

# How to Get the Job You Want

An Expert's Guide to a Successful Job Search

Job search is a constant in our work. We help clients to get a clear head and a clear plan in a way that allows them to manoeuvre themselves into key roles that will set them up both for now and for the longer term.

This eBook draws from our knowledge and experience in this area to look at how to ignite your job hunt by investing the right amount and the right type of energy into it to allow you to find a job the smart way. We will look at:

- **The reality of your current situation**
- **What's going on the job market today**
- **How to figure out what you want**
- **Researching and targeting roles**
- **Networking and being smart about it**
- **CVs, cover letters and applications**
- **What smart job hunting looks like**
- **What you definitely *should not* do!**

So let us get going and put you on the path to the job that is waiting for you with open arms!

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## Evaluating Your Situation

Why are you looking for a job? Have you been made redundant, been told that you are about to be or can you just sense it? Maybe your contract is ending. We are not talking just about the *paper* contract here; maybe the psychological contract between you and your boss has broken down. You went into the job feeling it was right at the time, but now the organisation has changed and so have you. The relationship between you and your boss might have gone like this:

- The ‘asking out’ phase-you get hired
- The ‘roses & chocolate’ phase-as well as getting paid, you get other benefits too
- The ‘marriage’-you show your commitment to your job by getting extra training for it
- The ‘honeymoon’ phase-the interface between you and your employer continues smoothly
- The ‘I want a divorce’ phase-you are fed up with your job because you are bored, being abused or your role has changed.

What to do now? You know you are unhappy in this relationship, but what do you want beyond that?

## Doing a Reality Check

Where are you now in your life and in your career? Do you even know, or are you just lost?

The majority of us do not receive career guidance in our lives, so it is not surprising that many of us still feel lost even once we are well into our working lives. The question is what are you going to do to find yourself and to find what it is you want out of your next job?

In addition – what are your key motivations? Understanding what drives you and what you are passionate about will help you to understand what type of job and role might suit you best as a next step.

Perhaps think about:

- What your motivations are for changing jobs now?
- What is it you want to do differently?
- What do you want to eradicate?
- What do you want from your next role?
- What activities, responsibilities and tasks excite you?

## Taking a Break

### **Some people take time off to clear their heads...**

A client of ours had a career that seemed to be progressing well, or so it seemed. Everything was great since having graduated from university and at work they were very good at what they did. Over time they took on more and more work and also started having some issues with their boss. They hadn't had a proper holiday in years for fear and concern that they were indispensable.

Eventually, they decided to take a really good break and went for a holiday alone. This took them into a state of what they described as 'decompression'. They took this opportunity to think hard about what they wanted out of life, out of their career and to identify the different elements that they held dear and felt were important. It helped to create some perspective and to enable that individual to move out of a hectic world and into a zone where they could start creating and imagining a world that they really wanted to be in.

Why not try taking some time off in order to gain a different perspective of your career? Take a short holiday, if you can afford it, or simply go somewhere that places you in new surroundings. Get a change of scenery so that you have a bit of breathing space and

have some time to get back on top of things. Spend time with a friend or relative that you have not seen for a while and try to pamper yourself a bit.

Spend this time away considering your job and career as part of the overall life that you are leading and think about whether that life is leading you in the direction that you want to go in. Once you feel refreshed, you will be able to start your job search again feeling revitalised.

### **How a trip to New Zealand led to New Thinking**

After being made redundant, Sandy\* went to New Zealand for a 3 week break. There, she found time to relax and to explore new sights. As a result, she was able to see things more clearly in terms of identifying what she wanted to achieve in her career and what types of tasks and activities she found genuinely interesting and enjoyable.

Her break gave her the space to re-energise and to see herself in a different light. She was able to think more objectively about herself and her career and to reflect on what matters most to her.

She chose to have this time away to get away from her usual routine and fast-paced life. She needed the opportunity to establish for herself the type of role, working environment and people she wanted to be surrounded by. This time of reflection has given her the clarity, vision and energy to now launch herself into the job market.

## Getting into the Right Frame of Mind

People do not say that ‘finding a job is a full-time job’ for no reason. If you were working on a project for work, you would throw yourself wholly into it. You should invest the whole of yourself into your job search in a similar way.

You need to identify what practical actions you need to take and what you can do for yourself. Identify who can help you in your job searching process and how they can help you.

Be realistic about your ambitions and goals. Set realistic and achievable goals and be clear with yourself and others about your intentions.

Some key areas to think about include:

- Knowing what you really want
- Valuing your unique set of skills
- Creating a positive job search environment

### Knowing What You Really Want

Whatever your reasons for seeking a new job, you need to know what you are looking for. Being clear about who you are is the natural precursor to being clear about what you want in, and from, your work.

Stopping to reflect allows you to see what is ok about your current work life and what is not, which in turn lets you identify what needs to change.

Crucially, taking your time over this assessment may not necessarily be about what type of new job you are after; it can also be about whether you need a new job at all.

**REMEMBER:  
KNOWING  
WHAT YOU WANT  
IS CONNECTED TO  
WHO YOU ARE  
&  
WHAT YOU'RE BEST  
AT**

## Should I stay or go?

If you are considering a job search due to the breakdown of the psychological contract, it may be worth asking yourself if you just need to 're-contract'. If you need something new, identify it and then ask for it. It could be more flexibility or new work.

Is it worth talking to your employer before you start booking time off to surreptitiously court new organisations?

People often rush to seek a new job opportunity without their current employer even knowing about it. Thus begins the clandestine pursuit of a new organisation. Once this fresh suitor is ensnared, the individual often strides into their current boss' office and presents to them a resignation letter with all the gusto of a wretched husband or wife personally serving divorce papers to their hitherto oblivious spouse.

Whether or not the boss knew anything was wrong with the now 'liberated' employee is immaterial, as it is made quite clear from the employee's side that 're-contracting' was never an option.

By adopting a different attitude, would-be jobseekers may be able to see that sometimes re-contracting is indeed an option. In such cases, it is possible for the employee to work with their boss in an innovative way that allows them to ignite their position within the organisation, melt it down and re-model it into something else. You could talk to your boss to see if you might change your role - reduce your hours, for example, or take on more responsibilities within your job.

## Valuing Your Skill Set

If you have decided that a new job is the right option for you then in order to move forwards you must get to know your full set of skills and strengths, in order to become confident in your value to an organisation and what you have to work with.

It is important to know that you are unique. This means that you possess a unique set of interests, skills and experiences, which must be recognised, valued and used to your advantage. To use this effectively in your job search, you will want to be thinking about the different ways that you can position yourself in the market where you are not competing directly against a whole range of

other candidates. I.e. you want to be as close to 1 of 1 as you can and you want to do this by marrying up your unique set of skills to what specific jobs and roles are looking for.

Focus on you and what you specifically have to offer employers. Look at how you can stitch together your unique selling proposition.

For instance:

- If you're older, you have more experience and wisdom than the younger candidates going for the same job as you and so look for opportunities where this may work in your favour
- If you speak a foreign language, find roles where this can give you an advantage
- If you're changing career direction, look for industries and roles where your past experience and unique insight into your past field of expertise can embellish your role and ability to do your new job

## Ask Others for Their Input

Sometimes it can be hard for us to see in ourselves what we are great at. So, ask others what they think and feel.

The people around you cannot give you all the answers, but they can objectively identify your strengths. Not only does hearing someone else articulate what you are great at make you feel good, it also serves as a third party corroboration of what you may already think. Alternatively, you may be pleasantly surprised and become aware of different skills and strengths that others appreciate and see in you that perhaps you had not appreciated previously.

Ask for feedback from colleagues from the past and the present. Get feedback also from family, friends and close associates i.e. people who have seen first-hand how you have grown up through the various roles that you have had.

**'SOMETIMES OUR LIGHT GOES OUT, BUT IS BLOWN AGAIN IN TO INSTANT FLAME BY AN ENCOUNTER WITH ANOTHER HUMAN BEING'**

**ALBERT SCHWEITZER,  
PHILOSOPHER**

You may end up being amazed by all the different types of responses you get. They could each be very different from the feedback you were expecting to get and all of this is great data for you to work with in order to build your unique selling proposition. It affects your confidence too.

## **Written Feedback is Also Valuable**

An extension of this is to ask for written evidence or feedback in the form of a report. If you were at school, University or have a number of past work appraisals – look at what people wrote and said about you in these. Collect the positive comments and phrases that people noted about you. See if there are any patterns. Certain comments from past teachers, educators and bosses can help you to crystallise where your strengths lie and this cannot only inform you, but also potential employers.

Extracting certain phrases and putting them at the top of your CV is an atypical move that can focus the reader's attention.

## **Use Your Experiences**

It is also important to understand and acknowledge your capability to do any one particular job. This is a combination of life experience and work experience. The latter consists of mistakes you have learnt from, skills acquired and technical wisdom gained through previous roles and levels of responsibility held. Identify what your experiences have given you by sitting down and reviewing your life, including your career, to date.

The use of a career guide to gain perspective on your strengths, skills and experiences is a popular and effective practice. Each guide has his or her own personal and professional background from which to draw on. They can, therefore, provide their clients with a structure within which to talk through and reflect on their experiences. This is often achieved through the guide's use of penetrative questions to get to know the career shifter's decision-making processes and thus helping them to guide the shifter towards making better job seeking decisions.

## Action Steps to Outline Your Strengths

You can acquire many strengths tools online.

1. Use a tool like [Strengthfinder](#) or an online careers test to identify your strengths
2. Ask your friends what they believe your best qualities are
3. Circle references to your strengths in your last school report/work appraisal
4. Reflect on skills gained through your work and education experiences by answering these questions:
  - What did I learn to do in each place?
  - What did I get better at doing?
  - What did I enjoy doing?
  - What did people ask me to do a lot? (When people ask you to do a certain thing frequently, that means you're good at it)
5. Bring to mind your passions and interests by asking yourself what you would like to be doing right now (apart from reading this!)

For more help with this explore our Identify Your Strengths Worksheet available now in our Career Ignition Club ([www.careerignitionclub.com](http://www.careerignitionclub.com)).

## Creating a Positive Job Search Environment

You need to support yourself and gain encouragement in your job search, from the environment that you are in. It is important to get with people who are positive when going through a major life transition such as changing jobs or moving from unemployment back to employment.

Surround yourself with supportive and positive people – it really helps. Also make sure that you are connected to people who really ‘get you’ i.e. they understand what you are going through, understand what you are looking for and they understand your needs too.

Job searches can take time sometimes and so it is important to know how to keep your energy levels high and to keep your motivation and momentum going. Think about:

- What energises you?
- How to stay focused in your job search?
- How to keep motivated
- Do you need space and time to reflect and review what you are doing by yourself?
- Do you need to spend time with other people – bouncing ideas off them and talking?
- Do you need some sort of structure or routine?

This section is also about managing your time and looking after yourself well. If you are going to support yourself in future, how are you going to look after yourself in order to do that?

Job searching is challenging and it can be tricky when done alone.

- If you know of others who are also looking to change jobs, why not buddy up with them and help each other?
- Why not change locations every so often when you are looking for roles or researching companies online?

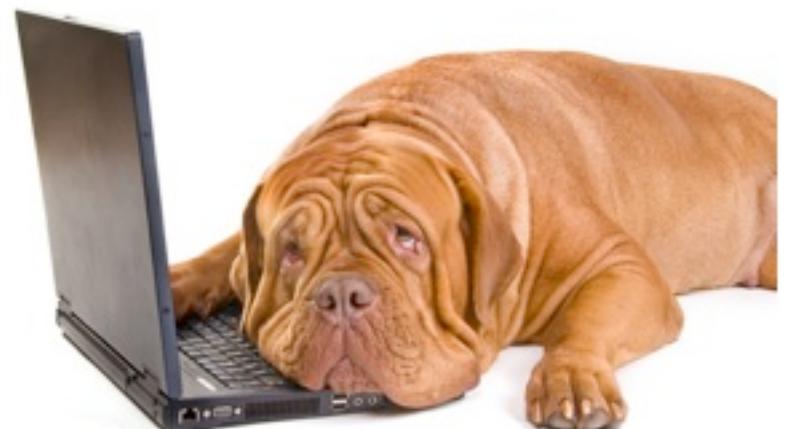
If we spend too much time by ourselves, alone with just our own ideas, we can start to go stir crazy and so make sure that you mix things up and maintain a sense of rhythm, routine and a connection with others.

## Job Searching Whilst in a Job

If you are currently in a job, it can be particularly overwhelming. There are many different pressures, with time being a critical one, as you have to devote a lot of time to your job hunt as well as your day job.

It can be really helpful and important to try to seek out somebody who can help you. Having someone else involved is fantastic because it gives you a degree of accountability. You do not often have the objectivity to go it alone when it comes to finding a new job. Someone who is helping you can ask you pertinent questions, make you think about things in a new light and set you tasks that will put you on your way towards achieving your goal of a new job.

All this gives you a much better handle on the reality of your situation. When you are stepping back and assessing how the land lies, you are in a much clearer position to know what is in front of you. There may be some hesitancy and you will not necessarily feel comfortable but if you have taken time out to really reflect on whom you are, where you have come from and what your story is, if you have evaluated your position particularly well, you have a chance to see what sector you might like and what is viable.



### ***Case Study: Keeping a Job Whilst Job Hunting***

*Jonathan\* is in his mid 40s and is in the middle his career. He's been effective at work but in reality hates his job. He being based in the UK with a boss in the US doesn't help matters and what he wants to do is just throw it all in.*

*Jonathan worked with one of our Career Guides who advised him against quitting right away. We believe that in most cases it is easier to get a new job, when you're currently in another one.*

*You don't want to put yourself in a position where after a little while of being unemployed you start worrying because that regular pay cheque isn't coming in any more and your job search isn't turning up anything that's suitable for you. That puts you in a situation where you're chasing the game and you start to make bad decisions out of panic.*

*So, we worked up a job search plan and strategy together. This started with a deep analysis of everything Jonathan had done in terms of work since he was 16. We looked at what he was good at, what he enjoyed and every other element of every job that occurred to us. We created a map of what he really loved doing and what he was great at based on his history and through our analysis of this data.*

*We developed his unique selling proposition jointly. Through identifying patterns in his roles, what he excelled at, his achievements, what seemed most natural to him – we could outline the set of skills that were specific and unique to him. This meant that we could now target his job search and be more focused in hunting down roles that suited and matched his particular skill set.*

*He secured his next job after taking the time to really think about it and to select a job he wanted, and made his shift.*

# Understanding Today's Job Market: Jobocalypse Now

In the last 5, 10 years, a lot has changed in the labour market and in the general world of work. Being out of work is becoming more common. If you're one of the many people currently out of work, don't just sit on your sofa at home when you could be learning and growing, nurturing mind and body and generally getting physically and mentally ready for whatever employment opportunity lies ahead. If someone asks you at a job interview what you have been doing with your time since you have been unemployed, what are you going to say?

Fill your time with some routine. Do your favourite type of physical activity 3 times a week, be it swimming, running, dancing, hiking, rock climbing or whatever. Subscribe to an industry journal and devote 2 hours a week to reading it so that you are continuously learning about your target field. When you tell the job interviewer that you have been doing all this, it will show that you have the energy and initiative needed to embrace and excel in the job on offer.

There are also a number of different areas that we believe are important for you to consider and be aware of before launching yourself into the job market. These include exploring the:

- Impact of Digital Technology
- World of the Recruiter or Head-hunter
- Flexible Working Options

## Impact of Digital Technology

Traditionally employers, if they were big enough, would have their own full-time recruiters. The recruiters would handle a relationship with an agent for specific roles that they were trying to fill. The agent's job is, for a fee, to advertise the position, handle responses, and interview potential candidates and then provide the employer with a shortlist. The employer would take it from there; appoint a candidate and pay the agent a fee for their work.

The impact of technology and social media means that a reducing proportion of jobs are handled in this way. There are two primary reasons. One is that technology enables a different and faster potential route for employers to find resources. Secondly, it is significantly cheaper than using agents to do that work.

Nowadays platforms such as LinkedIn are becoming integral to an organisation's recruitment process. It enables them to find people speedily and cheaply. It provides access to a critical mass of people and connections, and it is possible for a company to narrow down a search and to specify certain criteria like location, job title, level of role and more, in order to fill roles. What this means is that if you are not on that platform and if you have not optimised your profile, you will not be found.

Also, it was not many years ago that the main method of finding a job was either to respond to an advertisement that you saw in the national press, trade magazine, local rag or to make yourself known to an agent who'd stick your name on a file or a database and contact you if something came up. How the world has changed in the last few years. Personal branding is now more important than ever and being aware of your online presence and reputation is crucial.

Anyone who is anybody is on LinkedIn these days and organisations are relying more and more on direct hiring through platforms like this in order to increase efficiency and reduce costs. Twitter is also important in the job searching space as often information and announcements about new job openings and opportunities are tweeted about first before being advertised or mentioned elsewhere.

The key to succeeding in this digital era is to find a good balance between harnessing the technological tools that are now available to you and combining them with traditional face-to-face networking. The power in meeting people in person can never be replaced but with these technological advances, we now have more opportunities and more ways of connecting with others.

Look at our [125 LinkedIn Job Search Tips](#) and [125 Twitter Job Search Tips](#) to explore how to harness these online tools for your job search.

## The World of the Recruiter & Head-hunter

The way that recruiters have always earned their salary is by fulfilling a transaction - of finding a candidate to take on a new role. They then are paid a commission based on the successful candidate's salary. This remains the same today as it has for years. What has changed is how they enable the matching to happen.

Recruiters and head-hunters use online platforms and social media to find suitable candidates for the vacancies that they have. Therefore, the visibility and strength of one's profile, connections, recommendations and record of accomplishment are more important. It is also important to note that we are no longer reliant on recruiters and recruitment agencies to find us our next job. They still may have a part to play but in reality we are more likely to do better ourselves and through our own connections and research.

The hidden job market has always been a key feature of the labour market but it is now a more significant feature than ever before. Up to 80% of available work out there is not being handled by the recruitment industry.

If you do not know why the hidden job market exists, it is because of the amount of money and time involved in advertising a job and in the recruitment process. If a job can be filled through other means such as word-of-mouth, internal advertising, LinkedIn, Twitter, having old candidates on file or anything else – this can work better for the employer. From a job seeker's perspective, it means that you need to be more alert and more proactive in your job searching in order to come across these types of opportunities.

The main ways to penetrate this hidden market is via networking and through targeting your applications. By getting on people's radars (and this includes head-hunters), you are more likely to be approached about relevant opportunities or to uncover them. By being highly specific and targeted when approaching organisations speculatively, you increase your chances of being taken seriously and considered by them.

## Flexible Working Options

Nowadays, there is significantly more fluidity in terms of labour. There are more independent workers and contractors than there were a generation ago when everyone just went out and got the one permanent role with the one employer. It is more acceptable for organizations to want your value as a professional without necessarily wanting to own you as a wage slave.

Celebrated organisational expert Charles Handy pointed out that larger organisations are reducing their core permanent staff. Why do they need loads of people when they have the pool of flexible labour that is out there? Look at flexible working opportunities when considering job options open to you.

There are many different ways of working nowadays and we encourage you to be aware of, if not to explore, the following possibilities if you feel that these could work for you:

- Working from home / remotely or virtually
- Part-time working
- Freelancing
- Running your own business
- Contracting
- Interim Contracts
- Portfolio Career
- Becoming a Non-Executive Director.

When considering these options there are many challenges and different elements to weigh up. The challenges include the financial aspects, a lack of infrastructure or support, no traditional company perks like expenses or a pension, managing your workload, self-motivation, finding a new work-life balance, creating a pipeline of work and potential concerns from your family if there is a fear of instability or some uncertainty in your set up and plans.



However, there are several advantages to having greater flexibility in your career. These include being able to manage your own time, spend time with the family or those who are important to you, be closer to home, reduce commuting time, have greater control and to create a more flexible lifestyle.

Deciding what type of career and role is right for you is a choice. It is fine to take your time to identify and explore which option might be best for you. It is also reasonable to expect your preferences to change as you get older. However, before searching for a job, try to be as clear as you can about what you want right now in order to reduce the amount of upsets, rejections and time wasted in your job hunt.

## Finding Your Next Role

Where should you look to find the job you want? Start by looking within yourself. Find patterns.

Look at your CV in its current unedited form and pick out things that are pertinent to what you want to do. Look for clues and patterns in your experiences.

Having a mentor or professional career guide to work with on this can really help you. Once you have done this, you are more able to be creative about your options. Brainstorming your options allows you the ability to take a next step that reflects the past, your capabilities, where you are now and where your future is leading.

## Avoid the Scattergun Approach

Being scattered and rushed in your approach is more likely to land you with rejections than to help you find the job you want. It can be tempting to try to cast your net as wide as possible and to apply to as many different jobs as you can. This is not the wisest route, however, since it can lead to several rejections coming back your way (and that is if you hear anything at all), confused recruiters and unimpressed potential employers. It can also leave you feeling demoralised and drained of a lot of energy and it will

not necessarily be because of your ability to do a role. It is more likely to have been because of the amount of time spent really preparing and targeting each job.

We each only have so much time on our hands and so it is more efficient to spend that time on the applications that are more suited to you. It is also worth spending more time on getting to know the company, the role, and the people who might be interviewing you and what is going on in the industry than sitting at a computer applying for every job under the sun.

Be focused and have faith in the fact that if you really target your applications, then they will get through. Otherwise if you send out hundreds of untargeted applications across a range of different industries and job titles – it is clear that you are not very focused or clear on what you actually want and this is likely to come across in everything else that you do (i.e. your networking, your online profiles and your interviews).

Also, do not necessarily accept the first offer that comes your way. It might help you in the very short term but ultimately you may well be unhappy and will probably soon find yourself back at square one if it is not the job that you really wanted. You can save a lot of time and energy by saying ‘no’ to a job offer that you know deep down is not for you.

## Create Options

Knowing where to find the right job requires you to create options and to be innovative. Now you have worked out what unique set of skills you have, what is important to you and what you have to offer align that with what you want? Read up on, and find out about the areas that interest you. You could even read up on the general topic of career reinvention. See our webinars on [Career Options Exploration](#) and [Reinventing Your Career](#).

Say, for example, that you are thinking about going into nursing. You’re not sure which particular field you want to enter, so by reading up and volunteering you get to do some relatively low risk experimenting at no monetary cost to yourself, in order to identify a field that feels right for you.

You might also try taking time out of your paid work to shadow nurses in different disciplines. Whichever strategy you pick, the focus is on testing i.e. identifying what will work best for you.

There are a number of obvious places to start when looking for your next role. These include:

- Exploring career sites and job sites
- Studying career profiles
- Looking at LinkedIn profiles, company pages and groups
- Reading books, the press or industry journals
- Reading company websites and company career pages
- Exploring your immediate network
- Re-connecting with old colleagues from work or university
- Exploring networking events and opportunities
- Trying it out via volunteering / doing an internship / work experience.

## Understand the Organisation

Who is going to value you? The value equation is the marrying up of what you bring and offer and what the organisation needs and wants.

We would love the organisation to define clearly what it wants but it is not that simple. Try to step into the space of the organisation to understand what makes it tick, what is of value to it. Ask yourself the questions:

- What is this company trying to do strategically?
- Is it looking to expand / specialise in certain areas?
- What is the company's vision and goals?
- How does the role that I am applying to fit into that?
- Who are the key players in relation to my role?
- How did they get to where they are? What do their profiles look like?
- What can I bring to the organisation?
- How does what I can do help them achieve their goals?
- What experience and knowledge do I have which will be valuable to them?



The right job for you is one where your value is appreciated by the employing organisation. Employers look for authenticity in potential employees. They are searching for those who really want to do the job as well as actually being able to do it. You need to have a positive attitude-your desire to do the job is in itself of value to the organisation.

If you are trying to shift from one sector or segment to another, consider the transferability of your skills, qualities and experience and how you are going to communicate that to employer organisations. It is also important here to invoke your own curiosity in the targeted sector/segment in order to understand it, know it and commit to it. Find something that gets you going and achieves an energy flow that carries you along a clear path.

## Action Steps to Identifying Suitable Careers

1. *Read up on careers or roles that you are interested in*
2. *Get out and talk to people within those areas or who have worked in that role before*
3. *Volunteer in the fields that you are still interested in or find shadowing opportunities*
4. *Research organisations in your target sectors/industries*
5. *Write down what you think is of value to the organisations that interest you*
6. *Make a note of which of your strengths match up to each organisation*
7. *Identify which of your skills are transferable*
8. *Jot down a couple of sentences you can use to communicate the transferability of your skills to employers.*

## Doing Your Research

Research is one of the most important aspects to your job search. People often underestimate the value of research and spend most of their time around their applications and CV, and then wonder why they are not getting very far. The research that you do underpins the edge that you will have compared to others, in the job market.

As well as looking into what you might do, you are also considering the constraints on you and how they factor into your job search. Areas to consider could include your financial position, commuting preferences, family commitments and geographic location. These issues help determine your targeting plan. If thinking widely about what you could do is a “dream like” state, then applying the criteria about your current circumstances is the reality. Dreams plus reality is doable and practical.

### How and What Can be Researched?

Research is much easier than it used to be. Resources available to us include the Internet, libraries, reference works as well as simply talking to people, and asking them questions to gather the information you need.

You can look at business directories to identify organisations that may be of interest to you. If you are really in need of in depth analysis, you could hire an independent researcher to do some of the work for you.

So, what exactly should you be researching? The key elements include the sector, segment, organisation, role and people. You want to know what you need to do in order to get that job. You also want to know whether what a company has to offer is what you are looking for and will actually want or not. Doing your own due diligence on an organisation is just as important as researching a role and organisation in order to be attractive to them.



## DO YOU KNOW THE ANSWERS TO THE FOLLOWING?

- ◆ Who are the key players and brands in my sector?
- ◆ Who are the market leaders? Why are they the market leaders?
- ◆ What is their share price?
- ◆ Who's hiring and for what roles? Why are they hiring?
- ◆ For an organisation that you are interested in – what is the company culture like?
- ◆ What does the role involve? What skills / qualifications are required?
- ◆ What is the recruitment process like? What's involved? How many stages?
- ◆ What types of projects will you be doing?
- ◆ Who will you be working with?
- ◆ Are there opportunities for development and growth?
- ◆ Will there be travel involved? How much?
- ◆ Who are the company's competitors? What are they like?
- ◆ Who did the role before? Why did they leave?
- ◆ Who else is in the company? How did they get there? What are they like?

These are just a few questions may help you to learn more about the role and company that you may be thinking about applying to. The more you know the better position you will be in to decide whether it is the right role for you, and to be prepared when you do apply. Think about who can help you to answer these questions and what sources online or offline could give you more clues. Learn as much as you possibly can.

- You may need to invest in some learning, training or certain courses to ensure that you have the skills and expertise needed in your role. Research any courses you might want to take or any new skills you need to acquire and also see if other people have reviewed them or have any comments on whether those courses were worthwhile to them or not.
- If it is recruiters you are looking to research, get in touch with your local library, if you are a member, and ask about the Global Directory of Executive Recruitment Consultants by the business publishers Executive Grapevine. This directory features a complete list of head-hunters. It lists them by sector, specialism and so on. By ringing the library and requesting a copy, you should get a copy in a few days.

## Action Steps to Conducting Thorough Research

- *Identify some organisations that you want to explore further*
- *Research your target organisations on the internet looking at:*
  - a. *Website*
  - b. *Press page & press releases*
  - c. *Investors pages & Financial reviews*
  - d. *LinkedIn page*
  - e. *Careers pages*
- *Borrow/read library books on your target area/organisations*
- *Sit in the library and go through relevant reference works*
- *See if you know anyone who is or has worked there before and ask them what it is/was like*
- *Regularly check for any media coverage on your target organisations*
- *Contact and talk to the people mentioned in any relevant press releases*
- *Look at competitor websites*
- *Look at the profiles of the management team / leaders in the organisation and the person or people who may be interviewing you.*

## Targeting the Right Role

We are always told to keep our options open but that will not cut it in the case of job hunting. Narrowing down your options may seem like a cop out but it is actually the right thing to do in this context. Going in with 2 or 3 different approaches is not going to work for you. You will be spreading yourself too thin. You have to identify one target and one message. The more specific you get the easier finding a job becomes.

For example, if you pick just one company that you want to work in, you can look on LinkedIn specifically for people who work for that organisation. Even if you just decide on a specific sector you want to work in, you can have a look at which of your qualifications align with the requirements for working in that particular sector. By being specific in your targeting, you will give yourself a better chance of getting that right role for you.

## Being Focused in Your Job Search

Anyone who is familiar with binoculars knows that when the lenses focus, you can only see one thing because that is all that is being picked out. With a huge landscape such as the job market, you need to pick up the metaphorical pair of binoculars and focus on one thing. Focus really clearly on targeting a specific industry, sector, segment, organisation or even individual you want to work for.

Below are some key steps to help you stay focused and to be effective in your job hunt:

### 1. Commit yourself fully

It is recognised increasingly that finding work is challenging. There are lots reasons for this but it is certainly true that the employment market is an overcrowded one. If you accept this, you realise the need to commit yourself to the process of job search. It is going take time and effort, but the primary issue is your commitment to being focused on the process.

### 2. Own it and take responsibility

What we mean by this is that you cannot rely on other people to make things easy for you. Quite often, you will hear job seekers complaining about the fact that people have not responded to their applications or that they have not heard back from this particular recruiter or that one. That is just what comes with the territory; it is what job searching is about. Continuous advances in digital technology do increase the amount of communication that goes on but they do not necessarily increase the transparency or courtesies of those communicating with you.

Also, do not expect anyone else to take responsibility for your work, your career or how you integrate him or her into your life plan. This job search is your responsibility and it's up to you to take 100% responsibility for every facet of it.

### **3. Start mapping everything**

You want to map all the elements of your progress. There are some areas of job seeking that you are going to be quite strong in. For example, you may be an excellent interviewee and presenter. Other elements you may feel less strong in. If you can map every element of your job search, it will enable you to focus and to then plan all the things you need to do.

Also, create spreadsheets, which track your applications. Keep a record of who you have applied to, when, what happened, what the feedback was if you were rejected. Make sure you monitor the roles that you really want and perhaps think about different routes into the same firm if there is one company you really want to work for.

### **4. Make your messaging consistent**

In order to come across as professional and clear in your goals, you will need to be consistent across every aspect of your job search.

This means:

- Ensuring that your profiles both online and offline are consistent i.e. giving off the same message
- That you are telling the different people you meet, the same thing i.e. the type of role/company/industry you want to work for is consistent
- That each recruiter is given the same clear message about the type of role that you are targeting.

A good test is for you to explain what you are trying to do to two very different people. One knows you well but does not know what you do (a close family member possibly). The other does not know you well but does understand your professional world. Give them the same message but recognize the difference in the ways that you do.

## Knowing Your Target

We have mentioned in the previous section how doing thorough research is important. Here we are looking to expand on this and to now think about how to create a targeting plan that gets you closer to getting a job in your chosen organisation or sector.

Your primary set of research should give you an idea of the areas that really interest and excite you. Now our aim is to identify the best routes into these organisations.

What we need to do is to map out more information about the organisations of real interest. Information to gather may include:

- The size of the business
  - *Number of employees*
  - *Sector(s)/industry/(ies) the business is involved in*
  - *Its main founding principles and values (usually available on the company's website)*
- The type of business
  - *What it does*
  - *Services / products – what they are, who uses them*
  - *Where it sits in the market- competitors, market share etc*
- The culture of the business
  - *Ethos / culture*



- *Types of people who work there*
- *Work-life balance*
- *Flexible working.*

You may also want to be thinking about what is happening in your target sector financially, economically, commercially, sociologically, technologically and how these are affecting the organisations you have identified.

Once you have gathered this information about each target organisation, ask yourself:

- Which of these companies do I now want to work for given this information?
- Do some of the companies prefer job candidates with a particular qualification or background?
- Do you know someone who could introduce you to a person in the organisation(s)?
- Does the employer invite volunteers to work within it before they apply for paid positions?

You can set your own criteria to judge against. Your analysis may reveal that a globally famous brand is struggling whilst a firm with a smaller reputation is expanding in size and scope. Which one do you want to join?

A key component to your plan will be using your network and connections to learn more. Plan carefully what you want to ask your connections about and how they can help you to move closer towards that right role.

Some ideas to explore:

- Can they recommend a course that will give you credibility with the organisation you want to join?
- Can they introduce you to their connection within the organisation?
- Can they tell you about how they were recruited?
- Can they tell you about their role and responsibilities i.e. what they actually do each day at work?
- Can they give you a reference so you can start work as a volunteer?

## Networking and Being Smart

Although self-reflection, research and preparation are important in order to job hunt effectively, this is not a time for hiding away completely. It is critical that you get out there. There is plenty of work to do and some of that work includes networking. Even if you just arrange to meet up with one of your former colleagues, and have a coffee and a chat about what you are trying to achieve, this is networking. Explain to them your circumstances and they might be able to help you even if it is just by telling you what the labour market is looking like and how it has changed since the last time you were job hunting.

Be warned, however, that you can end up doing too much that is not productive. When you go out networking, choose where you are going to go and whom you are going to talk to. Ask people you know about the places to go for good networking opportunities.

Networking is a key skill in itself and we have created a separate eBook that looks at this in detail. Our [135 Networking Career Tips](#) eBook provides you with more in depth support and help with your networking and so in this section we will focus on just a couple of key points.

## Building Strong Relationships

You need to get to know your contacts really well in order to know best how to leverage each of them. It is the quality of relationship that is important here – think about the level of trust in each relationship and so on.

The author and speaker Malcolm Gladwell wrote a book called "[The Tipping Point](#)", which refers to "super connectors." A super connector is a person who can speak to you about your goals and intentions for a short while and then will be able to see your potential, and connect you up with a number of different people in their network that can help you. In your contacts list right now may be good bankers, lawyers, accountants, venture capitalists and other such self-starting professionals that are able to take on board what you want and intuitively sense who, out of their big list of contacts, would be interested in you.

Dunbar's number is commonly said to be 150. This is the number of people with whom you can maintain good social relationships. Anything beyond that and it has generally been considered difficult to manage meaningful relationships with each person. Some people may have a capacity greater than that, but realistically you cannot have thousands of people in your contact database and expect to stay connected with each one of them for the whole of your life.

We, therefore, recommend that you focus on the quality of your connections rather than quantity. It is not a numbers game so focus on the strength of those relationships.

Get more interested in the people you already know by thinking about:

- What are their interests?
- What is their educational history?
- What are their quirks?
- Do you know any members of their immediate family, and what they do?

It is by being curious about the detail of people's lives that you can begin to have a useful, and valuable, connection.

Here is the decisive test as to whether you are close with someone or not-can you pick up the phone at any time, ask him or her almost anything, and get some sort of positive response? If not, you may not have a close enough relationship with them, and they are not as useful a contact as you believe. They are merely someone else in your database.

## Harnessing Your Network

When you are approaching your network for help, be really focused in what you are asking, so as not to waste anyone's time. Time as we know is such a scarce commodity for all of us these days. If you are clear in your head about what you are targeting, you should be able to articulate this succinctly to your connections. Be sure that you are also clear about what it is that you are asking them for.

Here are some tips to help you to harness your network effectively:

**'IF YOU DON'T GO AFTER WHAT YOU WANT, YOU'LL NEVER HAVE IT. IF YOU DON'T ASK, THE ANSWER IS ALWAYS NO. IF YOU DON'T STEP FORWARD, YOU ARE ALWAYS IN THE SAME PLACE'**

**NORA ROBERTS, AUTHOR**

- When you make that initial first contact with an old associate, say that it is good to be in touch with them again. Point out that they know the space you are looking to move into well. Say, "Here's what my intention is. I would like to xyz."
- Be sure that the people you are projecting your intention to are the people who get you/understand enough about you. Go through your contacts database and identify anyone that you think is right for you to talk to. Think about where people have been before and what their backgrounds are. This will help you to identify whom you can open up to and which avenues are for you.
- Do not ask people to help you by listing your options and asking them to pick one. Ask people what they think so that you can get a different perspective and potentially identify new ideas that you may not have thought of on your own.
- Think about how you are going to meet people. How are you going to start making that happen? It is not always smart to go to some huge networking event that you can be swallowed up in. That can be frustrating.
- Use eye contact to initiate a conversation and start the process of building a relationship of trust. By giving eye contact with someone else, it is a way of you sounding him or her out, acknowledging their presence and giving them some feedback.
- The central thing when we come into a networking situation is to be interested in the other person. Ask, "How are you?" How has your day been? Not who are you? What job do you have? You are looking to find out about someone as a person, not what they do so that you can pigeonhole them into whatever your stereotype of that particular profession and industry is.
- Reward your connections for any help they give you by giving them updates on how you are doing. Pass on to them any information that may help them with their own challenges. If you pass it on to them, they will go and share it with somebody else. All of this helps to keep the relationship with your connection going.

Eye contact is critical in networking and asking somebody "How are you?" ensures that it is not about you, it is about them. By looking into someone's eyes, you can initiate conversation and start the process of building a strong relationship.

LinkedIn has become important to one's job search. You must make sure that you do not forget about this business-networking tool and your online presence and how you set all of that up effectively. Look at our [125 LinkedIn Job Search Tips](#) eBook for more help on this.

## Networking Action Steps to Try

1. *Read our 135 Networking Career Tips eBook and watch our webinar on Networking for Success*
2. *Quiz yourself on how much know about each of your closest contacts*
3. *Arrange to meet with, call or instant message these contacts*
4. *Ask them about themselves when you meet up*
5. *Ask if there's anything you can do to help them*
6. *Explain to them concisely and clearly what your aim is.*

## CVs and Applications

CVs are still the passports to employment in most people's view. When considering them, the key thing to remember is that less is more. The more you give, the more you give someone an excuse not to hire you.

Its purpose is to provide someone with enough information for him or her to want to interview you. You will not be given a job straight away and it does not require you to inform the reader of everything about you.

Look at your current CV and cut it down to the content that is going to be useful for what you want to do. Leave only the bits from the past that embellish the future – there is no need to rehash your whole work history. Think about the key areas and themes that you want to highlight.

Ideally, your CV should be just one or two pages; anything that is 3 pages or longer is likely hinder your job search (there are exceptions to this – for instance, in academic jobs and in research, where publications are crucial credentials that you need to show). People looking at your CV do not need to know everything about you. They just need the bits that are the most important and the most relevant to them and what they are looking for.

Here are some more practical tips for creating a winning CV:

1. First, think about whom your CV is targeted at. What is the role and who is most likely to end up reading your CV? What is the employer looking for, and who is in charge of the hiring process? The more you can learn about your target, the better you can tailor your CV specifically for them. This is why, in the last few sections, we have talked about doing your research.
2. Think about what is most important to the reader. Is it that you have worked for great brands in the past, or is it the job titles that you have had? Think about what they will find most impressive about you. Make sure that you highlight these really clearly, whether it's your academic background, the companies you've worked for, what you've done specifically for them, the languages you can code in or whatever. Put yourself in the reader's shoes and try to shape your CV according to what matters to those that are hiring you.
3. Keep your CV short and sharp. Put in relevant information only and use it to highlight the best bits of information about you. Do not write an essay. Do not make it wordy or too funky looking. Do not explain everything. Make it a document that causes people to want more.....that will lead them to want to meet you.
4. Think about what you are good at and how you can articulate these things in your CV. Stick with your strengths and build on your strengths rather than dwelling on what you feel you may be lacking. You have some great capability and a lot to offer, so focus on maximising these and making sure that people know what these are.

5. If it has been a while since you last updated your CV, there is a chance that some of the terms you included in it are now defunct, for one reason or another. It may be that an object to which you were referring is no longer in use or perhaps a particular word has taken on a different meaning. Whatever the reason, scan your CV for anachronisms and remove them.
6. Include contact information so that it is easy for people to reach you. If you include an email address, make sure that it looks professional. Nicknames or emails with lots of numbers are not professional or easy to remember and so stay clear of these.
7. You may not have had Twitter or a LinkedIn profile the last time you set eyes on your CV, so add your Twitter handle or LinkedIn URL to make it easier for employers to check out your online personal brand. In some cases, you may not even have had email or a mobile phone when you last updated your CV, so do not forget to include your email address and mobile number. Contact details are most useful at the top of your CV underneath your name. It is clear then where someone interested in you can get hold of you.
8. Break up paragraphs into smaller ones, split any particularly long multiple clause sentences into two or more separate ones and be ruthless in deleting any unnecessary padding or waffling. Make use of bullet points too.
9. Nowadays, most recruitment agencies and employer organisations use a computerized Applicant Tracking System (ATS) to identify any 'keywords' that match the CV to the position. Do some research by looking at several job ads or job specs for the type of role you want, and picking out words common to all of them. Words such as these, which regularly come up in relation to your chosen line of work, are keywords that you should probably be dropping into your CV.
10. Content is not the only thing that is important here - the format and design of a CV can also influence its reader for better or for worse. Does your CV have a good aesthetic look to it – not too crammed with words but not too much white space either? However, the text should not be too small either. As a rule, the font size used should be 12 and each section separated from the previous one with a double line break.
11. The modern labour market is so competitive that many job vacancies get huge numbers of applicants, at every level of job. Employers and recruiters are, therefore, glad for any opportunity to cut down long lists of candidates by being gifted a reason to throw a CV metaphorically straight in the bin. If they suspect that your CV is merely a template that you have

sent to 100 other people, it will probably end up in the trash. Instead of sending exactly the same document to each organisation, you will need to tailor your CV to the specific job that you are applying for each time.

12. You may wish to use a functional, sometimes called a skills-based, CV. A functional CV is one that displays your key skills rather more than employment history.
13. When spellchecking your CV, double check the spellchecker's suggestions. Spellcheckers occasionally scan a particular spelling mistake and suggest a word that has an entirely different meaning to the one you originally intended. Be sure to select the right suggested corrections to avoid embarrassing misunderstandings.
14. Another issue with spellcheck is that it does not always detect all mistakes, whether they are spelling, grammar or syntax errors. Even after you have put your CV through spellcheck, it is worthwhile reading the document yet again to make sure that all typos really have been eliminated.
15. Get someone in the know to 'beta-read' for you. No matter how many times you yourself review your CV, it is always worth getting a second opinion before sending it off, if possible. As opposed to getting an immediate family member or close friend to review it for you, look for someone able to give an opinion characterised by both objectivity and expertise. Perhaps you know someone in the recruitment business or HR sector that would be willing to act as your 'beta-reader'. Alternatively, if you have been working with a career guide or coach as part of your job search strategy, they may well offer a CV reviewing service.

## Common CV Mistakes

There are several common mistakes that people make when creating their CV. We have aggregated 20 things that you can be sure to leave off your CV:

- 'Curriculum Vitae' or 'CV' – It is as unnecessary as putting 'This is a piece of a paper' at the top of a piece of paper.
- The word 'Résumé' – You might think it sounds posh or more international, or even allows you to write a longer CV – but do

not use it unless you are applying for a role in the US.

- Photograph – What you look like has no bearing on how well you can do most jobs (obvious exceptions will be where the job majors on appearance).
- Video – Only create a video CV if you need to and if you can make a professional product
- Current work phone/email address – Provide your personal email and mobile phone number as your contact details. Most times your home address is not relevant
- Date of birth or age – Not relevant; and recruiters do not want to be put in a position of potential age discrimination.
- Nationality – You might be asked your nationality once you have been offered the job (for HR purposes), but it is not needed at this stage of the application process.
- Race or religion – As above, and you are not obliged to reveal this at any stage of the recruitment process.
- Details of your marital status or children – They are hiring you not your entire family.
- Reason for leaving your last company – It looks like you are making excuses.
- List of GCSEs/A Level subjects/degree modules – Unless you are a school leaver or are applying for a graduate role, you should write the number of exams you passed like this: 10 GCSEs; 3 A Levels. Most employers will not understand specific module titles – only include them if they are relevant to the job specification.
- Waffle – Do not waste space with unnecessary or repeated information. To put it another way, it is very easy, indeed too easy, to include sentences or paragraphs that tell the reader or automated computer parsing system, little or nothing of value. One example of such waffle could be: “I am a motivated, outgoing self-starter who is able to work on my own or as part of a team - who is an excellent timekeeper with people skills”. However, there are many others, such as very long sentences or even paragraphs explaining the corporate mission statements of your last three employers, which do get very

boring to read ... you get the point.

- Adjectives – Wherever you can, cut out adjectives. For example: ‘I **conscientiously** and **diligently** managed a **large** and **thriving** customer services team of 25 staff’ – of course you did, and it was!
- The first person – Starting each sentence with ‘I’ looks tacky and self-obsessed.
- The third person - Referring to yourself by name – For example: ‘Joe Bloggs’s last role was at X company.’ There is never a good reason to do this unless you are a Premier League footballer or celebrity.
- Hobbies such as reading, walking or dining out – How do these universal activities make you unique? You might as well write sleeping or breathing.
- ‘References can be provided on request’ – The employer already knows where they can get references; they do not need you to tell them. It looks like you are padding out the content (a bit like I am on these last few on the list).
- LinkedIn recommendations – These are not replacements for traditional references, so do not treat them as such.
- Clipart/borders/illustrations – Keep your CV simple and free of clutter/designs that can distract readers.
- Tables – They might make it easier for you to achieve a layout you think looks good, but they may not display correctly to the recipient; and can make information harder for automated parsing tools to read.

## Creating a Cover Letter

Whenever you apply for a job with your CV, always send an accompanying cover letter.

Know to whom you are addressing the letter. Find out who will be reading the cover letter and what their position within the company is. If you do your research, you can find out what it is that this person might be looking for, where they sit within the organisation and what is important to them. The more you can target your letter towards the receiver the better.

A terrific cover letter can be the difference between securing an interview and being passed over. Take time to draft, re-draft, and fine-tune your cover letter.

Here is a breakdown of what your cover letter might include:

### Introductory Paragraph

In the introduction of your cover letter, your goal is to let your prospective employer know exactly why you are writing. Of course, you are writing for a position. However, you need to get more specific than that to capture your reader's attention. Here are some of the most common reasons a person applies for a particular job:

- 1. Referral** – If a friend, family member, or acquaintance told you about an open position at a particular company, make sure to mention this person by name at the very beginning of your letter. If this individual has a good reputation within the company, you already have a major advantage over others applying for the same position without that contact.
- 2. Job Board** – If you saw an ad for a job position on craigslist or another local classified ad board, state this fact in the first sentence of your introductory paragraph. This way, your reader knows which outreach methods are successfully bringing in applicants. By helping your prospective employer in this manner, you are helping your own application to stand out.
- 3. Company Reputation** – If you are “cold call” applying for a job, begin by stating that this particular company’s reputation precedes it. Say why you are impressed with the company’s products or services and why you had to write and see if they might

have an opening to match your expertise. Flattery is only bad if it is not sincere. If you really do love the company, go ahead and gush a bit. They will like it.

## Two Middle Paragraphs

The actual body of your cover letter should consist of one or two succinct paragraphs. Do not use these precious few sentences to regurgitate information that is already on your resume. Instead, illustrate how your particular skills and experience can benefit the organisation to which you are applying. You can also look at cover letter examples to get a better idea. Here are a few ways to convince your reader effectively to peruse your resume:

- 1. Showcase your talents** – Are you an unusually perceptive researcher or planner? Say so in the body of your cover letter. Can you effectively lead a team or create new systems? Show in a few words how this talent can help you fulfil the vision of the company for which you are applying.
- 2. Show you fit** – A company generally publishes a list of specific qualifications for any position they are attempting to fill. Use a few sentences to show how you are particularly qualified to shine in the specific role you are looking to fill. Certifications, degrees, and specialized experience should be mentioned.
- 3. Short anecdote** – Do you have a personal story that illustrates your ability to execute the skill set required to shine in the position for which you are applying? If so, tell that story in about one to two sentences. Then add another short sentence to drive home how your anecdote proves you are the perfect fit for the company's role.

## Conclusion Paragraph

Use the last paragraph of your cover letter to reiterate your desire for this position. Also, provide a reliable telephone number and email address for contact information, or inform the reader that you will be contacting the company directly in the next few days to speak with a hiring representative.

## Writing an Email Cover Letter

In this digital era, we are asked about email cover letters often. Emails are less formal than a written letter; however, how should one put together an email when applying for a job? There are some overlaps with the traditional written cover letter but there are also subtle differences, since we are looking at a different form of communication.

Set out below are our tips to help you to create your email cover letter:

- At the top of your email, either in the subject box or before you introduce yourself, you should state which job that you're applying for
- You should assume that you have two short paragraphs before you sign off your email. In those two paragraphs, you should aim to answer the questions - who you are and why you are right for this role.
- In the first of these paragraphs, you will need to explain succinctly who you are in terms of what it is that you have done with your life so far. Describe this in a way that positions you well in the reader's mind for the role that they seek to fill. This paragraph is also the place for you to say how delighted you would be to work for this organisation and to be considered as a candidate
- The next paragraph should identify the key contributions that you can make in terms of your skills, qualifications and experience, which make you a great candidate for this job. Keep it tight and do not repeat, where possible, what is coming in the attached CV. At the same time, remember that the reader may not look at the CV at all if they do not think the cover email is interesting enough.
- Be professional and be authentic. Think about why you are right for the role and why you have chosen to apply for this particular job. You want to get across that you have specifically identified this role as being a good fit for you and the organisation, and by putting this in your own words and being authentic about it, your uniqueness will shine through.
- Do you know whom you are contacting? Do you know who will be reading this email and what their position/role is? Just as

with your CV and a traditional cover letter, knowing this can help you to target what you write for them.

- Include an email signature so that they can contact you easily. Your CV should also include your contact details however, making sure that the email also makes it obvious how to get in touch with you is helpful.
- Make sure that you follow instructions and are sending everything as it is required and requested in your email. Check if your CV should be sent as an attachment and if so – if it should be in a particular format e.g. word (check what version) or pdf.
- Simple, clear and concise is better. Do not go crazy with fonts and colours. Keep it simple, easy to read and easy on the eyes. Also, make sure that the font size is good for your reader – so font size 10-12 is optimal and something traditional like Arial, Times Roman or Helvetica are safe options.
- Stay formal. It is an email but do not forget that it is an application for an important job that you want to be taken serious as a candidate for. Start your email with a 'Dear Mr. or Ms. X'. Avoid any abbreviations

## Keeping Applications on Track

Too often, we apply for a job that is not compatible with us and that is impractical. It's not a match made in heaven and it will never be a match made in heaven. The irrational part of us wants to apply for that type of job. We get into the frame of mind where we want any job and any job will do, if we can get it now. The more rational part of our brains knows that we need to spend more time looking in order to find something that is more sustainable.

After all your hard work in preparing yourself for this job search, why would you go and apply for jobs that are not suited to you? Do not be seduced by something that sounds like it is right for you, when it is not. If you find it too easy to choose the wrong options, you may need somebody else, such as a trusted mentor or coach, to reflect your decisions back to you before you go through with the applications.

Here are some tips to keep your job applications on the right track:

- Do your research before you go for a job. Do not just go for any job that you can do in your sleep. Employers will see you as overqualified and will believe that you will get bored if they hire you, resulting in you moving on quickly. This will be the case even if they really like your CV or like you in the interview or whatever. They will think there is no point in investing in you if you are just going to leave soon after starting.
- When you have identified a number of jobs that are worth applying for, start keeping a list of the jobs so can keep track of what you have applying for. Where you can, keep a copy of the application form you filled in. If any of your applications are successful, you can refer back to what you wrote and be well prepared for your interview.
- Be proactive in seeking out opportunities and finding out more about them. If you see a role advertised through a recruitment agency, call the recruiter and sound them out. Ask the basis of their engagement in filling the role the organisation, i.e. are they mandated, if so, jointly or on their own? Recruitment agents can be evasive when challenged for this information sometimes but do not be apologetic about asking for reassurance. It is your CV that you are submitting, and you should know that it is for this role and this role only. If they want to put you up for anything else, ensure they check back with you first.
- Be aware of what is possible for you and what is not. Think about what is right for you but also what is realistic to expect. How adaptable can you be in terms of things like the location of the job? If you are flexible, you are likely to be in a better position to negotiate a deal that will work for everyone.
- Examine the numbers. Know how much you need to earn. Be realistic about how much money you require and then align the figure with your skills, as well as the opportunities that are out there. You will need to make sure you will be comfortable on the salary of any prospective new role. Get to grips with what you can expect and what the best option is for you. If you want to learn about how to negotiate the salary you want when applying for new jobs see our [Get Paid Right, From the Start](#) eBook.
- In terms of getting references, agree with one or two people you know that they will be your referee. Make sure that you use referees who will be useful to you – maybe they know the sector and/or the function. The more relevant they are, the more credence can be given to them by the employing organisation. Never use a referee's name and contact details on an application form without first checking with them.

- After your CV has gone out, send an email or make a call to follow up. Most people do not bother so go that extra mile to stand out or to track their progress.
- If you are applying for several roles with a number of different recruiters, use a spreadsheet to keep track of who is making approaches on your behalf to whom, avoiding the PR disaster of duplication to potential hirers.
- Respond quickly to emails. Someone who does not reply for two or three days may imply that they are less energetic and engaged or not all that interested in the job, she said. Employment experts say it is important to show you are energetic and a quick study, especially if you are a mature job seeker or one who has been out of the workplace for a few years.
- If you have been job searching for a while, take some time out every so often to review and reflect on what you are doing, what has been going well and what you can improve on. If you've been spending endless hours pumping out applications, filling in forms, ringing up agencies and going to interview after interview, a change of pace to evaluate yourself could be greatly beneficial. Analyse the feedback you have been getting and the different methods of approach that you have been taking and adjust your job search strategy so that you are continuously updating and optimising your job search activities.

## Handling the Interview

As we know, an interview is a conversation with a purpose. The conversation happens between at least two people and, in terms of job interviews, the purpose is to match a job with a person to fill it. We often feel the need to focus on visuals and dress beautifully for the occasion but in truth, an interview is more about the value equation. There needs to be a reaction between the value that the employer needs and the individual that has value.

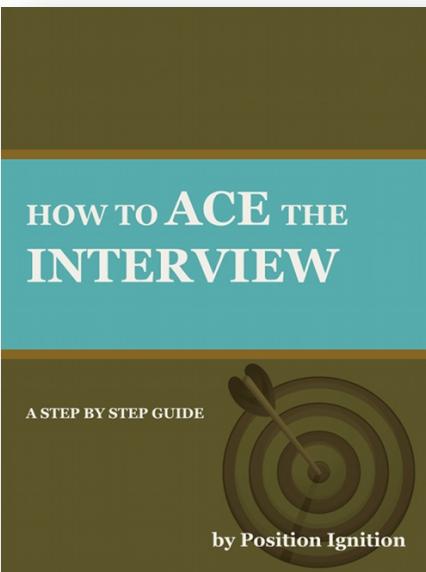
There is a lot to think about when preparing for an interview and so we have created a separate eBook called [How to Ace the Interview](#). Look at this in more detail. Another key component to feeling confident in an interview is the idea of having to sell a recent, but now quite popular concept, of our personal brand and ourselves. We recommend that you look at our [Selling Yourself with Confidence: 100 Tips on Selling You](#) and [125 Personal Branding Tips](#) eBooks to cover these two key areas in more detail.

In general, the outcome that you want from a job interview is the opportunity to have another conversation i.e. to move to the next stage of the interview process. Do not just think about yourself but also the person you are meeting. Knowing about the person who is going to be interviewing you is as important as knowing about the company, as it can help you build a rapport with him or her and understand what they are looking for. Get the interviewer's name from the organization and then have a look at their social media profiles and any press on them.

When at the interview, remember to listen as well as to talk and to express your interest in the role and answer questions. Also, make sure that you have prepared some good questions that show that you really know what you are getting into; about the company culture and that you want to really fit in well there.

You will be expected to have researched the company and to know why you want to work there. We covered some of this in the earlier sections but to summarise, there are a number of ways to research an organization:

- Look at its LinkedIn Company Page. The biggest professional social network in the world is no longer just for individuals. Many organizations now have their own company page on the site, including lists of current employees and recent hires. Have a look at the different job titles of these employees, especially the new hires. This gives you an idea of what the business does and what it needs in its new recruits
- Skim its financial reviews. Most medium to large organizations will have annual financial reports readily available to the public, as this is a sign of accountability and transparency. These yearly financial reviews should have at least a basic breakdown of where the money is being spent and this tells us a lot about the business areas the organisation is looking to build, expand and/or market.
- Check out its competitors. To get an insight into what a business is thinking and what is influencing it; look at how its market competitors are positioned and how they are performing. Private enterprises often respond to and are inspired by what their



rivals are doing. By finding out what is working and what is not for these rivals, you'll be on the same page as your would-be employer, if not one step ahead of them.

- Review its products & services. An organization is largely defined by its products/services if it is a corporate entity or its services if it is in the public or not-for profit. By checking out the employer's most well-known products/services, as well as new and upcoming lines, job candidates can get a feel for the organizational brand and what it's *raison d'être* is.
- Make direct contact. Sometimes the easiest way to find something out about a company is to ask someone there. On the job ad or interview invitation should be a name and a contact number/email address for if you want to discuss the role or interview process in further detail. If not, even phoning up the switchboard and talking to the receptionist can unearth some interesting information.

Something to be aware of in our digital era is that there are now many forms of interviews. They can be:

- Traditional face to face meeting
- Video interview / Skype call / Telephone interview
- Assessment centres with multiple candidates undertaking group exercises, tests, interviews and so on.

Make sure that you know which one of these (or any other), you are about to get involved in so that you can prepare yourself most appropriately for it.

## Job Search Wheel

The job search cycle below outlines the different stages to a job search.

The order of the stages is important. With each step in the cycle, you are building on what you have done in the step before and preparing for the following stage.

Use this ‘wheel’ as a reference to remind yourself what you are trying to achieve and to keep yourself on track.



## Understanding the Wheel

1. Before you start planning your job search, you have to get clear on what you are actually going to be searching for; hence “get clear” is the first step of the cycle.
2. Only once you know what you are aiming towards and planning for can you go on to make a plan.
3. After that, you have to define targeted areas and fields within which to search. If you embark upon a generalised search of nowhere in particular, you will end up looking everywhere without truly *seeing* anything. It is like hearing without actually listening.
4. Once you know what you want and where to look, you can start analysing the role and industry you have decided to break into. This analysis is crucial before you start launching into job applications. Candidates who have genuine comprehension of what they are potentially letting themselves in for—benefits and challenges alike—are able to make intelligent, informed applications.
5. Now, and only now, you are ready to get out there and really start *looking* for that job. When you are looking for something, you ask others if they have seen it. This is what networking is about. Ask the connections closest to you if they have seen what you are looking for, or anything or anyone that can lead you to it. Even if they do not at the moment, they now know what you are looking for and they can keep an eye out themselves. It is like if a friend has lost their dog and asks you if you have seen it. Even if you have not, you will keep a look out for that dog from now on because you care about your friend and their happiness.

6. Of course, CVs and interviews can be crucial to actually getting the job, so make sure these are right. This is when all the other stages you have progressed through can really help you to make the right decisions. You should now know enough to be able to give the relevant information both on your CV and in your interview-no more and no less.
7. Smart job searching is about continuing down your identified track, keeping the focus and ensuring that you continue to work with your targeted strategy and approach. By harnessing your network and staying focused – this has proven to be the most efficient way of job searching for us and so with dedication and commitment, we believe that you will get the job that you want.

These stages are all components of smart job seeking - taking your time, getting clear and getting it right. It can be easier said than done, however, especially if you feel that you are without a support network. The good news is that you might have a support network without even realising it.

Your back-up team can be your family, your current colleagues, your friends or your professional network. There is also nothing wrong with reaching out for additional support. Here at Position Ignition we understand the value of personalised support, which is why we treat each client as an individual, assessing their abilities, needs and desires and tailoring our services to them.

## Common Mistakes to Avoid

The final section in this eBook is a collection of the most common mistakes that people make when job searching. By being aware of these now, you can avoid making the same mistakes that many others will have experienced:

- ***Applying to all the job ads you can find:*** Do not waste time sending out blanket applications when you could be identifying the one specific thing that you are after. Job boards look efficient and are fun but they are not the route that a smart job seeker takes.

- **Doing nothing but applying for jobs:** If you are unemployed while job seeking, that is not an excuse to sit around idly and mope. Do something proactive to develop and grow yourself. When job interviewers ask you want you have been doing while between jobs, you will have a good answer for them.
- **Allowing fear to be too much of a rocket fuel:** Although we can use rocket fuel of this kind to motivate ourselves, we can also misuse it. It can end up with us being too fearful and, as a result, trying to rush the process of finding a new job and going to market too quickly. Rushing will cause us to stumble.
- **Rushing into the first available job:** Do not snap up the first job available if it is not right for you. Of course, we all have bills to pay, but there are other things to consider. Think harder about yourself and whether this role is going to work for you (think about those times when your work has made you frustrated and angry). The second job offer you get may be the one that is right for you, but if you have hastily accepted the first offer, then you have lost out.
- **Being vague about what you are want:** If all you know is that you are after a job, you probably will not get one -- at least not one you will actually enjoy. If you do not identify target areas of opportunity you would like to explore, you will be exploring the career wilderness for a long time.
- **Failing to do the research:** Making a targeting plan or applying for jobs without doing the necessary background research will not get you far. How do you know why you are targeting a particular organisation or sector if you know nothing about it?
- **Neglecting your existing network:** If you spend too much time randomly collecting numbers and business cards, your network can become saturated with contacts who you never actually contact. Instead, focus on strengthening and exploring the relationships within your existing network. The best networkers connect often. They do not need a reason – they just contact someone they know and check how their world is out of genuine concern and curiosity.
- **Lying on your CV:** Be true to who you are and what you have accomplished. Do not lie on your CV. People can usually see through a disingenuous or made up CV. Make sure that you really want this job and that you know you can do it, otherwise it will be very tough to get it. The more authentic you can be in going about your job search, the better chance you will have of succeeding in it.

- **Over relying on your CV to land you a job:** Do not spend all your time, head down, tweaking your CV to perfection when you could be reflecting on what you really want, researching your target area and building relationships with people in your network. Neither should you give your CV out to all and sundry.
- **Saying too much at interview:** An interview is a conversation, an exchange of views. Do not be too dominant in an interview, otherwise you will a) fail to notice what the interviewers are looking for and b) give too much away and potentially jeopardise your chances of getting the role.
- **Going it alone:** If you are going solo and you do not use your support network, do not be surprised if you end up being beaten to jobs in the particular field you are looking for work in.

#### Don't leave it in the hands of others or you'll get déjà vu like Samantha...

Samantha\* had a degree in French literature and was in the middle stage of her life when she realised that she had been spending far too much time doing jobs way below her capabilities. As a student, she did some switchboard work for a while and as a result each time she went to see a recruiter they always placed her in an admin role because for the recruiter, that was an easy fit.

She had placed herself into the hands of recruitment agencies and for years they kept placing her in admin roles because that's what her experience led her into and that's what they could easily sell into an employer. This didn't, however, match Samantha\*'s true capabilities but she had let this happen because it seemed easy and up until now she didn't really know what else was out there for her.

Now she knows that if she takes the time to establish what her career options really are and to understand what she would like to do as a career, she will be able to manoeuvre herself into much more fulfilling roles.

*Note: \*all of our case study examples have been taken from Position Ignition clients. We have changed their names to respect their privacy.*

## What Next?

To help you with your next steps we recommend that you read the following eBooks:

- [\*How to Ace the Interview\*](#)
- [\*125 LinkedIn Job Search Tips\*](#)
- [\*Sell Yourself with Confidence\*](#)
- [\*135 Networking Career Tips\*](#)

We would also like to recommend that you listen to the following webinars that are available now on-demand or through our [Career Ignition Club](#):

- *Igniting Job Searches*
- *Career Options Exploration*
- *Pitching and Packaging Yourself*
- *Dealing with Redundancy*

See: <http://www.positionignition.com/workshops-and-webinars> for our full schedule of live webinars and webinars on-demand

## More Position Ignition eBooks

- [125 Personal Branding Tips](#)
- [Re-Launching Your Career After Redundancy](#)
- [125 Twitter Job Search Tips](#)
- [Get Paid Right, From the Start](#)
- [100 Essential Career Change Tips](#)
- [Make Your Career Change Happen](#)
- [85 Mid-Life Career Change Tips](#)
- [Up Your Game, Up Your Pay](#)
- [Moving into Retirement in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century](#)



## Contact Us

Position Ignition Ltd is one of the UK's leading career consulting and career management companies. Founded in late 2009 by Simon North and Nisa Chitakasem, they have brought together some of the best career guides in the industry, providing much needed high quality career support and guidance to professional working men and women. Position Ignition helps working professionals to identify where they would like to go next, what roles they will find fulfilling and how to go about getting it. Their focus is on helping people to make successful career changes, establish smart job search strategies, find focus and direction in their careers and take control of their own career development.

Position Ignition offers support through [one on one career guiding](#), [career webinars](#), eBooks and through their [Career Ignition Club](#).

They regularly offer expert advice in the media and press including being featured regularly on Guardian Career Clinics and on Forbes. They also offer **a free initial phone consultation** via their website if you would like to find out more or explore how they can help you. Alternatively visit their [www.careerignitionclub.com](http://www.careerignitionclub.com) website to get access to on-going career support or contact us on: [enquiries@positionignition.com](mailto:enquiries@positionignition.com)

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## Recommended Reads:

- [\*\*What colour is your parachute?\*\*](#)
- [\*\*Working Identity: Unconventional strategies for reinventing your career\*\*](#)
- [\*\*Job Hunting 3.0\*\*](#)
- [\*\*You're Hired! Interview Tips and Tricks\*\*](#)
- [\*\*Ultimate Job Search\*\*](#)
- [\*\*Now Discover your Strengths\*\*](#)
- [\*\*Strengthsfinder 2.0\*\*](#)
- [\*\*Great Answers to tough interview questions\*\*](#)
- [\*\*Finding Square Holes – Discover who you really are and find the perfect career\*\*](#)