



Job Hunting Guide



A guide to getting your next job



Aims

This workbook aims to guide you through the job hunting process from finding a job opportunity, through applying and getting an interview, to what to do after the interview.

We hope that by completing the exercises in this workbook and following the practical advice, you will improve the standard of your job applications, letters and CV. In addition, we hope to help you improve your self confidence and performance in interviews so that you have the best chance to secure your next job.

The guide can help anyone looking for jobs at all levels. It's up to you to select the areas where you need the most help or which are most relevant to your situation.

If you have any questions or require further guidance please contact your A4e advisor.

Good luck with your job hunting!



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1. Introduction

Often people struggle to know where to start when looking for a new job and find it very difficult to sell their own skills. We aim to help you get started by looking at how to ensure you are ready and prepared for the job market.

We'll ask you to make an honest assessment of your own skills, working preferences and personal preferences. Don't under or over value yourself during this process.

The workbook will provide you with assistance in how to write a CV that stands out from the crowd, complete job application forms and write an effective covering letter. You don't get a second chance to make a good first impression, so it's crucial that you get these written documents right.

Open your mind to the many ways in which you can find your next job. Did you know that only a portion of vacant jobs can be found advertised in a newspaper or on the internet? So where do you find the rest?

Finally we'll explore how to approach the interview process for successful results, including how to prepare, attend and reflect on the experience. This will help you make the most of your experience and maximise your chances of securing your next job.



2. **Assessing your skills: what have you got to offer?**

Knowing what you do well is essential, whether you are looking for a similar job or something new. Once you know exactly what you've got to offer, you'll find it much easier to sell yourself to prospective employers.

Knowing your strengths will also assist you to identify:

- What your options are
- What kind of roles will suit you
- Which opportunities are a good match for your skills
- Where you might need further development

Use the exercise overleaf to help you look at your achievements and skills. You should reflect on the following:

Your career

Look back over your career. What have you done that:

- No one else had done?
- Made a difference?
- You were proud of?
- Was a major challenge or success?

Think about feedback you've had

- What do other people say you're good at?
- What do they often ask you to do?
- Look at your performance reviews

Activities outside work

- What are your activities and interests outside work?
- What skills do they require?
- What are you good at and what skills do you enjoy using?
- Have these skills helped you at work?

Complete the worksheets overleaf to help you make a structured assessment of the experience and skills you've got to offer.



Reviewing your personal strengths and key attributes

1. What words would you use to describe yourself at work?

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-
-
-
-
-
-

2. What would others say about you? (Performance review feedback, the views of your co-workers or direct staff?)

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-
-
-

3. Summarise your top 3 strengths:

-
-
-

4. What is the one thing you need to improve about you?

-



Reviewing your skills, knowledge and experience

1. Work experience

List the time you've spent in different roles (advisor, coach, exec, supervisor, manager?)

-
-
-
-

List the different businesses you've worked in (hospitality, retail, construction etc.)

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-
-

2. Work projects

List the key work projects you've been involved in (what was achieved? Quantify the outcomes and benefits if possible)

-
-
-
-

3. Special aptitudes (list your unique skills, key knowledge, personal contribution)

-
-
-

4. Qualifications (list your certificates, NVQs, degrees, courses attended)

-
-
-
-

5. Outside interests (list any interests – particularly those involving organizing, planning and team working skills)

-
-



3. Employment Options

It's worth taking some time to consider the options available to you before you create a CV. You might discover that you want to consider part-time work, self-employment or even a mix of roles. This outline guide gives you a flavour of your options; you may wish to do additional research.

The different options are:

- Permanent roles
- Contract roles (temporary work or fixed term contract)
- Self employment (consultancy, interim roles, setting up your own business, running a franchise)
- Mixed roles (several part time roles, sometimes combined with self-employment or voluntary work)
- Working abroad
- Alternative lifestyles (retirement, voluntary work, charity work)

Permanent Roles

Nearly all of us have a permanent job at some point. If this is your option things should be pretty straight forward.

Some employers now offer more flexible working (location, hours) or pick and mix reward packages. Not everywhere offers them but it's worth finding out what's typical in the market place before starting your search.

Advantages	Disadvantages
<i>Security</i> <i>Stability</i> <i>A clear role, working patterns and benefits</i>	<i>Possible lack of variety</i> <i>Possible lack of flexibility</i>



Contract roles

Contract work has expanded in recent years. Many people now work on short-term contracts and even hold roles for 2-3 years with the option to renew.

Most contract roles are found through agencies or recruitment consultants. Sometimes the contract is between you and the agency, other times it's directly with the employer. Always check your contract carefully. You may need to consider the time and finances necessary to allow yourself time to find your next contract.

<p>Advantages <i>Variety</i> <i>Scope for a more flexible working pattern</i></p>	<p>Disadvantages <i>Hard to achieve continuous employment</i> <i>Might not offer same benefits package</i> <i>Irregular income</i></p>
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Self-employment

There are many different ways to run your own business, and all carry risks. If you are thinking of this route, you must think hard about what it would mean to you, your family and your lifestyle.

Ask yourself honestly if you have the skills and qualities to succeed and whether you'd actually enjoy making a success of self employment. Here are the different ways of running your own business:

- Consultancy
- Interim management
- Starting a new business
- Buying an existing business
- Franchise

<p>Advantages <i>Independence</i> <i>Job satisfaction</i> <i>Possibility of more money</i> <i>Flexibility of working patterns</i></p>	<p>Disadvantages <i>Loss of security</i> <i>No predictable income or working hours</i> <i>Loss of other benefits</i> <i>No pension, legal rights or paid holiday</i> <i>Have to organize own work, no delegation.</i></p>
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Mixed roles

This is a simple combination of different roles such as part-time positions, self employment or voluntary work. They take as much planning and preparation as conventional careers and demand good organisational skills.

Advantages <i>Flexibility</i> <i>Variety of working patterns</i> <i>A chance to apply a wide range of skills</i>	Disadvantages <i>Possible irregular income</i> <i>Possible lack of security</i> <i>Possible loss of employee rights</i>
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Working abroad

Greater mobility has meant that a growing number of people want to work abroad. Some people see an overseas assignment as part of their long-term career development; others are looking for the chance to add new experiences to their life and career.

Making it a success takes adaptability, resourcefulness, good communication skills, open mindedness, good health and tolerance. If you are considering working abroad you need to do plenty of research into the culture and lifestyle and seek professional advice, especially about contracts, finances and tax.

Advantages <i>Variety</i> <i>Challenge and new opportunities</i> <i>Lifestyle change</i> <i>Personal growth</i>	Disadvantages <i>New terms and conditions</i> <i>Upheaval of social and work contacts</i> <i>Adjusting to returning home and re-learning and establishing your career and social life</i>
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Alternative lifestyle

Many people use a change in circumstances as a chance to make a complete change in lifestyle. They might realize a long-held dream, take early retirement or pursue voluntary or charity work. The focus is usually the desire for a new challenge and satisfaction, not necessarily income.

Advantages <i>Challenge</i> <i>Personal reward and satisfaction</i> <i>Freedom</i> <i>Independence</i> <i>Opportunity for growth</i>	Disadvantages <i>May take time to achieve</i> <i>Lower financial rewards</i> <i>Possible lack of opportunity to use or develop professional skills</i> <i>Possible loss of status</i>
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4. The job market: routes to the market

The job market is vast, involving millions of people every year. It's also fast changing: while some companies are downsizing and restructuring, others are creating new opportunities. So, remember that whatever the state of the economy, there are always opportunities out there. Your task is to find out where they are.

Job market split

The visible market

These are jobs that are advertised in papers, journals, on the internet and with recruitment consultants.

The hidden market

These jobs are not advertised, but they do exist. People find them through word-of-mouth, networking with personal contacts and by making direct approaches to organisations.

Advertised vacancies

What to look for

Adverts are a source of information about the job market as well as for finding specific job roles.

Read adverts carefully and highlight the skills, qualifications and qualities employers are looking for. You can use them to assess how well you match their requirements.

Read between the lines. Look for information about the type of organisation and its culture, problems and needs.

Is it worth applying?

As a rule of thumb, apply for any vacancy where there is at least an 80% match between the job requirements and what you've got to offer.

Key things to think about:

- **Qualifications** – usually the qualifications quoted indicate the sort of person they are looking for. In some cases exceptions may be made,



and many employers will accept experience as an alternative to qualifications.

- **Job title** – These can be misleading as responsibilities can vary widely from one organisation to the next. Look carefully at all the information and if you think you can do the job, apply.
- **Experience** – Even if your experience doesn't match up exactly, it could still be relevant and so worth applying.
- **Salary** – This is normally negotiable. Judge whether the salary matches up to the advertised responsibilities.
- **Essential or Desirable** – You'll often find these terms in job ads: characteristics marked as essential are non-negotiable. Desirable characteristics are a bonus, but the employer is flexible and open to compromise.
- **For more information** – Ringing for more information can give you a chance to make a good first impression, and to get extra information that could give your application the edge. Be prepared, just in case they ask you questions too.

Using recruitment consultants

Recruitment consultants are part of the visible job market. They work on behalf of employers to find the right person to fit a particular job.

Working with recruiters

- Recruiters are paid by employers to find and place candidates in particular jobs. Time means money, so recruiters are only likely to spend time with you if you're a good match for a current or potential vacancy
- Choose recruiters with care. Find out which ones are in your market and cover your area of expertise
- Before contacting recruiters, be clear about what you're looking for. Be ready to answer questions about the type of role, location and salary range you're looking for, and about your skills and experience
- Register with a manageable number of recruiters. It's easier to stay in touch and avoids employers being sent your CV by several recruiters
- Manage and build relationships with recruiters. Keep in touch regularly to check on progress
- If a recruiter puts you forward for a role ask them about the employer. Recruiters usually know their clients well and their input will be valuable when you're preparing for interview



- Get feedback from the recruiter after every interview. It will help you identify how you come across in interviews, and will highlight your strengths and areas for improvement

Personal contacts

Jobs in the hidden market are usually found through networking – by talking to personal contacts and gathering information that will help you identify opportunities and new contacts. It's a very proactive approach where you take the lead to make things happen.

A large percentage of roles are secured this way, so it's worth including it as part of your campaign. You may find you are the only person that an organisation is talking to about a role and, even if that role is then advertised, it puts you in a very strong position.

Talking to your contacts can help you:

- Identify organisations that may need your skills and experience
- Broaden your knowledge about the fields that interest you
- Practice talking about your ideas for the future and your relevant skills and experience
- Gain information that is not readily known

Rules about personal contacts

While your contacts may help you identify a job opportunity you are not asking them for a job. Instead your aim is to get information or advice about:

- Your present ideas and plans
- The direction you might want to take
- The type of roles and opportunities that may exist
- Suggestions about organisations you should contact or research
- Suggestions about other people to contact

How to go about making personal contacts

- Draw up a list of your potential contacts (friends, family, colleagues, social contacts, ex-workmates)
- Narrow down the list to 6-10 people
- Keep your contact list up to date and growing



- Make contact by phone or email, explaining your current situation and why you're approaching them.

The direct approach

Approaching organisations directly is a route into the hidden market that takes time and effort, but it can work well. Many jobs are filled by people who approach organisations at the right time – when employers have identified a need but before they have advertised.

Direct approaches are also the best option if you want to work for a particular organisation but haven't got any personal contacts there.

Market research is key

First decide: the type of organisation is relevant to you, which locations are convenient for you, what size of organisation you are looking for and what sectors or industries are you interested in.

Find out as much as you can about the company. Use every available source like press articles, websites, financial reports, yearbooks, the internet and other sources to look for changes that could turn into opportunities for you.

Whom should you approach?

Try to contact the person who will be making the selection decision or the one who has the problem or need. This is probably a function manager, e.g. the engineering manager, site manager, marketing manager, etc.

This can be more effective than writing to Personnel or Human Resources unless this is your chosen field. They may not know about the potential need and only get involved when a vacancy is about to be advertised.



5. Making your CV work for you

Your CV is your opportunity to sell yourself. It should clearly set out your achievements so that employers can see quickly what you could do for them. The work you did earlier in assessing your skills, knowledge and experience will help you create a CV.

The aim of your CV is to get you to the next stage of the selection process, whether that's an interview, a meeting or a phone call.

How long?

One page CV – This may be useful at the start of your career.

Two page CV – This is the standard length in the UK.

Three or four page CV – This may be suitable for some roles (eg IT specialists or project management roles which need to detail projects, clients or technology).

Consider that most employers that receive many CVs will skip read them. So, generally, the shorter and more focused, the better.

Make your CV stand out!

Your CV may be one of hundreds on someone's desk. If you're going to increase your chances of an interview, it needs to stand out from the rest.

Put yourself in the reader's shoes

Whichever format you choose, make sure you write from the reader's perspective. You need to market yourself in terms of how you can benefit the organisation.

You need to think about what the reader is looking for. Once you know what their needs are it will be easier to present yourself as the solution.



Make your CV as easy and interesting to read as possible

- Employers will want to know two things: Can you do the job? Will you fit in? Your CV should show them that you can and you will
- Keep it concise and jargon free
- Don't refer to yourself as 'I' or by name. Just use verbs and nouns on their own (e.g. 'increased sales by 50%', or 'major achievements include...')
- Use the past tense to describe your career ('led a team')
- Quantify outcomes in numbers where possible, it's quicker and easier to read and this information has maximum impact
- Use an uncluttered layout; leave plenty of white space and wide margins
- Choose a widely used font such as Times New Roman or Arial
- Type body text in font size 10-12, and use 14-16 pt for headings
- Use bold for headings rather than underlining or capitals
- Just print on one side of the paper
- Always use good quality paper (minimum 100gm).

Targeting specific roles

Your CV is a living document and you'll probably need to adapt it to specific roles, especially if you are looking at a number of career options. Employers and recruiters can easily spot a general CV that hasn't been targeted to their vacancy.

Hard-pressed managers have not got the time to read between the lines, so the more you do to help them see your suitability the greater the chance of you securing an interview. Make it easy for them by:

- Adapting your CV to their requirements
- Highlighting where you match their needs
- Bringing out the added value that you could give to the organisation.

The sample CVs later in this section are offered as examples. There's no one right way to write a CV and the style you adopt will depend on things like your personal preferences, how long you've worked, and the type of job you're applying for. Whatever style you choose, follow the CV building blocks below.



CV Building Blocks

1. Personal information

Your full name, address, postcode, phone numbers and email address.

2. Personal profile (optional)

A focused summary of your offer designed to grab the reader's attention and highlight what's to come. It's a summary of what you have to offer in a way that links to the employer's needs.

3. Key skills and competencies (optional)

A focused summary of the skills and competencies you have to offer.

Highlight any transferable skills that are relevant to the position.

4. Work experience

Start with your most recent position and work backwards.

Give the job title, when you started and left the job, the name of the company and what it does.

List your main responsibilities, achievements and duties, especially those related to the new position. Quantify your achievements as much as possible (eg increased sales by 50%, saved £6k over 6 months, achieved 75% service level, achieved 85% production target, reduced overstock by 5%)

Employers are usually interested in your most recent work, so concentrate on your last two positions – although you might want to highlight relevant aspects of previous roles.

Treat a promotion like a separate position.

Explain any significant gaps such as career breaks or unemployment.

5. Qualifications, education, training and development

Usually these come near the end, but if a particular qualification is essential for the job, put it on the first page.

Start with your most recent achievements.

Give relevant professional and academic qualifications but don't include bought memberships.

Include computer skills, foreign language skills and any other recent training/development that's relevant to the role.

6. Other information and interests (optional)



Include brief details of your hobbies and interests if you feel they're relevant to the position, or can help demonstrate key skills and competencies.

Sample CV 1

Duncan Dingle

123 The Lane, Anytown AB1 2CD
Tel: 01235 567890 Mobile: 07778889990

Personal profile

Experienced warehouse supervisor with strong leadership skills. Team player who can motivate and develop others. Excellent communication and influencing skills. Results focused, always working to ensure business targets are met.

Key skills

- Team leadership
- Time management
- Delegation
- Conducting performance reviews
- Computer literate; including Microsoft Word and Excel

Work experience

Aug 2005 – Apr 2007 Anyfirm UK Wakefield, West Yorkshire
Warehouse Supervisor

- Line management responsibility for 20 operatives
- Improved productivity of department (error rates reduced by 2%)
- Developed working relationships with team members, peers and other function teams
- Achieved less than 5% target for team absence and attendance
- Accurately completed all documentation within set timescales
- Ensured health and safety measures were in place at all times, completed regular risk assessments of area (no major accident in last 18 months)

Mar 2002 – Aug 2005 Anyfirm UK Wakefield, West Yorkshire
Warehouse Operative

- Picking and packing items
- Worked to set productivity targets (regularly achieved incentive bonus)
- Involved in regular stock takes



Sample CV 1 continued

Nov 2001 – Mar 2002 Brewers Fayre Wakefield, West Yorkshire
Bar Attendant

- Served food and drink to customers
- Cash handling (till receipts up to £3000 a week)
- Maintained clean and safe cellar

Education

In house training - Anyfirm UK

- Manual handling course (May 2002)
- Introduction to first line management (Sept 2005)
- Performance review skills (Jan 2006)

GCSEs Anytown High School, West Yorkshire

- Maths, English, History, Physics, ICT (at levels A-C)

Other information

Full clean driving license since Jan 2002

References

Excellent references available on request.



Sample CV 2

Name: Kelly Sye
Address: 1 Anytown Road, Anytown, West Yorkshire, AB3 4CD
Telephone: 01234 567890 (Home)
07777 123456 (Mobile)

Personal Profile

I am a determined and dynamic Marketing graduate. Articulate, confident and a good team player, I apply motivation and communication skills to achieve results. Experienced in brand development, e-commerce, media relations and business to business.

Work Experience

Anyfirm UK Jan 2006 – Apr 2008

Empire Stores Marketing Coordinator

- Assisted the Marketing Manager with day to day management of internal and external communication (**achieved** all...)
- Coordinated the creation and circulation of media releases and implemented the marketing strategy to given deadlines
- Managed key elements of brand development
- Assisted in the development of the Empire Stores internet site through copy editing and website development (testing and launch targets achieved)

ASDA May 2004 – Jan 2006

Marketing Assistant

- Updated the website content with relevant information about products and special offers
- Coordinated the creation and circulation of media releases. Liaised with design agencies to produce relevant print material
- Constructed market research in store to determine level of customer satisfaction
- Assisted in the development of e-marketing campaigns including the creation of regular e-communication

Traveling Jul 2005 – Jan 2006

Visited Las Vegas, Russia and Eire.



Sample CV 2 continued

Education and Qualifications

Anytown University 2006 – 2007

Chartered Institute of Marketing Professional Certificate (achieved Merit)

Anytown University 2002 – 2005

BA (Hons) Marketing 2:1

Anytown School 2000 – 2002

A-levels

Maths C

Art C

History C

Anytown School 1995 – 2000

GCSEs

English, Maths, Physics, Art, History, French, ICT (A-C grade)

Computer based learning Microsoft Excel, Word, PowerPoint, Access, Project, Photoshop, Publisher.

Interests and Achievements

Anytown Women's R.U.F.C team captain 2002 – 2004

Anytown Women's R.U.F.C Under 9s team coach 2006 – 2008.



Sample CV 3

Fifi Diego

15 The Road, Anytown, West Yorkshire, AB1 2ZY

Tel: 01234 987654

Mobile: 07891 234567

E mail: fifi.diego@hotmail.com

Work Experience

2004 - present

Anyfirm UK

A large home shopping company with a turnover of approximately £300m.

Contact Centre Manager

Managing the call centre to achieve budgeted call volumes. Leading a team of 5 team leaders. Ensuring the delivery of high call quality to achieve specific KPIs.

Achievements:

- Improved call quality from 70% to 90 % in three months through motivation and coaching strategy
- Project managed the installation of a new voice recognition system, which led to a 10% improvement in call response time.
- Implemented a new recruitment strategy in line with budget requirements that reduced recruitment costs by £8000 compared to the same time last year.
- Increased up selling by 100% for the first half of the season compared with last year's figures.

2001 – 2004

Ventura

A large financial services specialist providing loans, insurance and investment products.

Call Centre Team Leader

Lead a team of 15 call centre advisors. Coached advisors to meet KPIs. Dealt with complex customer queries and complaints.

Achievements:

- Coached and developed the team to achieve a 5% increase in bonus over a 3 month period.
- Lead a project to implement a new performance management system for all staff, leading to an increase in motivation.



- Successfully allocated resources to meet varying levels of demand

Sample CV 3

1999 – 2001

Research Solutions

A small market research company based in Bradford. Leading market research projects for Whiskas, Guinness and Bounce.

Teleresearch Team Leader

Lead a team of 8 teleresearchers. Managed recruitment and induction of new staff. Allocated resource to meet demand.

Achievements:

- Ensured my team consistently met demanding targets
- Developed teambuilding activities to increase morale

1998 - 1999

Teleresearcher

Contacted people by phone and asked them to complete surveys. Recorded information on customer responses.

Employment based training

Anyfirm UK Leadership Program

Full Ventura FSA training

First Aid

Education

Anytown College

A-level Business Studies, Maths, Music

Anytown School

9 GCSEs above grade C including Maths and English

References are available on request



Design your CV

The information in this workbook should act as a guide on how to write your CV. You now need to look back over your skills and experience and decide on the key points to include.

Once you've written your CV we recommend that you show it to one or two people whose judgement you trust and respect (a partner, colleague, friend) and ask them if the CV accurately reflects you. Ask them for feedback on the format, structure and language used and whether they feel it's clear. Listen to their opinions and any advice they may offer and then choose whether to make any changes.

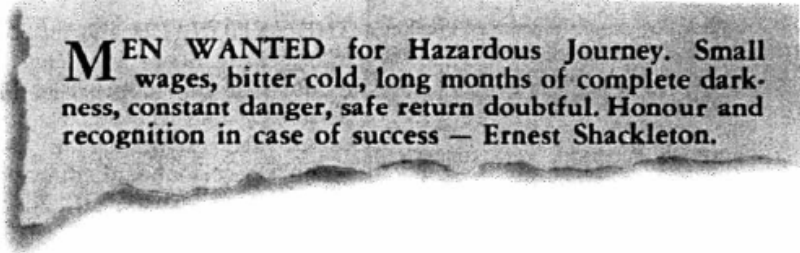
Remember, this CV should be your basic outline. When applying for a particular job, it should be tailored to match what's been sought.

There are a number of websites that offer hints and tips on CV writing, including:

www.cvtips.com

www.jobs.guardian.co.uk

You can find plenty more websites offering help and advice by typing "CV help" into a search engine.



MEN WANTED for Hazardous Journey. Small wages, bitter cold, long months of complete darkness, constant danger, safe return doubtful. Honour and recognition in case of success — Ernest Shackleton.

Advertisement placed in The Times by Sir Ernest Shackleton 1900



6. Getting your message across

Good communication skills are key to a successful job search. First impressions matter just as much on paper, on screen and on the phone as they do face to face.

Letters and emails

You'll be writing letters and emails at every stage of your campaign to:

- Follow up new contacts
- Reply to job ads
- Confirm telephone conversations with recruiters
- Make direct approaches to organisations
- Accept a job offer

Whether it's a letter or email, you should always:

- Be clear about the purpose
- Focus on the reader's needs
- Be businesslike and professional
- Use positive language (short simple sentences and action words)
- Check spelling, punctuation and grammar
- Write to a named person and use the correct job title
- Only ever write by hand if you're asked to

Content

Keep the content of your written communication structured and to the point:

Beginning: This should explain why you're writing. If you're replying to an advert, say so. Mention the job title, any reference number and where and when you saw it.

Middle: Briefly outline your current situation and how you could contribute to the organisation. Tailor your information to make it as relevant as possible to the organisation or job applied for. Avoid all negative information.

End: Close your letter by expressing an interest in further discussion with the recruiter. Explain what you hope will happen next, or what you will do next.

Have a look at the example letters overleaf



Sample letter – Response to advertisement

1 Anytown Road
Anytown
Sunnyshire
AB3 4CD

11th February 2008

Mrs L Groom
HR Manager
The High Roller Group

Dear Mrs Groom

Risk Analyst

I am writing to apply for your Risk Analyst post as advertised on www.fish4jobs.co.uk and enclose my CV for your consideration.

A position within the High Roller Group is of real interest to me. I am impressed by the company profile, and the emphasis you place on ‘working with clients to understand their needs and those of their customers or pension scheme members’.

As you will see from my CV, I have undertaken a variety of roles which require high level communication, interpersonal and interpretative skills. This is best demonstrated by my current role at Anyfirm UK where I have successfully built and maintained productive relationships with both clients and colleagues.

I would be very interested in discussing this opportunity with you at interview and look forward to hearing from you.

Yours sincerely

Joe Bloggs
Enc. CV



Sample letter – Direct approach

1 Anytown Road
Anytown
Sunnyshire
AB3 4CD

Telephone: 01234 567890
Mobile: 07778889990

11th February 2008

Mr G Brown
Molson Plc
1-2 Station Road
Anytown
AB1 2CD

Dear Mr Brown

Yesterday's Evening Post said that you are expanding your warehouse by 50% and it occurred to me that you might need extra staff for the new facilities. I am currently looking for opportunities to make use of my experience of working as a supervisor in a warehouse and so I would be interested in any potential vacancies.

Over the past 5 years I have worked in a retail warehouse, initially as an operative and most recently as a supervisor. This work has included:

- Line management responsibility for 20 operatives
- Monitoring productivity and looking for improvement opportunities
- Accurate completion of documentation
- Meeting health and safety guidelines
- Developing working relationships at all levels
- Training and coaching operatives as required

Full details of my career history and skills are on my CV which I have enclosed. I would very much like to explore any opportunities and will phone you next week to see if we can arrange a time to discuss this.

Yours sincerely

Spiros Pooter



Phone calls

When are phone calls the best choice?

Phoning is more personal, so use a call to:

- Keep in touch and check on progress with your contacts, recruiters or referees

Phoning is quickest, so call to ask for:

- Information to help you prepare for applications or interviews

Phone calls are less formal, so use them to:

- Check on progress with applications
- Confirm arrangements for meetings and interviews
- Get feedback from recruiters on your performance at interview

Advice for making calls

- Plan your calls and prepare to make a few calls at a time
- Don't make calls if you're feeling negative or tired as this will come across in your voice
- Identify whom you need to talk to and think about the best approach
- Plan and practice asking questions
- Have a diary, CV, pen, notepad and other relevant documents to hand
- Consider the time you're calling
- Call from somewhere quiet and private



7. Application packs

Whatever job you're applying for you're likely to be sent a form and/or a pack of information. Employers like application forms because they standardise everyone's information and this makes it much easier to compare what people have to offer. They also make it easier to structure interviews.

Completing the form

Make a copy of the form and use it to draft your answers. You don't want any mistakes, including crossing out, on the final version.

Follow the instructions such as using block capitals and black ink.

Use your CV as a guide on what to write, but tailor your answers to the specific job applied for.

Approach each question from the company's perspective.

If they ask open questions such as "Tell us about a time when...", think carefully about your answer. Use STAR to structure your answer:

Situation – Put your example in context

Task – What needed to be done?

Action – What action did you take?

Result – What was the result?

Checklist

- Does your application match what they say they want (check back over the job description and personal specification)
- Have you answered all the questions? (strike through and mark N/A if any section is not applicable to you)
- Are all your answers tailored to the job?
- Have you checked your spelling and dates?
- If you have to give referees, have you made sure they know about this application and will support you?
- Have you made a copy for your records and to take to the interview?



8. Preparing for interviews

Research

Good answers are one of the keys to success at interview. Preparation will really pay off as well.

Find out as much information as possible about your potential employer in advance. Many companies have websites packed with information. Familiarise yourself with mission statements, past performance and future goals.

If there's no company website you can still research the company. Most national newspapers have online archive articles, and simply entering the company name into a search engine may bring up useful information.

Talk to any contacts you have that work or have worked at the company you're applying to. They can give you an idea of what it's really like.

Practical tips

Double check the date, time and location of the interview and be familiar with the name and title of the interviewer. Take your interview confirmation letter with you.

Prepare your interview outfit in advance – all of it.

Check journey to the location to ensure you arrive in plenty of time. If driving, do a 'dummy run'. Check timetables and book train tickets.

Be punctual, but don't arrive more than half an hour early.

Be courteous at reception and to any other staff you may meet. Their opinion of you may be sought, and if all goes well they may soon be your colleagues.



Matching what you've got to what they want

Use the information you have about the job (job description, advert, person specification) to make a list of skills and knowledge that the interviewer will be looking for. Write them down in the form below and then think of real examples of tasks you've done that match what's needed.

What they want	Essential/ Desirable?	What you've got



The curtain goes up!

Your interview kit:

- Copy of your CV
- Pad and pen
- List of your job-related questions
- Additional materials about the job as appropriate

Personal appearance:

- Remember, the first impression is strongest and it's based on how you look
- Go for a clean-cut and conservative image (don't take risks! A white shirt/blouse is safest, go for plain socks, low heels, etc.)
- Have clean suit ready, shirt ironed, shoes polished, hair trimmed
- Watch your perfume/aftershave (you're trying to be appointed not dated!)

Curtain up (5 minutes before)

- Visit toilet
- Check grooming
- Turn off your mobile phone
- Final mental preparation/relaxation/breathing
- Recall the positive things you're going to say
- Review job description/person specification
- Smile

You're on!

- Give a firm handshake (avoid "bone-crusher" and "wet fish")
- Make eye contact and smile
- Say something short like "Hello, Mr Smith. I'm pleased to meet you"

During the interview

- Don't sit down until asked
- Don't show anxiety/boredom or look at your watch
- Don't discuss equal rights, sex, race or religion
- Don't ask about salary/benefits at first interview
- Don't assume a submissive role; treat the interviewer with respect and as an equal



Questions you can expect at many job interviews

What kind of experience do you have for this job?

- Use as opportunity to sell yourself
- Make sure you tailor your answers to the job/critical skills wanted

What do you like/dislike about your current job?

- Say what you like best
- Beware of criticising previous employers/bosses
- Relate a minimum of your dislikes to what the new job will offer

How do you feel about your progress to date?

- Be positive
- Don't give the impression you've already done your best work

What are your greatest accomplishments?

- Keep answers job related and state your key achievements
- Don't exaggerate your contributions
- Say if your contributions were achieved as part of a team

How do you organise and plan for key projects?

- Refer to having clear objectives or targets, breaking the job down into chunks, estimating time and resources, setting deadlines, need for communication across teams, working to budgets, reviews, etc.

Can you work under pressure?

- Give example of how you met a tight deadline or coped with change
- Relate to the need for proper planning and organisation to reduce crises

What interests you about this job?

- Be straightforward
- Ask for more information on the role first if necessary
- Focus on you looking for a challenge and the opportunity to make a contribution

Can you describe a difficult problem you've had to deal with?

- Give example of such a problem and your solution
- Quantify the improvement you made if possible (cost/time saved?)
- Explain your method of problem solving - e.g. stand back/examine, list possible solutions, weigh consequences and costs, determine best solution, etc.



Do you have any questions?

- Always have some prepared questions
- Focus on gathering information on skills required, role priorities, key objectives in job, etc.

Tell me about yourself

- Don't ramble on
- Refer to one or more of your key qualities (team player? determined?)

What is your greatest weakness?

- Don't hang yourself!
- Refer to a part of your job where you want to get more experience and which the new job will provide
- Turn a weakness into a positive - e.g. you enjoy your work and give every project your best shot. You sometimes get frustrated if you see others not pulling their weight. You're aware of this weakness and adopt a positive attitude to motivate others in the team
- Refer to a weakness in the past which you have overcome

What kind of people do you like to work with?

- People with pride, honesty, dedication, integrity, etc. (an easy question!)

What kind of people do you find difficult to work with?

- You could say: people who aren't committed, don't care about quality, etc.
- Say how you deal with these kinds of people (keep enthusiastic, raise issues openly but tactfully, listen, etc.)

What have you done that shows initiative?

- Give examples to show you are a 'doer'
- Quantify the benefits if possible (cost saving? increased productivity? less time?)
- Don't give examples which show your disregard for company rules

How do you take direction/criticism?

- Say you take direction well and get on with the job
- You work with your boss to achieve team goals
- You reflect on criticism to see what you can learn from it



9. How was it for you?

Did you get the job? Yes! Congratulations... No! Time for a review...

After your initial disappointment it is important to review how the interview went, why this was and what you can learn from the experience. Don't feel embarrassed about requesting feedback from the interviewer, it may help you pinpoint areas for improvement.

Using the following questions can help you to think in a positive way to prepare for the next opportunity.

1. Your preparation

- Had you done enough preparation?
- Did you know enough about the job?
- Had you anticipated the right questions?

2. Selling Yourself

- Did you present your key skills/experience effectively?
- Did you match the requirements of the job to your skills?

3. Handling Questions

- Did you answer the questions as you would have liked?
- Which questions did you not answer well?
- How would you respond differently next time?

4. Behaviour in the interview

- How did you feel in the interview?
- Which areas could you improve upon? i.e. listening skills, dealing with questions, summarising your key achievements
- What impression did you create with the interviewer?

5. What went well at the interview?

- What were you most happy with and why?
- How can you build on this for the future?

6. Key learning points

- Summarise key learning points from the above review
- What action/preparation can you do ready for the next time?

Remember, only one person can be successful for any job. Think of the experience as a learning opportunity to help you next time.



10. Contacts and further information

Websites

www.jobcentreplus.gov.uk – Information on vacancies, benefits, training and job search facility.

www.propects.ac.uk – Graduate careers website

www.learn-direct-advice.co.uk – Help and advice on careers and learning

www.cvtips.com – Tips and hints on writing a CV from scratch

www.monster.co.uk – Job search website

www.fish4jobs.co.uk – Job search website

Online learning

www.vision2learn.net – free course funded by the Learning and Skills Council – “Finding Your Dream Job”

Support agencies

Nextstep.org.uk – Information and advice service

Job Centre Plus - Information on vacancies, benefits, training and job search facility

Wakefield First - Information and advice service

Invest in Bradford - Information and advice service

Colleges

Bradford College www.bradfordcollege.ac.uk, 01274 433333

Wakefield College www.wakcoll.ac.uk, 01924 789789

Joseph Priestley College www.joseph-priestley.ac.uk, 0113 3076 111

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