

A guide

A-Z to finding your dream job



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Applying for jobs

Applying for a job can be stressful – after all, there is a lot to consider. Are you ready to move on to a new job because you are looking for a new professional challenge or are you simply lacking motivation or unhappy in your current working environment?

Understanding your reasons for considering moving on will help you to find the right job for you.

If you're ambitious and keen to take the next step up the career ladder, then you may be looking for a more senior role. If you're looking for a change in environment, then you may be looking at moving sideways into a similar role elsewhere.

Once you've found the right job for you, it will be time to start the job application process. There are many different types of application procedures and every prospective employer will have their own preferred methods. Some will rely on traditional CVs and covering letters, whilst others may require you to complete an in-depth application form or even submit a video application.

In recent years, there has been a big change in the ways that candidates have been asked to apply for jobs. Thanks to the development of Applicant Tracking Systems, it is now easier than ever before for candidates to complete online application forms. Not only are they more user-friendly, but they are fully mobile-responsive and automated technologies can keep candidates updated as to the status of their application. This growth in technology is hugely beneficial for job seekers who can start to apply for jobs directly from their phones regardless of where they are in the world, at a time that suits them.

However, it should be noted that the increasing use of technology is having an impact on CVs and covering letters. Many firms which use technology are making the most of automated pre-set filters which can scan CVs and decide which ones should be progressed to the next stage. The automated filters look for specified keywords without an understanding that they could be discounting fantastic candidates who simply haven't adapted their CV to include these words or phrases. We will talk more about the

growing use of keywords later in this guide, but a general rule to follow is to identify what terminology has been used within a job description and to ensure that that these phrases are replicated in your CV and covering letter. Firms which use technology to aid their recruitment practices are broadly speaking more innovative and dynamic than their counterparts. They understand the importance of investing in new technology and adapting their workplaces to the new requirements of Millennial and Gen Z workers. If you are looking for a progressive workplace, then the style and speed of the recruitment process can tell you a lot about the dynamism of the organisation.

Believe in yourself

“Nurture your mind with great thoughts, for you will never go any higher than you think.”

Benjamin Disraeli

There is much to be said about the power of positive thinking and believing in yourself to chase your dreams. Many people remain working in their current roles because they lack the self-belief that they can move into new roles, and experience new professional challenges.

It's important, to be honest with yourself about what you want to achieve in your career, and where you see yourself in 5-10 years. Having a clear vision will allow you to take the necessary steps to make your vision happen. It may be about asking for a promotion, participating in training or even gaining new qualifications. The only thing that is holding you back from achieving your goals is you.

To help push yourself, why not ask a friend or colleague to act as a mentor? Not only would they be able to help you learn new skills, but they can be the person to hold you accountable to your professional targets.

Company culture

In today's working environment, company culture is increasingly important. Job seekers are looking for more than just a salary; they are looking for a company which matches their own personal values and ethics. They

want to become brand ambassadors for their employers, and as such, it's imperative that you consider what is important to you when looking for a new job.

The term “culture fit” has a lot of different meanings... It can be how each employee’s personal set of values, mission, and goals align with the values, mission, and goals of the organization.

Shannon Howard, The Predictive Index

You may be looking for a job which offers flexible working hours or opportunities for remote working. Or maybe you're looking to work for an employer that operates ethical and sustainable policies. If you are working for the right organisation, you'll feel in sync with their culture and, as such, will have a much more enjoyable working experience. According to research from LinkedIn, three-quarters of job seekers research a company's reputation and employer brand before making the decision to apply for a job. This is likely to increase as Generation Z enters the workforce and Millennials advance along the career ladder; shaping the ways that companies operate. These generations are keen to make an impact upon the world, and it is thought that they will drive forward new policies such as time-tracking, better communication, improved integrity, remote working and greater autonomy for all employees.

If the company culture is important to you, make sure that you do your due diligence prior to applying. You can find out a lot about a company through their website, their CSR reports (if they have one), their social media and even through searches on local newspaper websites.

Alternatively, if you're applying for one of the vacancies offered by Allen Associates, make sure you speak to a member of our team. We can provide more detail and information about the company to help you decide if it's the right move for you.

Dress code for interviews

Once you're invited to attend an interview it may be tempting to hit the shops for a new outfit, but you need to consider what impression you wish to project. First impressions do matter. Psychology suggests that it takes just seven seconds to form an initial impression of someone, so you may wish to consider how your outfit impacts upon this impression. As a matter of course, we would always recommend sticking to a formal dress code – even if the office staff is wearing jeans or casual clothing, you want to show that you've tried.

For men, this may mean a shirt and tie, whilst ladies may wish to wear a tailored outfit – perhaps some smart trousers and a shirt, or a tailored dress. Attention to detail is crucial – so avoid anything which is heavily wrinkled and invest in some shoe polish to cover up any scuffs or other unsightly marks.

You may also wish to consider power dressing. This is where you use psychological tricks to portray an impression through your use of colour.

- **Black is an authority colour.** If you're aiming for a senior management position, then it's a good choice to make. It shows that you're serious but it's also a confident colour.
- **Blue is for control.** Blue is a fantastic choice for job interviews because psychologically speaking, blue represents calmness, stability, trust-worthy, truth and honesty.
- **Grey shows sophistication.** Grey is one of the most popular colours for interviews because it's not distracting. Interviewers can focus on what you're saying without being distracted by that geometric print or crazy outfit.
- **Red is the ultimate power colour.** As colours go, red is always a bold choice. Whilst it suggests assertive, confident and bold, it could reflect negatively in the interviewer's eyes as it may portray an image of power or aggression. However, it can make a fantastic accent colour.
- **White is always precise.** White shirts and blouses may conjure up images of school uniforms, but they are always a safe colour to wear in interviews because it suggests precision, cleanliness, and simplicity. It's not distracting and can be used to tone down any other colours that you choose to wear.

Expectations

During the job application process, you need to be clear about your expectations. What salary are you looking to achieve? How many hours do you want to work? Are you happier to accept a lower-paid position in exchange for a fantastic working environment? Do you require remote working or flexible hours?

Once you're clear on what you are looking for, you then need to determine if this matches up with the employer's expectations. This is where we'd always recommend reading the job advert carefully and establishing if you're clear on what they are looking for.

Expectations can be tricky, and one of the benefits of working with Allen Associates is that our recruitment consultants can help both parties set their expectations. You can ask any questions about the organisation prior to applying and feel confident that you're aware of what to expect.

Feedback

The most successful job seekers ask for feedback and act upon it. They use constructive criticism to improve their approach and transform themselves into stronger candidates.

You should be continually asking for feedback at every stage of your job search – from the initial CV and cover letter writing stages through to the interview stage. When you're writing your CV, ask a trusted colleague, mentor or family member to review it for you. They may spot areas which could need improving or make suggestions for new skills/attributes which you should be mentioning.

Following an interview, do not be afraid to ask for feedback, particularly if you have been unsuccessful.

As experienced recruiters, we know how important feedback is and we've seen every scenario you can imagine. We work closely with our candidates to share any feedback that we've received, and we help them take practical steps to overcome any criticisms to improve their interview performance.

Generational differences

In 2019, the workplace may be employing up to five different generations of workers; and each one will have its own way of working and expectations when it comes to job seeking.

These five generations can be defined as:

Traditionalists (born 1928 – 1944)

The children of the great depression. They have grown up in tough economic times and value hard work. They believe in jobs for life.

Baby boomers (born 1945 – 1964)

This generation was born post World War II and grew

up during a time of economic growth and prosperity. They are highly driven and focus on building strong careers.

Generation X (born 1965 – 1979)

The first generation who have had true exposure to technology in the workplace.

Millennials (born 1980 – 1995)

Millennials have been impacted by the technology revolution. They are resilient and want to work in an environment where differences are valued.

Generation Z (born 1996 onwards)

The first true digital natives having grown up with the influences of technology and social media.

(Source: Asb Law)

Today, each generation will have their own preferences for how to find a new job. Millennials and Gen Z may be used to searching online, and making the most of social media opportunities, whilst Gen X and Baby Boomers may spend more time on taking a personal approach to recruitment.

Each generation wants something different from their career. Younger workers may be looking to make an immediate 'splash' in their role. Millennial and Gen Z workers are known for continually looking to take advantage of new opportunities. Therefore, they are likely to respond to job adverts which mention the words 'career progression' or 'training and development'. They want to work for companies which match up to their own personal ethics and moral code, and they will pay close attention to firms which have strong diversity and inclusion policies.

In contrast, the older workers (generation X and baby boomers) are looking for senior positions which reflect their level of authority and expertise. They aren't necessarily concerned by career progression although they are keen to continually improve existing skills and adapt to new technologies. This generation is more concerned with flexibility. They may be looking for reduced hours as they start winding down towards retirement, or they may be simply looking for opportunities which offer them a strong work/life balance. They know the value that they bring to the workplace and are more suited to roles which place emphasis upon "cohesive working" and "teamwork".

Handing in your notice

It's always important to resign amicably. No one wants to leave a position under a cloud; not only do you never know what the future could bring, but you also want to start your new job feeling positive and confident.

Handing in your notice can be an emotional moment, particularly if you have been a longstanding employee who has risen through the ranks. But there are practical ways to ensure that the process is as smooth as possible.

We always recommend resigning in person during a confidential meeting with your line manager. This will give you the opportunity to explain your reasoning and talk through any issues face-to-face. Following this meeting, you may need to provide a formal resignation letter signalling your intent to leave which will be used by your HR department to start the resignation process.

To ensure an amicable departure, make sure that you have a positive handover with co-workers prior to your final day. They will need to be aware of what work you've been doing and the status of any active projects to ensure a smooth transition.

Interviews

Interviews are your first opportunity to 'sell yourself' in person to the hiring managers. They'll already be aware of your reasons why you think you are a good candidate thanks to your covering letter, and your CV will have detailed your career history/experience.

During your interview preparation, you may want to start considering what you are likely to be asked. Undoubtedly, you'll be questioned on your strengths and perceived weaknesses as well as any pivotal moments from your career. This is an opportunity for you to really explain what sets you apart from other candidates and discuss your experience.

Hiring managers are looking for someone who is the best fit, not necessarily the person with the right attributes on paper. If you feel that you are lacking in experience in certain areas, then be honest about it – explain how you plan to gain experience or ask them if they have any training opportunities in place to help you develop these skills.

It's important to consider interviews as a two-way process. Your interview is a chance for the employer to learn more about you and vice versa.

If you have questions that you'd like to ask about the company and the job role itself, this is your chance.

At Allen Associates, we work hard to help our candidates prepare for interviews. We do what we can to help them practice interview questions and give them confidence. If you would like any interview support then please get in touch with one of our consultants, who will be happy to help.

Job seekers rights

When you are actively applying for job roles, it's always wise to be aware of the legislation regarding job seekers rights. Whilst every employer wants to hire the most appropriate candidate for the role, it's important that they do not discriminate on the grounds of gender, age, disability, or sexuality.

Knowing your rights isn't just about discriminatory practices. It's about understanding what a prospective job offers entails. Are you confident that you know the difference between a 'conditional' and an 'unconditional' job offer? Do you know what the terms and conditions of your contract mean? Are you aware of your holiday entitlement? Have you been informed of your rights regarding overtime? Have you been offered the opportunity to join a workplace pension?

As you can see, there is a lot to consider so we would always recommend visiting the various information sections listed on gov.uk

Keyword research

As technology starts to become increasingly important within recruitment practices, it's wise to start considering what keywords you should be using within your CV and covering letter.

Many organisations have invested in dedicated Applicant Tracking Systems which allow them to use automation and artificial intelligence to help them screen job applications. This means that they use pre-set filters which automatically scan documents for specific words or phrasing. The CVs which do not mention these words are at risk of being discounted.

To find what keywords you should include, make sure you read the job adverts and descriptions carefully. If the advert has used a specific piece of jargon, then make sure you replicate the phrasing within your CV – it's likely that it will be one of the pre-determined automated filters. For example, if you're applying for a marketing position,

you may wish to use the phrases “content marketing” or “communication strategies” or “stakeholder relations” within your CV. Likewise, those applying for finance roles may wish to use keywords such as “payroll administration”, “financial reporting” or “accountancy support”.

Of course, when you are updating your CV, you should always ensure that it’s tailored to that specific job advert and that any keywords make grammatical sense!

If you’d like some advice about how to incorporate keywords into your CV and covering letter, please get in touch with one of our consultants. We’ll be able to work with you to adjust your CV so that it is picked up by these new systems.

Learning from your mistakes

As we’ve already mentioned when discussing the importance of feedback, it’s always wise to learn from your mistakes. Not only will this give you more confidence for future job searches, but you’ll be a much stronger candidate for it.

Today’s job market is competitive and Candidates can be discounted for reasons as basic as having typos/ grammatical errors in their CVs through to giving a poor first impression.

Common mistakes within the job application process include:

- Dressing inappropriately for the job interview
- Embellishing your qualifications/experience
- Not having a reference
- Not knowing anything about the job role or the company
- Not playing to your strengths
- Poor online presence
- Poorly written CVs and covering letters

If you are struggling in your job hunt, then speak to an experienced recruitment consultant. They’ll be available to offer advice and guidance through every stage of the application process, offering practical tips and advice to help you boost your confidence.

Alternatively, why not conduct a personal SWOT analysis on yourself. Being honest about your Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats will enable you to see which areas you need to improve upon. You may find that conducting a small analysis post-interview may be beneficial. Jot down some notes about which questions

were easy to answer and which ones were harder. You can refer to these notes ahead of your next interview, which will allow you to learn from your answers and improve your weaker areas.

Making the most of your cover letter

If a CV is about demonstrating to a hiring manager that you have the right qualifications, a covering letter is about explaining why you would be the right person. Your covering letter should emphasize why the company should hire you and what you can do for the company. It should be completely tailored to the job description – each covering letter should be written individually and should be concise.

Prior to writing your letter, you should do your research. You need to be completely clear about who the company is and what type of employee they are looking for. Once you’re confident you know who they are looking for, you can write your letter accordingly.

There are no right or wrong ways of writing a cover letter but, you can’t go wrong with the following structure

- Address the letter to the hiring manager
- Introduce yourself / explain why you are getting in touch
- State why you are suitable for the job role
- Detail what you can do for the company / what your accomplishments are
- Direct them to review your CV or request a personal meeting

Before you submit your covering letter and CV, make sure that it is clear of any grammatical errors or typos.

At Allen Associates, we’re always available to act as a fresh pair of eyes to read through your cover letter and ensure that it’s going to catch the eye of a hiring manager.

Negotiations

“Let us never negotiate out of fear. But let us never fear to negotiate.”

John F. Kennedy

Once you’ve been offered a job, you may need to negotiate your employment package. This is something that many people feel uncomfortable with; after all, it’s not in the British nature to haggle.

However, starting off on the right salary is an important component in helping you to feel happy and confident in the workplace.

Employers will likely expect you to negotiate their initial offer so don't be put off from asking for what you think that you are worth. Negotiations aren't just about asking for a monetary value. It's about prioritising what's important to you. Do you want to have confirmation that you can work flexible hours on certain days? Do you want your employer to pay for any professional memberships or subscriptions on your behalf? Are you looking for a guarantee of any decision-making processes or level of authority?

Once you're confident you know what you're looking for, you can start to negotiate terms of employment. Don't just look at the 'here and now' – take a long term view to your negotiations. You may be happy with a set salary, but will you still be happy on that package in two or three years time? Be prepared to ask for more with the expectation to compromise in the middle. It's also fine to ask for time to consider any offer before accepting.

O **online presence** The online world has opened more opportunities than ever before to job seekers. We now work in a candidate-driven environment, where job seekers are in control over how and when they are likely to apply for a position.

But managing your online presence isn't just about finding the right job. It's about what a prospective employer can see when they search for you. A 2018 survey from CareerBuilder suggested that 70% of employers use social media to screen candidates during the hiring process. Worryingly, the report showed that 57% of those who do use social media searches had found content which caused them to reconsider hiring that person.

Employers know that most people are extremely active online, so it's easy for them to conduct swift background checks prior to offering any job positions. Candidates should be aware of this and take steps to improve their digital footprints to enhance their employability.

- **LinkedIn.** When starting your job hunt, the first thing you should do is to update your LinkedIn profile so that it adequately reflects your skills and expertise. Join in with conversations relating to your industry/sector and start connecting with key influencers. You may find that

making use of LinkedIn's "Publish Article" feature may get yourself known – it's an opportunity to share your thoughts/opinions and showcase your knowledge.

- **Twitter.** You may think that your personal Twitter account is nothing to do with your professional life, but you'll be surprised how easy it can be for hiring managers to find your account, even if it's not connected to your name. For most people, their Twitter account won't be a cause for alarm but if you've written any inflammatory statements or retweeted or liked any controversial posts, it could cause a new employer to think twice. On a positive note, if an employer is seeing that you are regularly commenting on topical issues and generating positive engagement, they will be likely to see you as an asset and will be more likely to hire you – particularly if you're applying for a marketing position.
- **Facebook.** A lot of employers are actively using Facebook to enhance their recruitment strategies, and this is allowing them to connect in a more informal setting with prospective hires. If you are connecting online with someone from a new company think about what your profile says about you. You may wish to check your privacy settings – not only should you have your profile set to private to protect yourself from potential hackers (who can instantly see your date of birth, your mother's maiden name and what school you attended) but you can set it up to only allow friends to post to your timeline or tag you in photos with your approval.
- **Instagram.** This is the account where most people are likely to become unstuck – particularly the younger generations who may be keen to get as many 'likes' as possible. It may be tempting to post photos with friends when you are in a bar or pose for bikini photos around the pool when you're on holiday but if your account is set to open (which many are) then anyone can see what photos you are uploading. If you wish to keep an element of privacy, then you should apply the highest privacy settings to your account.

This guidance isn't just for job seekers; it's for anyone employed by an organisation. If it is clear who you work for on your profile, then you will need to reflect that organisation's brand values. CareerBuilder discovered that 48% of employers have used social media to check on existing staff members and a third have found content online that caused them to reprimand or fire an employee.

The overall message here is to ensure that your online presence reflects you both personally and professionally. You should only ever post content which you happy for your employer to see.

Psychological tricks

P If you suffer from nerves, then you could benefit from using some psychological tips to get you through the interview process. Using simple techniques could give you more confidence and help you ‘sell’ yourself to the best of your ability.

Practical tips to make you seem confident include mirroring a hiring manager’s body language, giving a firm handshake or maintaining eye contact. You could also repeat an interviewer’s name when answering a question. It shows that you’ve listened to what they’ve asked, and it helps to strengthen the conversation.

You can even go one step further and tailor your answers depending upon the interviewer’s age. According to authors John B. Molidor, Ph.D., and Barbara Parus, there is a distinct generational difference when it comes to interviewing panels. In their book *Crazy Good Interviewing*, they surmise that:

- **Millennial interviewers (between 20 and 30):** They are looking for visual aids and examples of your work. In today’s multi-tasking world, they’ll be looking to see how you handle multiple projects simultaneously
- **Generation X interviewers (between 30 and 50):** These will be looking to see how creative you are and for details on how you manage a work/life balance.
- **Baby Boomer interviewers (between 50 and 70):** They aren’t impressed by ‘gimmicks’ and will be looking for hard workers who respect that they’ve achieved.

Qualifications

Q The first thing that you will need to ask yourself when viewing a job advert is “do I have the right qualifications and/or experience?”. For some job roles (such as accountancy) you will need to have a set qualification to be able to apply, but for other types of job role, it may be about experience and transferrable skills.

Capability vs qualifications is a big topic, and it can be a leading cause of the growing gender pay gap. Research from Hewlett Packard showed that “Men apply for a job when they have 60% of the listed job attributes, whilst women wait until they have 100%”. If we took this as gospel, it shows that women need to gain confidence and

trust their capabilities to do new job roles.

You may wish to consider boosting your CV with relevant attributes which you may have picked up elsewhere. For instance, have you undertaken any volunteering roles? Can you speak a different language? Can you show how your hobbies and wider interests have given you different skills which you can use in the workplace?

References

R If you have been offered a conditional job offer, your success may depend upon the quality of your referees. It may sound tempting to simply ask a friend to act on your behalf, but a good referee needs to be someone who has worked with you in a professional capacity and understands your strengths and weaknesses.

Some reference requests may simply be a confirmation of employment dates, whilst other requests may be a comprehensive application form. Every employer will have their own way of checking references.

Your reference should accurately reflect your time at an organisation. This means that if you have been subjected to any disciplinary proceedings, it may be included if the information remains factual and accurate. Once you have started a new employment contract, you do have the right to request to view your reference. If you feel that you have been given an unfair or misleading reference, you may be entitled to financial damages, particularly if a job offer has been withdrawn as a result.

Salary expectations

S Many people choose to move to a new job as a result of salary expectations. Whilst the money can be a significant factor in the decision-making process, it’s important to consider whether your expectations are in line with the prospective employer.

Before accepting an offer, make sure you consider how the new salary compares to your existing package. Whilst you may have been given an increase, is it truly comparable? You may wish to consider whether it includes bonuses or a commission structure? Are there any tax implications if you’ve moved into a new tax bracket? Will your working hours remain the same – if they are long hours, are you financially compensated for it? Will increased commuting distances have an impact on your disposable income?

Many job adverts may have a salary bracket included to set expectations. If you feel that your experience should be closer to the higher amount stated, be prepared to negotiate your offer. Do your research before any negotiations.

Consider what the current market rate is for a similar role, and pay attention to the prospective employers Gender Pay Gap report (if they have one) to make sure that any offer is comparable to other colleagues of similar experience.

Part of our role as recruitment experts is to match the salary expectations of both our clients and our candidates. We can work with you to find out what you feel that you are worth and match you with the right role which meets these expectations.

Transferrable skills

A transferrable skill is a talent or attribute which can follow you around in different settings.

That may be a new job role, a career change or even something which you can use as part of a hobby or interest. Its flexibility can be the difference between success or failure.

Broadly speaking, transferrable skills are based upon six different categories

- **Basic** (e.g. listening, communication, public speaking)
- **People** (e.g. negotiation, delegation, motivation, collaboration)
- **Management** (e.g. financial management, team leadership, evaluations)
- **Administrative** (e.g. minute taking, managing spreadsheets, word processing)
- **Research and Planning** (e.g. problem solving, critical thinking, time management)
- **IT and technical skills** (e.g. ability to install new software, trouble-shooting IT issues)

You should subtly reference any of these skills within your CV to highlight to hiring managers of your capabilities to manage the job role effectively. Try to demonstrate examples which are relevant to the business, taking care to replicate the terminology used within the job description.

For example; avoid writing “I have great communication and listening skills”. Instead, consider replacing it with “I have

enhanced my communication skills by working closely with both colleagues and customers. Understanding their needs has allowed me to take on board their feedback to identify solutions to their issues.” As you can see, there is a big difference in the way it’s presented – the second sentence allows a prospective employer to learn more about who you are and the way that you work.

Understand the job role

Although it’s good to push yourself to apply for new challenges, you need to feel confident that you understand what the job role entails. The last thing you want to do is show your confusion in an interview setting. Look up the role and the company, and research what other companies offer in similar roles. You’ll quickly start to understand more about what will be expected from you if you are offered the position.

If you are unsure what specific terminology means, or you’re unsure of the wider picture, use it as an opportunity to speak with one of our recruitment consultants. We’ll be able to answer any specific questions about that job position and help you clarify if it’s the right match for you and your skills.

Visualisation techniques

“Create the highest, grandest vision possible for your life, because you become what you believe.”

Oprah Winfrey

Visualisation techniques have long been used by sports stars to give themselves a competitive edge. Athletes such as Dame Jessica Ennis-Hill, Jonny Wilkinson and Wayne Rooney have openly spoken of their use of visualisation techniques to help them prepare for success and there is much we can learn from this in a business context.

Visualisation is not just about winning; it’s about having clarity of where you want to go and how you want to get there. Gaining mental confidence is a way of encouraging you to aim further and push yourself to achieve things that you previously felt were out of reach. There are two types of visual simulation; outcome and process. Outcome techniques allow you to visualise your destination (perhaps a specific career target) whilst process-driven techniques allow you to visualise how you want to get there.

Next time you are nervous ahead of an interview, why not try the following technique?

1. Identify the situation
2. Consider which parts of the interview may be difficult to overcome
3. Prepare your answers and consider how you will respond to any tricky questions
4. Close your eyes and visualise yourself in the interview room answering each question to the best of your ability

Writing a great CV

Writing a great CV is an unappreciated skill. After all, you need to sell into a prospective employer who you are and what makes you a standout candidate whilst treading the fine balance between giving enough information and remaining concise.

Hiring managers may view hundreds of CVs every day so you may have mere moments for your CV to be scanned before it's moved to the "yes" or "no" pile. When writing your CV, you need to focus on your professional history, your skills, and your achievements. It should be directly relevant to the job description because the recruiter wants to know how your skills match their needs.

Broadly speaking, your CV should ideally be no longer than two pages and your experience should be listed in chronological order (most recent first). Use bullet points or lists to highlight your relevant responsibilities and achievements in each role and try to show any outcomes where possible. This will demonstrate your ability and set you apart from other CVs.

Don't forget to include your qualifications and list any training courses that you've participated in, or professional memberships. It's also hugely beneficial to share any softer skills that you may have – if you speak a different language or you can understand sign language then make sure it's noted. You'll be surprised how often they can be considered valuable assets.

If you need advice on how to strengthen your CV, our recruitment consultants are experts at helping you to highlight your skills and expertise. They'll be able to offer constructive feedback to allow you to tailor your CV to show your strengths effectively.

X-factor

Employers are looking for candidates who have that certain "je ne sais quoi". They want to find a stand-out employee who will really give them the 'wow' factor. With each job role receiving hundreds of applications, it's increasingly difficult to stand apart from others to get yourself noticed.

In creative industries such as marketing and public relations, you can afford to take a few chances with your CV and covering letter. Creating a video CV or an online portfolio may make you more memorable but in more traditional sectors such as finance or HR, you may prefer to stick to the standard template.

If you are sticking with a traditional format, think of the different ways that you can still make yourself memorable. This is where your personal profile can really shine. It's your opportunity to showcase your personality. You want to show that you're highly experienced and capable, but you also need to show that you are a person with outside interests. Perhaps you spend your weekends competing in "Tough Mudder" events or you have a season ticket for your local football club. Maybe you volunteer for a local charity or you speak a variety of languages – whatever the case, make sure you mention it.

You'll be surprised how simple statements can really help you to stand out from the crowd and help the hiring manager to see the person behind the CV.

You've succeeded!

Congratulations! You've got the job! It's the phrase that every job seeker wants to hear, and it shows that you've paid attention to our hints and tips for how to make the most of your job search.

Once you've signed your agreed contract, there are a few considerations to think about ahead of your first day.

- **Confirming your new start date.** Once you've handed in your official resignation, you will need to confirm your final working day. Many people like to take a few days as a holiday between jobs – this is a great way to reset yourself and recharge your batteries before starting a new job. However, you may need to consider if you can afford to take a few days break – after all if it's between employment contracts it will be an unpaid break. If you can afford it, then enjoy it – after all, it's your time to sit back, relax and reflect upon your success!

- **Prepare yourself mentally.** Ahead of your first day, you may wish to conduct a second search into your new employer. When undertaking your interview preparation, your research will likely have focused on the company – who they are, and what they do. It's now time to investigate what the company's working culture is like. Do you know what the working hours will be? Are you confident that you know how you're going to get there on your first day? Will there be parking nearby or if you're commuting via train/bus, do the times match up? You may even wish to do a practice run ahead of time to avoid any last-minute flusters.
- **Research your new job role.** Even if it's a similar role to your previous job, it may be beneficial to spend some time researching typical roles and responsibilities. Every company operates differently, and what may be standard practice in one firm, may be completely different in another. Make sure you are reacquainted with the job description so you know what to expect from the role, and that you are confident that you know what your new employer will expect from you.
- **First day jitters.** Walking into a new office for the first time is daunting – there's much to consider; after all, you'll need to be shown where the kitchen is, where the toilets are and even where to hang your coat. You may find that you'll be walking into a tight-knit group of co-workers who may have known each other for a long time. Your new colleagues will be equally anxious to make a good impression on you, so try to walk in with a big smile and initiate conversations with people. If you show that you're warm and approachable, you can't fail to make a good first impression.
- **Don't forget your documents.** If you haven't completed any of the onboarding processes prior to your first day, then make sure you take copies of your national insurance number, passport and driving licence ready to hand into your new HR department. Your first day will likely be spent primarily sorting out paperwork and reading induction manuals. The quicker you can complete your induction, the faster you can get stuck into your new role.
- **Updating your LinkedIn profile.** It may seem tempting to update your LinkedIn status announcing that you've been offered a new role, but you should remember that you are still under contract to your previous employer until the moment you walk out of the door on your final day. Of course, you can continue to update your profile to showcase your skills and experience, but make sure that any new job title change is only reflected after you've completed your first day.

Zest

Job hunting can be a lengthy process and it can be demoralising, especially if you haven't been successful. But it's important to retain your zest and your enthusiasm.

Employers are more likely to hire someone who clearly shows passion and excitement for what they do.

To ensure that you're projecting an enthusiastic image, consider your body language during any interviews or face-to-face meetings with any representative from other companies. Always maintain eye contact, give a warm smile, a strong handshake and avoid slouching.

We hope that you have found this A-Z guide to finding your dream job useful. We're sure you'll agree that there's plenty of top tips and advice here that you can implement to transform your job searches.

At Allen Associates, our dedicated team is here to help you through every step of the process. If you'd like to find out more about the support that we can offer our candidates, please contact our Oxford or London offices.

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