

Top Tips for Job Search

At the beginning of your job search you need to get into a positive frame of mind: with determination and a good understanding of how to manage a professional job search you will succeed.

But sometimes it is difficult to know how your job search should be conducted. Here are some key steps to help you on your way:

Consider setting up a dedicated email address for your job search

This way you know that every email coming into that address is related to your job search and there will be no chance of mixing up personal and business emails. You could even get a cheap mobile dedicated to your search. Recruiters often call for impromptu telephone interviews and this way, when you answer, you will know you need to be professional.

Tailor your CV

Don't send off the same old CV for every job. Take the time to customise your CV; read the job advertisement or specification carefully, pick out the essential skills and experience required, and make sure your CV demonstrates you really do have the required experience. Do that for every job application and you will see a dramatic improvement in the number of times you get shortlisted for interview.

Proof read

Check your CV and application letter for typos or grammatical errors. With so many CVs to review, many recruiters say that applications with mistakes just go straight in the bin. Use your spell checker and get a friend or family member to take a look at it for you. Most recruiters and employers will assume that if your CV is written carelessly then that attitude will carry over into your work.

Provide recent example of your achievements.

Ensure these closely match the requirements of the job. A lot of CVs simply list duties and responsibilities but don't spell out the value provided to the employer. Use the action and result model to add impact. For example, "I led a team of 20 staff that hit their sales targets every quarter" is more impressive than simply, "I led a team of 20 staff". Or, "I introduced a new incentive scheme" is less informative than, "I introduced a new incentive scheme that reduced staff turnover by 20%."

Use all the opportunities the internet presents

Registering on the job boards is a great place to start your job search and you can also set up searches to notify you by email or text about jobs that match your skills. Upload your CV to selected job sites and make it public so that recruiters can search for you, find your details and contact you with appropriate roles.

Create a recruiter-friendly professional profile, using keywords for your particular skills and experience on networking sites like LinkedIn. You can also use some aggregate jobs boards that collate job advertisements to help your search.

Look for hidden jobs

While searching for advertised roles is a great place to start, many vacancies aren't widely publicised. Try using Google Alerts to find out about possible opportunities and make speculative job applications.

Do not ignore withheld numbers

This call could be in relation to a potential role or interview

Perfect your interview technique.

Many interviewers complain that interviewees let themselves down by turning up late and inappropriately dressed. Make sure you avoid these common mistakes and demonstrate that you have prepared well for the interview; plan to spend at least two hours researching the organisation and interviewers. Use the company website and other resources, such as LinkedIn, to find out more about the company and the interviewer. Listen to the questions carefully and demonstrate your motivation and commitment by speaking with real passion about your experience.

You can prepare your answers to some of the most commonly asked interview questions:

- Tell us about yourself
- What do you know about us?
- Why do you want to work for us?
- What are your key strengths?
- Why should we hire you?

Practise your answers using a video camera or ask a trusted friend or family member to give you feedback on your performance.

Prepare your own questions

Many interviewers say that it is often the interviewee's questions that reveal their true motivation and commitment to the job. The first interview is not the time to be asking about holidays or working hours. Ask questions that demonstrate the time you have spent preparing for the interview and your level of knowledge about the employer's business. For example, you could say, "I understand that you are opening an office in New York, how will that affect your sales figures next year?" Or, "I see from your accounts that profits increased by 20% last year, do you think you'll be able to maintain that in the current market conditions?"

Interview techniques have changed

Employers still conduct traditional or biographical interviews but increasingly they are also using behavioural or competency interviews to probe your past experience and test that you're fit for a particular job. Questions that begin, "can you tell us about a time.." or "can you give us an example..." are almost certainly competency questions.

To answer effectively, use the STAR model: situation, task, action and result. Most interviewers will assume that your very structured answers will also be reflected in your approach to your work.

Be prepared to attend an assessment day

Employers use assessment centres as part of their selection process. These may be half or full day events run for a number of candidates. They were typically used for graduate jobs but they are increasingly being used to select more experienced staff, particularly where there are multiple vacancies.

Assessment centres may include traditional biographical and competency interviews, as well as a number of other activities including ability and occupational personality tests. These psychometric tests are designed to examine your innate abilities and unique personality. You cannot change these factors, but you can practice and become familiar with the format of the tests so you can perform to the best of your ability. The CEB and Saville sites, for example, allows you to practice a variety of tests for free;

<https://www.cebglobal.com/shldirect/en/practice-tests>

<https://www.savilleconsulting.com/PracticeTests>.

There are many benefits associated with the use of assessment centres, most of which are related to the candidate experience:

- More opportunities for candidates to demonstrate their competencies and skills
- The provision of realistic job previews for candidates
- More comprehensive feedback for candidates
- Enhanced identification of development needs
- The ability for assessors to obtain more objective and comprehensive information
- The ability to make better decisions (in terms of both reliability and validity)
- Fairness and consistency