graduate Recruiters.

Passionate about working with people with special needs, Peter leads a charity for adults with learning difficulties and is an advocate for individuals with disabilities.

### THE WINDMILLS TEAM

The Windmills team is part of GIEU, based at The University of Liverpool. Team members, in particular Helen Wakefield and Sharon Nicholson, have significantly contributed to the concepts, development and writing of this resource.

Windmills was developed through the team’s experience and its success has included; increasing the employability of 20,000 under-employed and unemployed individuals; enhancing the competitiveness of 2,000 businesses; creating 1,250 entirely new jobs, and adding over £30 million value to the economy.

Windmills includes a portfolio of job, career, work and life resources together with tailored training programmes. The process has been successfully used with a range of clients, including women’s groups and graduates, as well as for staff development, public, voluntary and commercial organisations and career and life practitioners.



For more information contact:

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