**Researching the Job Market. Researching Yourself**

Before starting your job search, make sure you have fully assessed your skills and experiences, ensuring they’re a good fit for your target role. You should know exactly what type of roles are suitable, as this will help with the accuracy of your job search. Many people waste hours applying for unsuitable roles and wonder why the don’t get any response from employers or agencies.

Researching the job market will give you a good idea which job roles are suitable to you and what industry sectors you should be aiming for. This research will also outline the trends of the labour market as a whole, giving you an idea of what industries are growing and which are shrinking. This will help you decide which industry you should be investing your time in.

Taking the time to research the industry and the job market can help you tailor your CV and application forms, ensuring they’re a good match for the role you’re applying to. Having strong knowledge of the industry and position will also help you stand out from the crowd and show you have done your homework.

What concerns job applications, the most important factor that ensures your application is considered is that the HR managers receive your application documents in the first place. E-mail application shouldn’t be too big and documents shouldn’t be sent individually or in a confusing jumble. Then comes pre-selection – the process of filtering out the candidates that don’t fulfill the basic criteria, which leaves a group of promising potential candidates.

Your CV and your cover letter are analyzed before and after a job interview, and they should complement each other. The CV should be clearly laid out and not be too lengthy while still containing all the relevant key information. The cover letter should conform to the usual layout criteria and stand out from the other cover letters in terms of content, as well as it should reveal a little of your personality.

After the job interview, you should make a note of the most important issues and then relax. The appraisal and decision will take a few weeks. The successful candidate is always contacted first, and if the chosen one accepts the job, rejection letters are drafted and sent to the other candidates.

However, assessing your strengths and weaknesses as an early researcher can also be the key to your longer-term development. There’s no doubt we should celebrate our strengths more, and acknowledge that if we’re not strong in a particular area, we may never be able to attain the same standards as others in this area. But, on the other hand, it’s worth trying to explore our strengths and weaknesses in different ways as a means of acknowledging some of the possible reasons you don’t excel in an area, while in others you do.

Ask yourself questions like: “What areas are you most inspired by or interested in?”, “What scares you?”. And, finally, ask yourself why and look at possible ways of changing your perceptions of a competency. You may hold a lot of negativity about something, that if you could remove, you might enjoy and be good at.

For example, there’s some focus these days on researchers using social media as a means of reaching out beyond academia. You may not feel like this is something you can do, but if you come at this more broadly and look at different social media tools that suit you and your personality, you might be able to change how you feel about this specific competency. Trying to come at things from a different angle is often refreshing and valuable.

It’s vital not to attach too much negativity to your weaknesses. Through some self-awareness, you should be able to start acknowledging how some of your weaknesses can also be deemed a positive thing. For instance, you may be the type of person who focuses too much on “the detail” of an issue and finds it difficult to draw out the key points, but of course, this could be both a weakness and a strength, depending on the context. Equally, if you’re a passionate spontaneous person, this could be both a positive and negative character trait depending on the context. By being aware of our weaknesses and by re-positioning them we may begin to see that they shouldn’t be always seen in a negative light.