

**Handout of Supporting Information for Unemployed Professionals**

**Tutorial to Help Unemployed Professionals**

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Reception: Induction

## Introduction

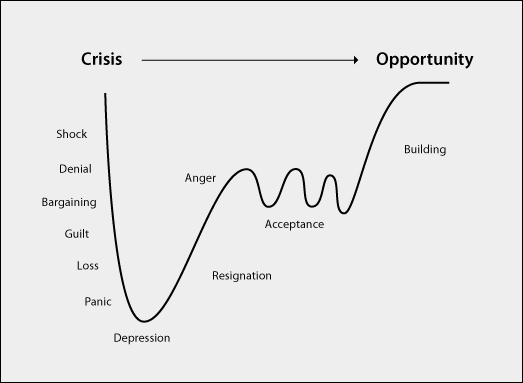
GR Law have been helping job seekers find work in professional organisations since 1995. Our business has been built on helping people with similar backgrounds to yours find jobs in the City. The people that come to us are highly skilled and frequently specialists in their fields. Our specialism is recruitment. The DWP has asked us to share our recruitment knowledge with you so that your own job search skills are enhanced. To address this we created a new division, GR Recruitment which brings together all of our recruitment skills. The training course you attended was designed to give you three main components to think about and incorporate into your activities:

* To have a clear idea how your CV (and application letter) can be modified to become more attractive to employers. The goal here is to get invited to more interviews and encounter less rejection!
* Gaining access to more vacancies and utilising new techniques to connect with potential employers
* Enhanced interview performance – our goal is that you enjoy greater success at passing the myriad of selection techniques utilised by employers today. We will have shown you in the seminar what employers are doing and why.

This document will support the seminar you attended, which is designed to help you construct an action plan that will accelerate your return to employment. This Action Plan is designed to be SSMART, that is: Stretching, Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Realistic and Time-bound. We don’t promise to find the job for you although we will share any vacancy we have that we feel is a potential fit. As such we have tried to be non partisan and we will give you details of as many sources of employment as possible including our competitors.

## The Emotional Rollercoaster

When you lose your job there is often a sense of disbelief. You may be looking for someone to blame. At first it is the person that fired you or made you redundant, it may be the managers of the business not doing enough to protect jobs, it may be the government for the state of the economy and eventually you look around at others in work and think why me? Have I done something wrong? Could I have done more? I’m not up to it. I’ll never get another job. I want to give up. These feelings are perfectly natural. Everyone goes through these feelings and it takes time. Some people will go through certain stages at different speeds so don’t be too hard on yourself. This is a well recognised phenomenon and is the way in which we all deal with a significant change in our lives. This model is the same whether you have just lost your job or suffering bereavement.



When you are in shock or depressed about losing your job you are simply not ready to accept the situation and rebuild your career. Objectively you know there are certain things you must do but you simply may not feel like doing them or not believe that the actions you take will make any difference. We cannot move you from panic or depression to acceptance or rebuilding. You have to do that in your own time. However, in the same way as looking at holiday brochures instantly makes you relax and think of a beautiful beach looking at strategies to find another job may help you move on from the job that is no longer there, to the new challenge of finding a better job.

## Structure of the Tutorial

This Tutorial is designed to help you develop your skills to find a job. Some of this is obvious and some of it will be new. The main points of this tutorial will build into an initial action plan which is designed to be further refined and developed by you. It is based along the vital steps of job search, identification of relevant vacancies, application and interview performance. As you add your own detail and action points you will have a plan that clearly shows the progress you have made.

## Additional Reading/Support

We endeavour to cover as much as possible on the seminar and back that up with these course notes but if you have any further queries or if there is specific areas you would like help or advice on, please feel free to contact your presenter or one of the team by email or telephone. Below is a book that is you may want to get out of a library, we found it useful and amusing.

***Who Moved My Cheese*** by Dr Spencer Johnson. This is a very short book talking about change and how we react to major changes in our lives. Centred around two mice that suddenly find that their cheese has gone. Cheese is a metaphor for what you want to have in your life. Amusing but very thought provoking.

# Personal stocktaking

Before you start the process of identifying potential vacancies we advise you first to spend time to identify your own skills and values. If you know what your core skills and strengths are you can take the first step in marketing yourself.

The following exercise should point you in the right direction

## Referencing

In today’s market references or endorsements from your last or previous employers are critical. As part of your severance agreement we advise you to obtain detailed, open references or endorsements from your last and previous employers that you can use to define you as a valuable employee, where you have made a difference to the organisation and where your strengths lie. These documents can then augment all future job applications that you will make.

## You and your former employer

How have you been treated? And how do you feel? You are entitled to be paid for your notice and despite popular misconceptions this is not necessarily tax free. It is only tax free if there is no payment in lieu of notice clause in your contract. Any payments in excess of your contractual entitlements are generally regarded as redundancy payments and these are not subject to tax.  If you do not leave immediately you are entitled to time off to attend interviews.

Has the employer followed the correct procedure in making you redundant. You may be able to make a claim against your former employer for wrongful or unfair dismissal or breach of contract. You should seek advice on this.

## What are your skills?

Make a list of your talents, explore and add detail to where your skills lie, this list will form the backbone of your future job applications and will underpin and support your performance at interview.

The following should act as a guide:

* Identify the key elements of your work-based skills
* Training. What training have you had for your last or previous roles?
* Academic qualifications?
* What is your most valuable employment asset?
* Where did you add organisational value?
* How clearly does your CV demonstrate the above?

This last point is critical. If you’re not sure where you added **organisational value,** open references and your **appraisals** often offerexcellent evidence of this. You will analyse your CV in more detail later in this tutorial but the sooner you to start the questioning and re-evaluation process the better.

[Action Point](https://grlawrecruitmentemeamicrosoftonlinecom-1.sharepoint.emea.microsoftonline.com/london/DWP/Documents%20and%20Settings/pfrancis/Users/jbruce/Work%20Misc/Seminar%20documents%20for%20printing/Action%20Plan.doc#talents)

## Opportunities

It is important to fully explore the industry segment that you last worked within, as this could identify the fastest route to becoming re-employed. One factor to consider at this point is your own goals in relation to changing industries, changing roles or both.

Relevant questions here are:

* Who else requires these skills?
* Who are your historic competitors?
* Have competitors moved region?
* Are competitors moving to your locality?
* Is relocating an option for you?

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## Changing industries

If your goal is to utilise the skills you have gained in your recent or historic employment, then it is beneficial to look at complementing industries or job descriptions to open up new avenues of potential vacancies. A classic example here is a secretary. Secretaries can work across many different industry segments, from medical, legal, finance, public sector to manufacturing. There is often greater compatibility or cross-over than you first realise for your skill group.

Ask yourself the following questions:

* What other industries could utilise your skills?
* What other business employ similar staff?
* Are you able to move between private and public sector?

As you begin your job search it is important you have roles or industry segments in mind that you are going to target. Add these to your action plan you were given at the end of the training course, so you can track.

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## Optimising your CV

A CV can quickly become outdated. Often it is a document that is brought out, dusted off and new employment details added, almost in a running commentary fashion. Your CV needs to be much more than that.

A professional recruiter will scrutinise a CV in 10 to 40 seconds (currently 20 seconds is normal) and in that time they will decide whether you are someone they can assist or not. An employer who is recruiting directly may take slightly longer but still a very short time.

The recruiter/employer is looking for the following points:

What the person does

What competencies and skills the person has

How much experience the person has

Number of job/career changes

Continuity of employment

Qualifications

They will ask themselves whether that person matches their requirements and how closely. If not, then they will immediately reject the person. Only if they find that the applicant has the required skills and competencies will the recruiter examine the detail of their experience in closer detail. The recruiter will be considering how will they “sell” that applicant to the client i.e. what makes them stand out from other similarly qualified candidates? This is the same thing an employer will be looking for and it will distinguish a suitably qualified candidate from a desirable potential employee. This is the value this person adds to an organisation either by way of enhanced revenue or cost saving. The professional recruiter and experienced employers know precisely what they are looking for and this considerably reduces the time they have to spend analysing CVs.

**Conclusion**

Knowing that so little time is spent screening a CV will be an advantage to you, if you follow the following points which we call the Twenty Second Rule:

* Make sure the reader can see at a glance what you do:

E.g. use a title or very short summary e.g. MBA qualified management consultant with 5 years experience in the FMCG sector

* Ensure that your CV does not at first glance give rise to the impression that you are a job hopper. If you have moved around in one organisation ensure your headings are such that this is not the impression that is inadvertently conveyed. If you have a number of job moves or if you have had a period of contracting consider consolidating these under one umbrella heading with dates spanning that period.
* Make sure that the most relevant information is prominent and anything that isn’t necessary to pass the twenty second rule is moved to a more appropriate area of your CV (such as education and hobbies being on the bottom of your CV in most cases).
* Keep it simple. Your CV needs to be easy to read and easy to extract information from. Making it “stand out” with extravagant fonts, graphics, colours etc. usually just results in it being hard to read and then rejected.
* Make sure there are no mistakes! Proof reading your CV is hard because you know what you want to say, get someone to help with this and ensure the finished article is error free and understandable.

Ensure that your CV demonstrates your competencies and how you add value. This will put you ahead of 90% of the competition who will not do this.

* The CV must contain examples of how you have made a difference to your employers either by the revenue you have generated or saved for the company. e.g. cost cutting, increased customer spend or margin growth?
* Use examples to demonstrate your competencies. These carry much more weight than simple assertions.
* Look at jobs applications in the same way you would answer an exam question where the job advert is the exam paper and every sentence is a question that must be answered in your CV. See the score card section of this tutorial
* Style of CV is really a personal preference as long as the message it sends is clear i.e. it emphasises the parts that see you and does not draw attention to any negative parts of your career. Make sure that there is space between the lines so that it is easy to read.
* Identify what the employer is looking for so that your CV highlights examples of those competencies in the CV. See score-carding the vacancy
* Appraisal performance – have you highlighted occasions when you have received positive or outstanding appraisals?
* If you plan to apply for vacancies in new areas, does your CV highlight your speed of learning and your **transferable** **skills**?

Read your CV with a fresh approach and get a friend, partner or relative to give you their honest opinion as well. Make a note of any and all changes and allocate time to re-writing this document. We believe that in this market, when you’re CV is competing with numerous other CVs, you should modify your CV for each and every job you apply for. We will cover more on this in the Vacancy Score Card section.

[Action Point](https://grlawrecruitmentemeamicrosoftonlinecom-1.sharepoint.emea.microsoftonline.com/london/DWP/Documents%20and%20Settings/pfrancis/Users/jbruce/Work%20Misc/Seminar%20documents%20for%20printing/Action%20Plan.doc#CV)

## Covering letter

Try and avoid using a standard letter for each application that you make, not only will it detract from the work you’ve done to rejuvenate your CV, you will also demonstrate to the reader that you are applying for roles en-masse and this could reduce impact. Instead you can create several boilerplate paragraphs that you can use to semi-automate your application letters that will remove some of the labour but retain that personal touch.

Treat each application as a one off, you are applying for a specific vacancy or employer and need to promote yourself accordingly. Your letter should contain:

* Bullet point or highlight your skills (in relation to the post applied for)
* Explain your rationale for applying
* Sell back your skills in relation to their needs
* Close your letter with confidence

In some cases you will be writing to the person that will conduct the initial interview, so a personal letter from you will enhance your chances and will provide a good start for your initial interview.

If you haven’t done so already, create a clean home email address that uses your name. Keep it simple and as corporate as you can.

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# Labour market intelligence

This section contains tips and advice to ensure you keep informed of any changes to your local or desired location of work. If businesses are moving into your desired area, it essential you keep these companies on your radar so you can exploit any employment opportunity that they bring. Local papers (or their associated web sites) are a vital source of local information, as is the planning department at your local council.

## Job volumes per sector

Most job boards will categorise their vacancies by location and by sector, with this information you can quickly determine which sectors are offering the greater number of vacancies. Despite the reported gloom on the high street, retail is still very active – certainly in the discount sector. Public sector (education) remains a steady employer as do other areas.

## Most active areas

Any change in the economic cycle brings opportunities to secure a new career. Progress as they say doesn’t stop. Sectors like technology are generally in a positive hiring mode no matter what the economic cycle, public sector is also one that remains fairly constant as services are planned years ahead by local or central government.

## Finding pockets of activity

Finding pockets of hiring activity in your desired locality is a straightforward exercise, as we saw early on at the start of this recession. News stories were quick to highlight companies that were releasing positive hiring statements. As with any recession there is a marked migration to companies who provide discount services. The most obvious of these is food retailers and supermarkets. We have seen a rapid rise in market share of the discount supermarkets Aldi and Lidl.

You can apply this migration of spend all across the services sector, as company buying habits will (in most cases) follow those of individuals. If you target companies that are offering discount services, there is a likely chance that they will be experiencing an increase in trading volumes that could result in new vacancies.

To maximise your chances of spotting these opportunities you need to be constantly analysing any news or gossip that you pick up. You can access most business information free using the following links:

<http://business.timesonline.co.uk/tol/business/>

<http://www.reuters.com/finance/markets/uk>

<http://www.telegraph.co.uk/finance/>

Ask the question ‘does that mean they could be hiring’? Don’t let information wash over you, actively listen and write down the opportunities that you pick up. To increase your chances of getting this information make sure you keep up to date with the news, both national and local and make sure you don’t lock yourself away.

Also consider areas of growth that are less affected by the economy being driven by a “higher” motivator, such as the environment.

Consider sectors such as **Low Carbon, Renewable Energy** and **CCS (Carbon Capture and Storage)** [http://www.co2storage.org.uk](http://www.co2storage.org.uk/).

The face of business in the UK is changing rapidly and you need to consider whether you can take advantage of the growing industries and rise of “super cities” that may make places outside London your best option.

Location change is something you may wish to consider and this applies to places outside the UK. Would Europe, the UAE or Australia/New Zealand be an option for you? Before discounting this, have a look at whether your skills and experience are in demand and whether you would qualify for sponsorship or a visa.

**UAE**

<http://www.cvtips.com/uae_work_permit.html>

**Australia/New Zealand**

<http://www.workingin-australia.com/categories/82>

<http://www.immi.gov.au/skilled/>

<http://www.workingin-newzealand.com/categories/80>

<http://www.immigration.govt.nz/migrant/stream/work/>

[Action point](https://grlawrecruitmentemeamicrosoftonlinecom-1.sharepoint.emea.microsoftonline.com/london/DWP/Documents%20and%20Settings/pfrancis/Users/jbruce/Work%20Misc/Seminar%20documents%20for%20printing/Action%20Plan.doc#trends)

# New opportunities/job leads

As you would have seen in the seminar, searching for employment has more facets to it in this market than ever before. Here we are going to cover every possible option you can use to identify vacancies and or employers to market your CV to. This will include where and how to look for jobs with a focus on safe job search and recently developed viral marketing techniques; signposting further sources of advice and guidance;

## Giving you the skills to find a job

As we have mentioned this tutorial is about giving you the skills to maximise your own efforts in finding a job. We will obviously help you as much as we can but with limited time and resources you need to be equipped to track down leads so that you do not miss anything. This approach is designed to cover as much of the market, as quickly as possible. You may not need to get as far as the latter parts of this strategy as you may have already found a job.

If you do have to work through to the end there is a good chance you will be rewarded because by that time a lot of people might have given up so persist! In any business endeavour, and your business is finding a job, you should normally assess the size and scope of the market so that you can put together a strategy to cover it. However, this could take some time and with the financial and other pressures you are under time is of the essence. There are some simple steps that will help you cover 70 to 80% of the market very quickly. Once you have done that you can go back and develop your strategy.

The internet is without question the place to start. You can cover more here in a very short time than in any other way. For those who have been out of the job market for a couple of years a lot has changed. In 2005 GR Law spent £120k on paper based advertising. This year we will spend less than £10k on paper based advertising. This is because of the relative cost of print advertising and the response it brings.

The more traditional means of advertising has changed so if you are looking to find a job the emphasis must be on internet based research. In fact, a recent report in The Timeshighlighted that **70% of all jobs AREN’T advertised** at all.

But do not forget the paper media because they still have a role to play and can give you many jobs and leads for internet searches. Make sure you receive the relevant trade journals every time they are published. Most of them are free and paid for by advertisers like us! This can be done later.

## Job boards – identify and register

The first step is to search and register with the obvious and most high profile sources of job adverts. These are the job boards and the web versions of the traditional trade magazines. These have become successful because they are highly visible on the internet and the more visible they are the more jobs they have on them. Use one of the main search engines to identify these sites with searches such as “banking jobs London” or the area that is of most relevance to you. Most of these have a job alert facility where by you save your criteria and the site notifies you as soon as a new job is posted that matches your criteria. Obviously apply for all of the relevant jobs but see the next section for advice on the best way to go about this and how to maximise your response. Cover the top five to ten sites. Make a note of which ones you have covered as you do them so that you do not double up later.

NB Do not make any applications until you have studied [Analysing vacancies](https://grlawrecruitmentemeamicrosoftonlinecom-1.sharepoint.emea.microsoftonline.com/london/DWP/DWP/Main%20Pack%20-%20current%20and%20old/Seminar%20main%20pack%20September%202010.doc#_Analysing_vacancies:_To)

[Action Point](https://grlawrecruitmentemeamicrosoftonlinecom-1.sharepoint.emea.microsoftonline.com/london/DWP/Documents%20and%20Settings/pfrancis/Users/jbruce/Work%20Misc/Seminar%20documents%20for%20printing/Action%20Plan.doc#_jobsites)

## Covering the rest of the market

Now you can start a more structured and strategic search that will compliment your earlier on-line endeavours. The following guide is to make sure you have left no stone unturned. We have tried to put these in an order with the first steps giving the greatest return.

Draw up a list of potential sources of jobs.

These include, but are not limited to:

* Trade journals and corresponding websites
* Other job boards not already covered
* Trade Bodies

This will give you a list of employers who are advertising directly and agencies that specialise in your field.

The paragraphs below give more information on how to track down and extract information from these sources.

[Action Point](https://grlawrecruitmentemeamicrosoftonlinecom-1.sharepoint.emea.microsoftonline.com/london/DWP/Documents%20and%20Settings/pfrancis/Users/jbruce/Work%20Misc/Seminar%20documents%20for%20printing/Action%20Plan.doc#potential_sources)

## Trade journals and corresponding websites

If you are a lawyer and looking for a job the obvious start point for paper advertising in this country would be The Lawyer Magazine, Legal Week, The Times (Tuesday edition) and possibly the Law Society Gazette. Be systematic and make a list from the ads in these magazines of all of the recruiters who advertise positions in this sector together with their contact numbers and their web addresses. If you are a banker, accountant or any other professional then there are similar journals. Centaur Communications and Incisive Media publish many of these. Examples are:

<http://www.centaur.co.uk/section.asp?catid=58> or <http://www.incisivemedia.com/corporate/products>.

Find each of the magazines websites and look at the jobs on these sites. If you can register for job alerts from these websites then do so. Use these websites to add to your list of recruiters.

[Action Point](https://grlawrecruitmentemeamicrosoftonlinecom-1.sharepoint.emea.microsoftonline.com/london/DWP/Documents%20and%20Settings/pfrancis/Users/jbruce/Work%20Misc/Seminar%20documents%20for%20printing/Action%20Plan.doc#Trade_journals)

## Agencies’ Websites action point

As you get the first few names of agencies, work through these agencies’ websites looking for jobs that are of interest to you. On many of these sites you can enter what you are looking for and they will automatically alert you of new jobs as they come in. You should have already covered the most obvious of these. Make a list of agencies that specialise or operate in your area. Do not be disheartened if your list of agencies is 30 to 50 long. That is a good thing because you have 30 to 50 places to look for a new opportunity. However, be realistic about how long it takes to look at the suitable jobs on each of these sites. Try a couple and see how long it takes and keep a note of the time it took you. If each one took an hour, then the maximum you could realistically do in a day would be between three to five. So in this example week one of your action plan may be dedicated solely to covering all of the sites. i.e. don’t expect to cover everything in 5 minutes. Mapping out your strategy is as important in finding a job as it is when working on any other project.

It is advisable to qualify your raw list of agencies so that you cover the major ones first. When law firms and banks and indeed most of the major City employers draw up a list of preferred suppliers they tend to have at least three agencies on that list. We are on the preferred supplier list for most of the top 80 law firms in this country and in every case we always have at least two competitors. We may be given a job ahead of our competitors but in 90% of cases you will see a job advertised with two or three other agencies. Therefore, if you cover the largest five or six agencies you will probably have covered a good 70% of the market in the first few days of your search. Do cover the other agencies on your list in between because whilst most agencies will deal with the major players some also act for a number of smaller employers and these tend to be on a more exclusive basis. Cover these agencies even if you do not necessarily see the perfect job on their site.

Another concern people have is how current jobs are on either agencies websites or on job boards. This is a more individual picture. On our own website we have an automatic upload from our internal database. As soon as there is a live job with an ad drafted it is posted to our site. If the job is filled on our database it comes off the website automatically or within about 20 minutes. Most modern recruitment databases have a facility to link to the agency website. If the job is advertised on a job board or magazine site the picture is much less clear. We find it very difficult to control jobs once they have been posted to certain sites and sometimes only find out that a job, that has been filled, has not been taken off is when someone calls about that job. It is actually against the Employment Agency Licensing Act to wilfully advertise a job that does not exist so we work hard to make sure that it does not happen.

For more information on your rights and how to get the most out of agencies, take a look at our trade body’s website;

<http://www.rec.uk.com/jobseeker>

[Action Point](https://grlawrecruitmentemeamicrosoftonlinecom-1.sharepoint.emea.microsoftonline.com/london/DWP/Documents%20and%20Settings/pfrancis/Users/jbruce/Work%20Misc/Seminar%20documents%20for%20printing/Action%20Plan.doc#list_of_agencies)

## Other job boards not already covered action point

The major job boards and websites are updated automatically from the agencies’ websites. We and other agencies have direct links from our database to these third party websites so you can rely on only active jobs being on the sites. More than that other companies and advertisers use a third party to upload jobs to a number of different sites. One of these compilers is [www.broadbean.com](http://www.broadbean.com/) . Other agencies use one of the other twenty other compilers such as [www.openjobs.co.uk](http://www.openjobs.co.uk/) or just have their own software as we do.

Some of the most popular job boards are:

[www.monster.com](http://www.monster.com/)

[www.jobsite.co.uk](http://www.jobsite.co.uk/)

[www.totaljobs.com](http://www.totaljobs.com/)

[www.stepstone.co.uk](http://www.stepstone.co.uk/)

The major search engines apart from Google have their own job boards e.g.

[www.hotjobs.yahoo.co.uk](http://www.hotjobs.yahoo.co.uk/)

[www.msn.co.uk](http://www.msn.co.uk/)

[www.lycos.co.uk](http://www.lycos.co.uk/)

A good list of job boards can be found on the compilers websites <http://www.broadbean.com/job-boards/> for broadbean but look at the other compilers for additional leads.

Don’t forget [www.gumtree.co.uk](http://www.gumtree.co.uk/). This site has become very popular by word of mouth and has a lot of job ads on it both from agencies and from employers advertising directly.

[Action Point](https://grlawrecruitmentemeamicrosoftonlinecom-1.sharepoint.emea.microsoftonline.com/london/DWP/Documents%20and%20Settings/pfrancis/Users/jbruce/Work%20Misc/Seminar%20documents%20for%20printing/Action%20Plan.doc#Other_job_boards)

## Trade Bodies

If you are looking for other agencies that have not appeared in any of your searches our trade body the REC has a list of all its members broken down by specialisation and geographic location. This can give you additional leads. <https://www.rec.uk.com/membersarea/directory/default.asp?dir=1>

[Action Point](https://grlawrecruitmentemeamicrosoftonlinecom-1.sharepoint.emea.microsoftonline.com/london/DWP/Documents%20and%20Settings/pfrancis/Users/jbruce/Work%20Misc/Seminar%20documents%20for%20printing/Action%20Plan.doc#Trade_Bodies)

## Potential Employers

Use the search engines to draw up a list of potential employers and search the websites of those employers. Again there is no cost to the company if it advertises a job on its own website so the jobs are often there, if you can find them.

For law firms and in house legal departments look at [www.legal500.com](http://www.legal500.com/) and [www.chambersandpartners.com](http://www.chambersandpartners.com/)

For banks look at [www.thebanker.com](http://www.thebanker.com/), accountancy [www.accountancyage.com](http://www.accountancyage.com/), insurance [www.insurancejobs.co.uk](http://www.insurancejobs.co.uk/).

As a word of warning we would not recommend firing your CV off to potential employers indiscriminately. Many employers now record the names of candidates who have applied previously and if there is no job you will be rejected. Often the reason for the rejection is not recorded so when a job comes up and you apply again you will show as having been already rejected and so will be rejected again. See also: [Limit your applications](https://grlawrecruitmentemeamicrosoftonlinecom-1.sharepoint.emea.microsoftonline.com/london/DWP/DWP/Main%20Pack%20-%20current%20and%20old/Seminar%20main%20pack%20September%202010.doc#_Limit_your_applications)

[Action Point](https://grlawrecruitmentemeamicrosoftonlinecom-1.sharepoint.emea.microsoftonline.com/london/DWP/Documents%20and%20Settings/pfrancis/Users/jbruce/Work%20Misc/Seminar%20documents%20for%20printing/Action%20Plan.doc#potential_employers)

## Graduates

In addition to the various sites you can use such as; [http://www.graduate-jobs.com](http://www.graduate-jobs.com/), [http://www.milkround.com](http://www.milkround.com/) and [http://www.thegraduate.co.uk](http://www.thegraduate.co.uk/) you should also be aware of a recent Government initiative that is free to both sides so is becoming very popular as a way for employers to match with suitable graduates.

**The** **Graduate Talent Pool** is a new service that matches graduates with internship opportunities. On this site you can search and apply for internship vacancies posted by employers.

Getting an internship through Graduate Talent Pool is one way of building on the skills you gained at university. It can also give you real life work experience, let you try your hand at a possible career, and prove yourself to a potential employer.

<http://graduatetalentpool.direct.gov.uk/cms/ShowPage/Home_page/p!ecaaefg>

## Advanced Searches on the Search Engines

Using the search engines themselves to add to your list places to look. E.g. [www.google.co.uk](http://www.google.co.uk/) or [www.yahoo.co.uk](http://www.yahoo.co.uk/) etc. Note we have used the ending .co.uk rather than .com because the searches done on .co.uk are reflective of the UK than .com which is either a more global search or US based search.

Don’t necessarily expect to find a list of banking jobs by typing in banking jobs into Google. It doesn’t work that way. The first generic listing (i.e. not a sponsored link) will probably be the website with the words banking and jobs most frequently on its site. A four line ad is going to be dwarfed by a job board that advertises hundreds of banking jobs as you will have found. The way that Google and the other job boards work is a closely guarded secret and changes frequently to stop websites say using banking jobs many times over in its text to improve its ranking. This search is likely to list the agencies and job boards with most banking jobs on it which is why we suggested it first off.

A useful tip when searching is to refine the search e.g. banking jobs London or legal secretarial recruitment. For the latter search GR Law comes up first on google.co.uk and google.com but not google.co.za hence our suggestion to ensure you are on the right part of Google.

Be aware that in the above the search engines do not only look for the words banking and jobs when they are together and so the search would return references to a sentence that read banking on finding jobs. To cut out these false returns use the search terms in inverted commas e.g. “banking jobs” or “banking jobs London”.

# How Does Having a Disability Affect Your Chances of Finding a Job?

We would love to answer with an unequivocal no to this question but we live in the real world and despite legislation making discrimination illegal it still goes on. However, it is still possible to maximise your chances and in some cases turn your disability to your advantage.

## Some Facts

Nearly one in five people of working age in Great Britain have a disability.

Only half of disabled people of working age are in work.

35% of disabled people feared negative reactions from employers.

61% of employers stated nothing discouraged them from employing disabled people.

## The Law

The Disability Discrimination Acts of 1995 and 2005 (DDA) make it unlawful to discriminate against a person because of their disability. That includes people who are applying for a job. The employer and any intermediary (such as a recruitment consultancy) is under a legal duty to make reasonable adjustments to ensure that a disabled applicant is not placed at a disadvantage in the interviewing, testing or selection procedure or in the role itself. The definition of disability is extremely wide ranging and includes any physical or mental impairment that has a substantial long term adverse affect on their ability to carry out normal day to day activities.

## The Reality

Despite it being illegal to discriminate against disabled people the fact that only half of disabled people (who are of working age) are in work, demonstrates the ongoing, additional difficulties that unemployed people with disabilities face. At least 40% of employers are discouraged about employing people with a disability.

The positive message is 60% of employers do not see any barriers to employing people with disabilities. Therefore to increase your chances of success, either fight the prejudice head on or apply to more enlightened employers who genuinely care about the welfare of their staff.

## The Strategy

When looking for a job it is important to always look at the most suitable employers first. Not just because they are more likely to consider your application in an unbiased way, but also because they are more likely to be an employer who will give you the best working environment. There is no point wasting your energies applying to companies who will not consider your application. It is demoralising and reduces your confidence when you do get interviews. Therefore start with employers who are disability friendly. This is not taking the easy option. Companies who are more diverse in their recruitment practices are more likely to succeed in the battle for talent over the next five years and therefore will be more successful as the UK is looking at a huge, looming skills shortage.

Target employers who have taken positive steps to attract people with disabilities. Look at companies who are members of the Two Ticks Disability Scheme. Provided you can demonstrate the minimum criteria for any open vacancy, they will guarantee to interview you.

Links to Organisations that Can Provide Support

Employers Forum on Disability [www.efd.org.uk](http://www.efd.org.uk/)

Remploy [www.remploy.co.uk](http://www.remploy.co.uk/)

RNIB [www.rnib.org.ug](http://www.rnib.org.ug/)

RNID [www.rnid.org.uk](http://www.rnid.org.uk/)

The British Dyslexia Association [www.bdadyslexia.org.uk](http://www.bdadyslexia.org.uk/)

MIND [www.mind.org.uk](http://www.mind.org.uk/)

Two Ticks Disability Scheme <http://www.direct.gov.uk/en/DisabledPeople/Employmentsupport/LookingForWork/DG_4000314>

A list of employers who are members of the EFD is set out at the end of this document. Although these companies will not necessarily guarantee you an interview they will look at people with a disability in a positive light.

The DDA places and obligation on all public bodies including government departments, local government and qangos to actively promote opportunities for disabled people.

In 2008, almost three million people were employed by the local government and almost 2.5 million people by the central government. The public sector, including the NHS, is one of the largest employers in the UK, employing 19.5% of the UK workforce. The public sector should therefore be more disability friendly.

The obligation on public bodies to actively promote opportunities for disabled people also extends to businesses that supply these bodies. All of these businesses are also obliged to promote these opportunities and are under some pressure to demonstrate this. Businesses who supply goods and services of more than £50,000 pa are scrutinised in even greater detail as part of the tender process. A cynical view could be that these businesses will operate a policy of positive discrimination to get their numbers up. Therefore with these businesses it could be a real advantage to disclose your disability.

When researching potential employers, look at their websites in detail for clues as to their approach to disability. Does their site allow you to increase the size of the text, is there a section on disability, do they support or are they members of any organisations that work in the sphere of disability?

What about the 40% of employers who admitted some levels of discouragement from employing disabled people? Many of these people have little or no experience of knowingly employing people with disabilities and often it is a lack of knowledge or embarrassment on how to discuss disability that is the barrier. Good, open communication can frequently resolve these difficulties. Sometimes employers would rather not interview someone than embarrass them by asking the wrong question. A good recruiter will ensure that there are no unpleasant surprises for you or the potential employer and that everyone is aware of any relevant factors surrounding your potential employment.

## Should You Disclose Your Disability?

Certain obvious disabilities should be disclosed if they are not hidden and will affect your ability in the job application process or in the workplace. For example the employer may need to make minor adjustments to allow you to attend the interview. You may also wish to consider disclosure if you have had a number of absences from work which are difficult to explain without disclosure. Potential employers hate unexplained absences.

For hidden disabilities the decision to disclose is a personal one and should reflect the approach of the potential employer. You are under no obligation to disclose and can do so at any time you please. With the Two Ticks System you must state you have a disability to qualify for the scheme. Likewise if you suspect that an employer may be operating a policy of positive discrimination (either overtly or covertly) then again it is in your interest to disclose.

Finally when drafting your cv and in interview if you are seeking to demonstrate evidence of how you have overcome difficulties, had to think laterally, determination, depth of character and many other skills and competencies your disability may give you a more compelling example than any non disabled person’s examples.

See <http://www.direct.gov.uk/en/DisabledPeople/Employmentsupport/LookingForWork/DG_4000219>

for more information on disclosure.

[Action Point](https://grlawrecruitmentemeamicrosoftonlinecom-1.sharepoint.emea.microsoftonline.com/london/DWP/Documents%20and%20Settings/pfrancis/Users/jbruce/Work%20Misc/Seminar%20documents%20for%20printing/Action%20Plan.doc#search_engines)

# Networking - old and new

Finally it pays to be proactive in your search. The methods listed so far rely on you finding a job that someone else has posted. Let as many people as you can know that you are looking for a job. Do your friends/colleagues have anything in the companies they work for? Ask them to ask. Send them your CV so they can refer you to their boss. Word of mouth and personal recommendation is a powerful thing.

Word of mouth is not the only way now to get the message out. Send an email to all of your friends asking them if they know of anything and to spread the word. Add a paragraph saying what you are looking for, what your skills are and add a CV. Ask them to pass it on to anyone who might know.

Use the social networking sites in a similar way. Register on [www.linkedin.co.uk](http://www.linkedin.co.uk/) , [www.facebook.co.uk](http://www.facebook.co.uk/) [www.visualCV.com](http://www.visualcv.com/) , [www.jobfox.com](http://www.jobfox.com/) and any other sites that your peers recommend.

LinkedIn has specific areas designed to enable your job search further. These can be found here: <http://learn.linkedin.com/job-seekers/>

**LinkedIn – (as of Sept 2012)** Currently has 187 million users worldwide with over 10 million in the UK

2 new users join every second

London is actually the biggest LinkedIn City in the world by its active users

68,000 UK recruiters use it

515,000 recruiters worldwide use it

The key to success on LinkedIn is to grow your network and join/participate in groups and discussions relating to the industries that you seek employment in. People within these groups are significantly more likely to recommend you and to inform you when they know of suitable job opportunities.

The average age of LinkedIn users is 43\*

\*it’s worth noting that the average age on Facebook is 28 and on Twitter 36 but the average age on both of these is increasing rapidly.

When looking at vacancies within LinkedIn be aware also that vacancies with a blue asterisk \* are exclusive to LinkedIn.

We have included our LinkedIn guide as [appendix 9.8](https://grlawrecruitmentemeamicrosoftonlinecom-1.sharepoint.emea.microsoftonline.com/london/DWP/DWP/Main%20Pack%20-%20current%20and%20old/Seminar%20main%20pack%20September%202010.doc#_LinkedIn_guide)

Put an up to date CV on your profile and spread the word that way. You can share a status and even link it to Twitter. ([www.twitter.com](http://www.twitter.com)). There is now a new site: [www.twitjobsearch.com](http://www.twitjobsearch.com) that may also have jobs for you.

# Analysing vacancies (Decoding job adverts) – Action Plan step five

In this section we will start a questioning process where you begin to look at job adverts in a more analytical way. This will improve the success of your future applications and should focus your efforts to avoid time wasting.

Vacancy adverts can be de-constructed to unlock their hidden or stated requirements. The better you know a vacancy the more effective you can be when applying for those that match your skills or discounting positions that don’t. First task is to differentiate between direct vacancy adverts and recruitment agency ones.

## Direct adverts

These provide a rich information source to you – as they generally tend to have greater detail, often with elements of the specific job description used as the body text of the advert.

* Make a list of the skills required
* Make a second list of the experience required
* Is training offered to support the skills?
* What percentage of the skills required do you meet?
* What do you know about the organisation?

With direct adverts you are able to effectively research on-line the company or body that is recruiting. The key points here are:

* Does the company hold any awards for training?
* Is it recognised as an Investor in People?
* Does it feature in any staff satisfaction tables e.g. The Sunday Times 100 Best Employers or The Fast Track 200 fastest growing companies
* How big is the company?
* Is it listed on any major stock indices?
* Financial performance for its last trading year?

Have you ever had any dealing (directly or in-directly) with this company or group in previous employment?

As you can see from the points above, you are able to conduct informative and effective research by knowing the identity of the company or organisation that is recruiting.

[Action Point](https://grlawrecruitmentemeamicrosoftonlinecom-1.sharepoint.emea.microsoftonline.com/london/DWP/Documents%20and%20Settings/pfrancis/Users/jbruce/Work%20Misc/Seminar%20documents%20for%20printing/Action%20Plan.doc#Decode)

## Recruitment agency adverts

With recruitment agency adverts you can obtain some or all of the information above, you just have to go about your research in a slightly different way. Most established recruitment businesses now have sophisticated web sites, many of which will have identifiers of who their main clients are. In many cases you will see specific sections or pages devoted to client promotion. This can take the form of client logo’s, client micro-sites, or simply testimonials. By having a thorough look at an agency web site you can often deduce:

* Their sector of specialisation
* The key clients within this sector

Armed with the above knowledge you can then go on to conduct your research as you would with a direct advert, gathering key information about what this employer looks for, how well they are placed to re-train you or advance your existing skills set.

[Action Point](https://grlawrecruitmentemeamicrosoftonlinecom-1.sharepoint.emea.microsoftonline.com/london/DWP/Documents%20and%20Settings/pfrancis/Users/jbruce/Work%20Misc/Seminar%20documents%20for%20printing/Action%20Plan.doc#Decode)

## Competencies – understanding and matching

As mentioned earlier you can also score card your CV. This is a powerful technique whereby you structure your CV to follow the requirements and competencies contained in a vacancy advert or job description.

Set out below is a detailed job description that repeats the competencies many times. The length makes the score-carding a longer process than with a job advert but the repetition does give clues as to which competencies are essential and which are more peripheral. Every area that is highlighted in yellow is a requirement and must be met. By summarising these it is possible to produce a checklist of requirements that your CV must contain. If your CV does not meet these requirements you will not be called for interview. Conversely if you systematically work through these requirements then you will have demonstrated that you are unquestionably the most suitable person for the role and will be called in.

A Major Law Firm LLP

Job description

Job title Floor Manager

Reporting to For secretarial matters - Heads of Department or nominated partner

For operations matters - designated operations partners

Location London (EC1) Hours Contract hours are 9.30am - 5.30 pm. Flexibility with hours/overtime is essential.

The role This is a new role, which has come about as a result of the firm’s growth and move to new open-plan premises (1)at xxxxxxxxx , which will require a new internal layout and change in many existing working practices.

On their designated floor, the post holder will have dual responsibility for managing the cross departmental secretarial population (approximately 35 staff) and ensuring adherence to existing and revised policies, procedures and working practices.

The post holder will be one of five Floor Managers within the firm and these will be crucial appointments to ensuring a smooth transition to the new premises and the realisation of the firm’s vision.

Duties and responsibilities

Duties include, but are not limited to:

Resource management

· manage and monitor the appropriate distribution of secretarial work, giving consideration to efficiency and ensuring optimum use of the floor’s resources

· assist HR with recruitment of permanent secretarial staff. This will include:

o assisting with the compilation of job descriptions by identifying key skills and experience required

o participation in the selection and interviewing process

· manage the authorisation of overtime to ensure it is appropriate and cost efficient

· assess and manage ongoing secretarial temporary staff requirements and take responsibility for requesting floats and temporary staff as necessary

· manage day and night time overflow secretaries/document production operators, ensuring the most efficient utilisation of resources available

· produce overflow work, taking on secretarial overflow duties as required and in the event of unforeseen secretarial absence

Performance management

· responsibility for managing secretarial performance, including:

o assisting fee earners in the preparation and conduct of secretarial performance reviews

o identifying and managing underperformers, including obtaining feedback from fee earners and holding review meetings with secretaries concerned

o assisting in the preparation of evidence for performance hearings and/or dismissals

o identifying possible training needs

o reporting to the Partner responsible for secretaries and/or HR on overall performance levels and flexibility of the secretarial population

· responsibility for absence management, including:

o recording and monitoring absence levels to ensure compliance with absence policy

o pre-empting and escalating to HR any issues which may be cause for concern

o conducting return to work interviews

Operations

· responsibility for standards, including:

o managing the floor specific induction process for all new hires, both fee earners and secretaries,

o ensuring the implementation of any group specific working practices and systems usage

· ensure smooth running across departmental boundaries of the floor

· ensure a safe system of work, including health and safety matters and workstation assessments

· manage specific operations projects at floor level, for example paperless office, large scale scanning projects and filing clean up

· work with the Facilities Manager to resolve operations issues

· identify and booking resources required from General Office team e.g. bulk copying, scanning, printing, or reception services

· attend regular meetings with the other Floor Managers, to contribute to the agenda and highlight any issues, suggest solutions and resulting training needs

· communicate management decisions and represent and support the views of management to the secretarial population

Person specification

The post holder will have a secretarial background with more recent experience of facilities management or office supervision, in a service focused, professional environment. The following skills and experience are essential:

· experience of managing staff, with particular regard to absence management and exposure to basic employee relations issues, including disciplinary and grievance proceedings

· the ability to encourage and develop the secretarial population, as well as manage underperformance when required

· experience of managing a busy office/department, including implementing and ensuring adherence to policies and procedures

· excellent written and oral communication skills

· the ability to communicate difficult messages coherently to senior management

· the ability to build rapport at all levels

· highly organised, with the ability to prioritise own workload, as well as that of others

· solution orientated approach, with a willingness to resolve problems in a hands on manner

· the ability to remain calm under pressure

· the ability to handle sensitive situations with discretion, while maintaining a managerial distance

Training will be provided where required, particularly in relation to interviewing skills and employee relations management.

Draw up a table listing the competencies required in the job description

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Clue from Job spec | Example |
| move to new open-plan premises | Versatility  Adaptability/Flexibility  Time management |
| Flexibility with hours/overtime | Versatility  Adaptability/Flexibility  Commitment to task |
| managing the cross departmental secretarial population | Control  Delegation  Teamwork  Collaboration |
| ensuring adherence | Control  Work standards |
| one of three Floor Managers | Teamwork  Collaboration |
| smooth transition to the new premises | Planning and Organising |
| realisation of the firm’s vision | Dealing with change  Oral Communication  Written communication |
| manage and monitor | Control  Priority setting  Decision making/Decisiveness/Judgement  Follow up  Staff development |
| consideration to efficiency | Time management |
| ensuring optimum use of | Time management |
| assist HR with recruitment | Teamwork |
| compilation of job descriptions | Logic  Written communication  Listening  Technical and Professional Knowledge and Proficiency |
| identifying key skills  and experience | Analysis  Logic  Technical and Professional Knowledge and Proficiency |
| selection and interviewing process | Analysis  Listening  Oral Communication |
| Manage | Control  Priority setting  Decision making/Decisiveness/Judgement  Follow up  Staff development |
| ensure it is appropriate and cost efficient | Control |
| Assess | Decision making/Decisiveness/Judgement |
| manage ongoing secretarial temporary staff requirements | Control  Priority setting  Decision making/Decisiveness/Judgement  Follow up  Staff development  Time management |
| take responsibility | Tolerance for stress  Control |
| manage day and night time overflow secretaries/document production operators | Control  Priority setting  Decision making/Decisiveness/Judgement  Follow up  Staff development  Time management |
| ensuring the most efficient utilisation of resources | Time management  Strategic management  Control |
| taking on secretarial overflow duties as required | Teamwork  Collaboration  Technical and Professional Knowledge and Proficiency |
| Performance management  responsibility for managing secretarial performance | Verbal communication  Written Communication  Control  Priority setting  Decision making/Decisiveness/Judgement  Follow up  Staff development  Time management |
| preparation and conduct of secretarial performance reviews | Verbal communication  Written Communication  Priority setting  Interpersonal skills |
| identifying and managing underperformers | Verbal communication  Written Communication  Control  Assertiveness  Analysis  Priority setting |
| obtaining feedback | Verbal communication  Written Communication  Priority setting  Interpersonal skills |
| holding review meetings | Oral Communication  Assertiveness  Analysis  Priority setting  Interpersonal skills |
| preparation of evidence for performance hearings and/or dismissals | Written Communication  Control  Decision making/Decisiveness/Judgement  Analysis |
| identifying possible training needs | Analysis  Oral Communication  Technical and Professional Knowledge and Proficiency  Fact Finding |
| reporting to the Partner responsible | Decision making/Decisiveness/Judgement |
| overall performance levels and flexibility of the secretarial population | Decision making/Decisiveness/Judgement  Analysis  Oral Communication  Assertiveness  Analysis  Priority setting  Interpersonal skills  Conflict management |
| responsibility for absence management | Assertiveness  Control  Conflict management  Fact Finding  Sensitivity to others  Listening |
| recording and monitoring absence levels | Written Communication |
| pre-empting and escalating | Decision making/Decisiveness/Judgement |
| conducting return to work interviews | Follow up  Decision making/Decisiveness/Judgement  Analysis  Oral Communication  Assertiveness  Analysis  Priority setting  Interpersonal skills  Conflict management |
| responsibility for standards | Control  Customer Focus/Customer Service Orientation  Work Standards |
| induction process | Oral Communication  Priority setting  Interpersonal skills |
| implementation | Commitment to task  Control  Negotiation |
| ensure smooth running | Decision making/Decisiveness/Judgement  Analysis  Oral Communication  Assertiveness  Analysis  Priority setting  Interpersonal skills  Conflict management |
| ensure a safe system of work | Decision making/Decisiveness/Judgement  Analysis  Oral Communication  Assertiveness  Analysis  Priority setting  Interpersonal skills  Conflict management |
| workstation assessments | Analysis |
| manage specific operations projects | Decision making/Decisiveness/Judgement  Analysis  Oral Communication  Assertiveness  Analysis  Priority setting  Interpersonal skills  Conflict management |
| work with the Facilities Manager | Teamwork  Collaboration |
| identify and booking resources | Priority setting |
| contribute to the agenda | Oral Communication  Analysis |
| highlight any issues | Oral Communication |
| suggest solutions | Analysis  Oral Communication |
| communicate management decisions | Oral Communication  Written Communication |
| secretarial background | Technical and Professional Knowledge and Proficiency |
| experience of facilities management or office supervision | Technical and Professional Knowledge and Proficiency |
| in a service focused, professional environment | Technical and Professional Knowledge and Proficiency |
| absence management | Assertiveness  Control  Conflict management  Fact Finding  Sensitivity to others  Listening |
| exposure to basic employee relations issues, including disciplinary and grievance proceedings | Technical and Professional Knowledge and Proficiency |
| the ability to encourage and develop | Oral Communication  Assertiveness  Sensitivity to others  Listening  Fact Finding |
| experience of managing a busy office/department | Technical and Professional Knowledge and Proficiency |
| implementing and ensuring adherence to policies and procedures | Control  Assertiveness |
| excellent written and oral communication skills | Oral Communication  Written Communication |
| ability to communicate difficult messages | Oral Communication  Written Communication  Sensitivity to others  Assertiveness |
| ability to build rapport | Sensitivity to others  Listening  Interpersonal skills |
| highly organised, with the ability to prioritise | Priority setting |
| solution orientated approach | Commitment to task |
| willingness to resolve problems | Commitment to task  Problem solving |
| remain calm under pressure | Tolerance for stress |
| Discretion | Sensitivity to others |
| maintaining a managerial distance | Decision making/Decisiveness/Judgement  Analysis  Oral Communication  Independence |

**Summary of Competencies**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Competency** | **Recurrence** |
| Control | 6 |
| Decision making/Decisiveness/Judgement | 4 |
| Priority setting | 3 |
| Teamwork | 3 |
| Time management | 3 |
| Adaptability/Flexibility | 2 |
| Analysis | 2 |
| Collaboration | 2 |
| Follow up | 2 |
| Listening | 2 |
| Logic | 2 |
| Oral Communication | 2 |
| Staff development | 2 |
| Technical and Professional Knowledge and Proficiency | 2 |
| Versatility | 2 |
| Commitment to task | 1 |
| Dealing with change | 1 |
| Delegation | 1 |
| Planning and Organising | 1 |
| Work standards | 1 |
| Written communication | 1 |

**Language**

You can also summarise the language used

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Word** | **Frequency** | **Importance** |
| Manage | 20 | 1 |
| Flexible/Flexibility | 2 |  |
| Ensure/Ensuring | 11 | 2 |
| Communicate | 3 |  |
| Identify | 4 | 4 |
| Prepare | 2 |  |
| Assess | 2 |  |
| Assist | 4 | 4 |
| Implement | 3 |  |
| Prioritise | 1 |  |
| Review | 2 |  |
| Responsibility | 8 | 3 |

It is also looking for the absence of language

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Word** | **Frequency** | **Inference** |
| Set/Setting | 0 | Limited responsibility |
| Lead/Leading | 0 | Limited responsibility |

This suggests that this role has someone else who is used to setting targets, direction etc and leadership. If your application focuses too much on how you have demonstrated leadership you may be overqualified for the role.

A handy tool for speeding up this exercise is;

[www.writewords.org.uk/word\_count.asp](http://www.writewords.org.uk/word_count.asp)

Only once you are clear on what is required by the role can you re-write your CV to match it. Do not just use a generic CV. Make it specific. See [CV writing](https://grlawrecruitmentemeamicrosoftonlinecom-1.sharepoint.emea.microsoftonline.com/london/DWP/DWP/Main%20Pack%20-%20current%20and%20old/Seminar%20main%20pack%20September%202010.doc#_Optimising_your_CV)

[Action Point](https://grlawrecruitmentemeamicrosoftonlinecom-1.sharepoint.emea.microsoftonline.com/london/DWP/Documents%20and%20Settings/pfrancis/Users/jbruce/Work%20Misc/Seminar%20documents%20for%20printing/Action%20Plan.doc#Decode)

## Being realistic

Whilst job searching can be a disheartening or slow experience, you must ensure that you are not over exposing yourself to the hiring community. By doing so you risk:

* Early burnout
* Reduced confidence
* Lack of focus

## Limit your applications

It is also important to pace your applications and maintain relevance. All too often job seekers send applications for roles that they have no experience for, mistakenly thinking that they are playing a percentage game. This is not the case. If you send out 100 applications for any role, you are not guaranteed 10 or 5 interviews. You must ensure that:

* You identify which employers are attractive to you
* You keep a close watch on their hiring activity
* You focus on quality over quantity
* Time is precious

Do not become seduced into applying for anything. Remember that if you keep a clear action plan of how you will achieve your goals you are more likely to succeed than fail. As we mention above, scatter gun applications for roles that fall outside of your skill, experience or talent set will not only consume precious time, but will ultimately fail. This is the job seekers perfect storm, as you become disheartened by rejection and de-motivated by lack of success. You must always play to your strengths and ensure your strengths are what the hirer desperately needs.

* Keep your goals safe
* Maintain a proper market view
* Stay alert for vacancies that fall into your criteria
* Ensure every application is compelling

## Don’t give up

Whilst the media has had a hay day with this recession, it will end and with that end comes the return of higher employment and greater wealth. You may have spotted already that the broadcasters and newspapers are no longer following the recession as they once were. Whilst it will take time, many commentators are now saying the worst is behind us. The reality is that you will start to see a steady increase in vacancies, you will see faster response to the applications you make, and you will get more reward for the work you do now to secure your next job.

The important factor here is that you secure not just any job, but the right job for you.

# Employer selection techniques

Understanding the various selection techniques, (for example assessment centres, information on psychometric testing etc);

## Post and Pre-Credit Crunch Approach

Until September 2008 employers would want to meet potential employees face to face as soon as possible because they were competing for talent. Firms and companies that are now recruiting realise that there are a lot of people to choose from so are able to be very selective. As a consequence of this many employers are using further tests or telephone interviews as a way of screening candidates before seeing people face to face. Employers are also interviewing more people for every position than they used to. Therefore it is vital to

make sure you are as prepared as possible for every interview or pre-screening process that you are invited to attend.

## Types of Pre-screening

### Technical tests

Typing tests, skills on Microsoft packages such as: Word, Excel, PowerPoint and other programs. These are generally assessed by specialist testing programs where the person is asked to perform as series of actions and is awarded points for each correct answer. Job seekers can practice their typing using [http://www.typingtest.com](http://www.typingtest.com/). Most recruitment agencies have some form of testing programs and should test candidates when they register them. All of these tests are very similar in the way they work and so if you are not offered a test ask for it. It is important you know what your skill level is so that if you need training or to practice and area you can do so.

Many agencies use tests provided by Previsor. A list of the tests they provide is found at <http://www.previsor.com/products/assessments/catalog>. If you are invited to undergo a pre-screening test make sure you prepare for it. Look at the catalogue provided by the Previsor website and ask the agency that has put you forward or any agency that you are registered with if you can take a practise test before you have to sit the test for real. One of the criticisms of these types of test is that candidates get used to the questions and so the marks are inflated. Turn that to your advantage! There are other tests in the market place so search Google for these. The chances are that the employer will be using one of those tests and even if they have prepared their own bespoke tests there is likely to be a lot of overlap with the off the shelf ones.

[Action Point](https://grlawrecruitmentemeamicrosoftonlinecom-1.sharepoint.emea.microsoftonline.com/london/DWP/Documents%20and%20Settings/pfrancis/Users/jbruce/Work%20Misc/Seminar%20documents%20for%20printing/Action%20Plan.doc#Decode)

### Psychometric and verbal reasoning tests

Often job applicants are terrified by personality tests and either freeze or try to give the answers they think the tester is after. Do not do this and do not panic. If you try to cheat on a psychometric test it is likely that you will have a very odd profile in the results which will have a very adverse result. These tests have a lot of test questions in them that are designed to double and triple check the consistency of the answers. On these tests there is no right or wrong answers and they are used to look at personality types rather than absolutes. If you are very introverted would a sales role be suited to you, if you are very creative would a highly technical role be suited to you? If a psychometric test suggests you might not be suited to a role it might be doing you a favour. Consider the results. You should be provided with a copy of the results. If you are apprehensive about this type of test there are hundreds available on the internet. Sit a few of these so when you are asked to complete one as part of the interview process you will know what do expect. To get an idea of your general psychometric profile, you can take a free MBTI (Myers-Briggs Typological Identifier) test here <http://www.humanmetrics.com/cgi-win/JTypes2.asp>. Your score will be four letters, you can then Google (or your preferred search engine) the letters to get your basic psychometric profile.

Verbal reasoning tests are also frequently used by employers. <http://www.psychometric-success.com/faq/faq-verbal-reasoning-tests.htm> is a concise guide to these tests and offers some sample tests. It explains the type if tests you may be given and how to prepare for these tests. It is a commercial site that offers coaching on how to pass these tests.

[Action Point](https://grlawrecruitmentemeamicrosoftonlinecom-1.sharepoint.emea.microsoftonline.com/london/DWP/Documents%20and%20Settings/pfrancis/Users/jbruce/Work%20Misc/Seminar%20documents%20for%20printing/Action%20Plan.doc#tests)

### Work simulation tests

These tend to be tests of situations you may include in the workplace. For a lawyer such a test could be to review a contract and highlight the points that need to be discussed. For a legal secretary it may be an in tray test where you are given a file and asked to carry out certain tasks. These should be part of your existing skills and therefore not alien to you. If you are moving into a new area allowance should be given for this in the test. Speak to others working in the new area so that you have a clear idea of the precise nature of what it is they do and then use your common sense.

These tests may appear at any stage of the interview process but are now more commonly being used before the face to face interview.

[Action Point](https://grlawrecruitmentemeamicrosoftonlinecom-1.sharepoint.emea.microsoftonline.com/london/DWP/Documents%20and%20Settings/pfrancis/Users/jbruce/Work%20Misc/Seminar%20documents%20for%20printing/Action%20Plan.doc#tests)

## Preparing for the Interview

**This is one of the most important parts of this tutorial because unless you excel at interview all of your efforts are wasted.**

Interviews are the traditional way of screening applicants for a position. They can range from telephone interviews to one to one interview, in person or by video conference or with several or a panel of interviewers. Assessment centres and group interviews are very rarely used except for trainee positions and normally for college or university leavers.

Whichever physical form an interview takes they generally are a combination of some or all of the following:

* Vague/cosy chat
* Structured interviews
* Competency/behavioural questions

Strategies for dealing with each of these are set out at the end of this section after the general points below.

### Before Your Interview

* It is very important that you prepare well for your interview. The following are our minimum guidelines for creating the right impression.
* You should receive information from the agency or employers on the position you are being interviewed for and the company/firm.
* Make sure you read this material thoroughly and take note of any questions you have, to run through with your consultant prior to interview. Make a list of the reasons why you are suitable for the role and examples of how you have demonstrated the necessary competencies in the past.
* Draw up a list of 10 adjectives that you would like to use to describe yourself
* Draw up a list of your strengths and weaknesses
* Research the company on their website. This is a key area to pick up profiles on interviewers as well as areas of expertise for the company.
* What you wear is not only a confidence booster to you, but will have a huge impact on the first impression you make. We always advise candidates to wear classic corporate attire: a dark suit, plain shirt/blouse and minimal jewellery will create a groomed and polished air.
* To ensure you are as calm as possible, plan your route well before the day and don't forget your map. Plan to arrive with 10 minutes to spare so that you can take a few minutes to relax and get your bearings.
* Before you enter the reception area, remember to TURN OFF YOUR MOBILE PHONE.

### Interview Questions Commonly Asked

Make sure that you read through your CV prior to your interview and take some time to think about what has motivated you so far in your career. What makes you a good employee and team player? Why would you be the best person for this role? You will be asked questions based on this information, such as:

* Why are you seeking to leave your current firm?
* Why do you want to work at this firm?
* What is it about this position that particularly interests you?
* Tell us about your experience to date.
* What do you find difficult about your current position?
* What are your main strengths and do you feel you have any weaknesses? (Always try and make any weaknesses sound as positive as possible explain how you overcome them.).
* Describe a problem encountered and how you resolved it.
* Where do you see yourself in five years time?
* What do you enjoy most about the work you do?

### Questions to Ask at Interview

It is important to show enthusiasm at interview and also find out not only if you are suited to the position but also if it is suited to you. You may have formed some questions to ask when you were doing your research but here are some other questions you may feel comfortable asking:

* Products, locations and marketplace?
* Why has this role become available? – is it new?
* Career progression path?
* Where possible, does the company promote from within?
* Does the company have a fast-track programme?
* What is the next stage in the recruitment process?
* What do they like about working there?
* What are the key competencies required for this role?

### The Golden Rules of Interviewing

Probably the most important aspect of your interview is how you conduct yourself. You are aiming to appear professional, enthusiastic, helpful and willing. Try and relax, you are not trying to hide anything so don't worry about being caught out. There are no hidden agendas to interviews! Always try to avoid being critical or answering questions negatively. Give positive reasons for your motivations. Try and steer away from salary issues but if asked then market rate is a safe answer. If asked a technical question you don't know the answer to, never guess. Explain that whilst you cannot answer that question off the top of your head you are confident

that in a working environment you would know where to go to solve this problem; by asking a colleague, using online help facilities, etc. It may also be prudent to add that you are a very fast learner. If asked a difficult question you are not prepared for, do not panic and do not be afraid to take some time to think before giving an answer. First impressions are extremely important and you must remember your body language, most importantly do not fidget, maintain eye contact, give a firm handshake and do not be afraid to smile.

Finally inform your referees that they may be contacted. Use open references as testimonials to support your applications.

**Cosy chat**

The cosy chat interview can be the most difficult type of interview because it is not clear what the interviewer is trying to find out. In many cases it is a sign that the interviewer is not sure what they are looking for other than a general “does this person fit in”. Faced with this type of interview make sure you bring out during the interview the most important of the points and competencies you have identified from the job description. It could be that the questions the interviewer is asking seek answers that have been cleverly disguised. If this is the case you have to go with the flow and not worry about it

**Structured interviews**

These are a series of questions that the interviewer will throw at you and often are prompted by your CV.

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Type of Question | Example | Reason for question | Approach |
| Factual | What did you do between school and university | To resolve grey area or missing facts. Sometimes a cross check if similar questions asked earlier | Give thinking behind your action. E.g. I took a year out because I wanted to broaden my perspective on the world |
| Motivational | Why did you study law?  Why did you leave? | Previous behaviour often indicates how you will behave in the future. | Anticipate these questions and prepare your answers beforehand |
| Scenario | What would you do if…? | Trying to get an idea of how you would react in if you were faced with this scenario in your new role | Work out what would be expected of you in the role as part of your preparation. 90% of these questions can be anticipated |

**Competency/behavioural questions**

Competency or evidenced based interviews look for evidence to support a list of desired competencies in a role. For example if the role requires good communication the questions will be designed to find examples of how you demonstrated or failed to demonstrate good communication in the past. This approach is based on

the fact that people generally repeat their behaviours in similar situations. These competencies are either a function of your personality or can be trained or may be a combination of both. E.g. a competency required in the emergency services requires being able to work calmly in a highly pressurised environment. It is more difficult to fake the answers to these questions as a skilled interviewer will ask for more and more details about the example you have given and so a lie quickly becomes apparent. Therefore as part of your preparation identify the competencies required in the role. See [Decoding job adverts](https://grlawrecruitmentemeamicrosoftonlinecom-1.sharepoint.emea.microsoftonline.com/london/DWP/DWP/Main%20Pack%20-%20current%20and%20old/Seminar%20main%20pack%20September%202010.doc#_Decoding_job_adverts).

Interviewers trained in competency based interviewing are generally taught the STAR technique:

**Situation** – where, when, whom?

**Task** – describe the task within the situation

**Action** – How did you deal with the situation? What steps did you take and why?

**Result** – did those steps lead to success or failure? If failure, what did you learn?

These all require you to “give an example of a time when…” or “tell me of a scenario where you…”. I.e. explain the context. It will be followed with prompts such as “and what was *your* role in” or “so what did *you* do?”. I.e. how did you perform against the competency? Look at the potential questions set out in the links below and prepare your examples to demonstrate you have these competencies.

Examples of Common Competencies

Communication skills

Delivering Results

Interpersonal Skills

Use of Initiative

Planning and Organising

Analytical Thinking

Strategic Thinking

Building relationships

Developing Others

Team Work

The links below contain some very good examples of competency based questions. It is vital that you go through these.

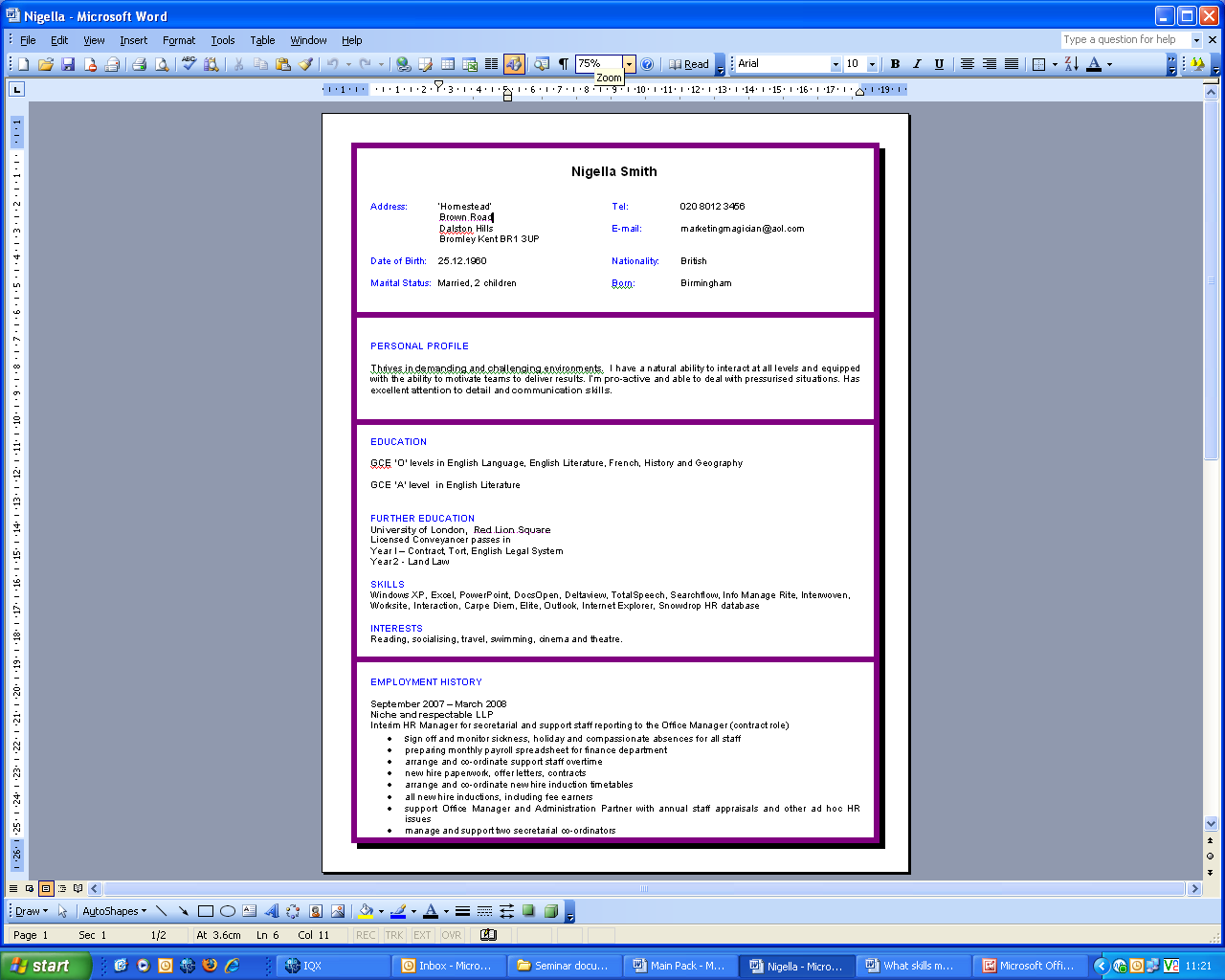
<http://www.interview-skills.co.uk/competency-based-interviews.aspx>

<http://www.wikijob.co.uk/wiki/competency-based-questions>

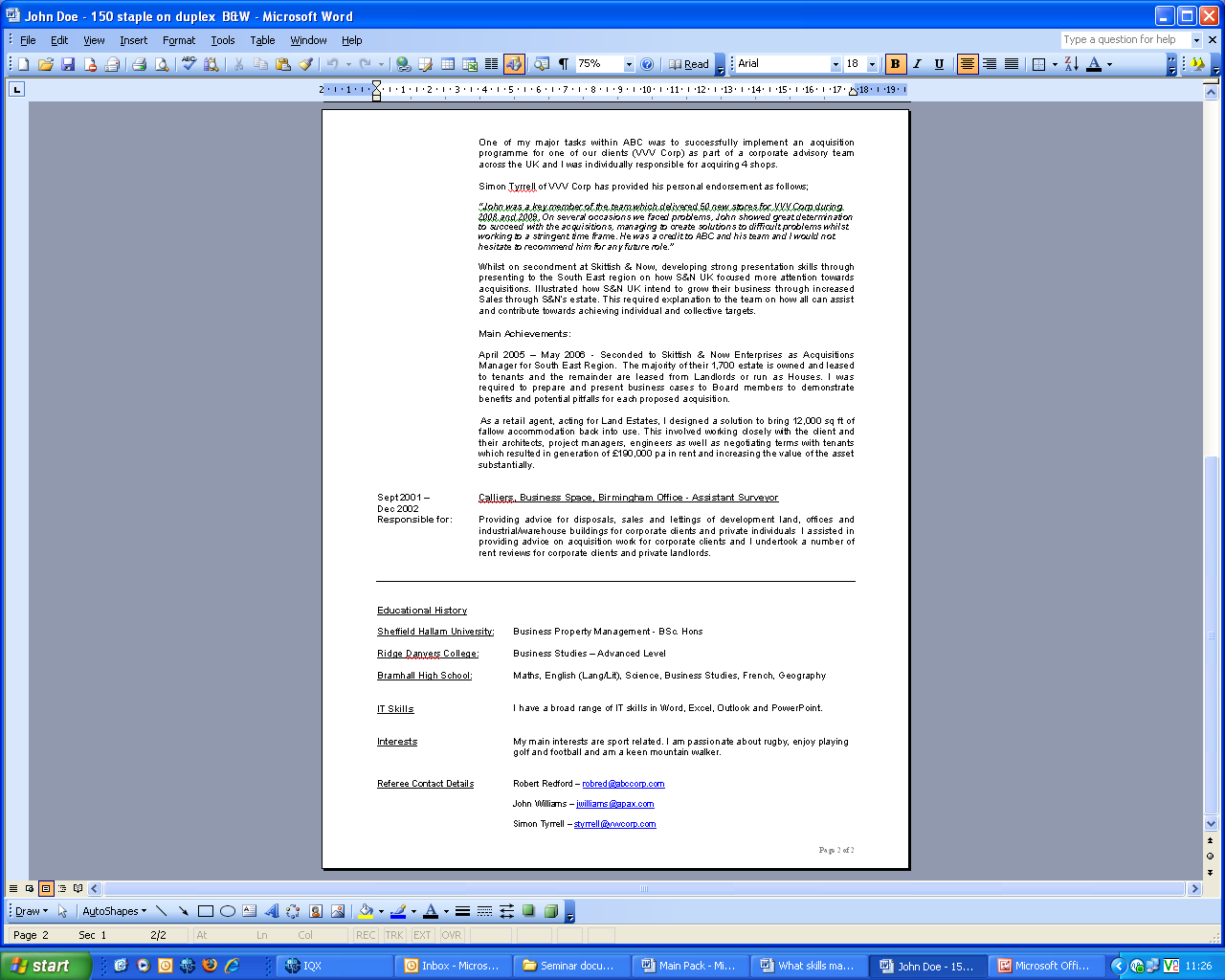
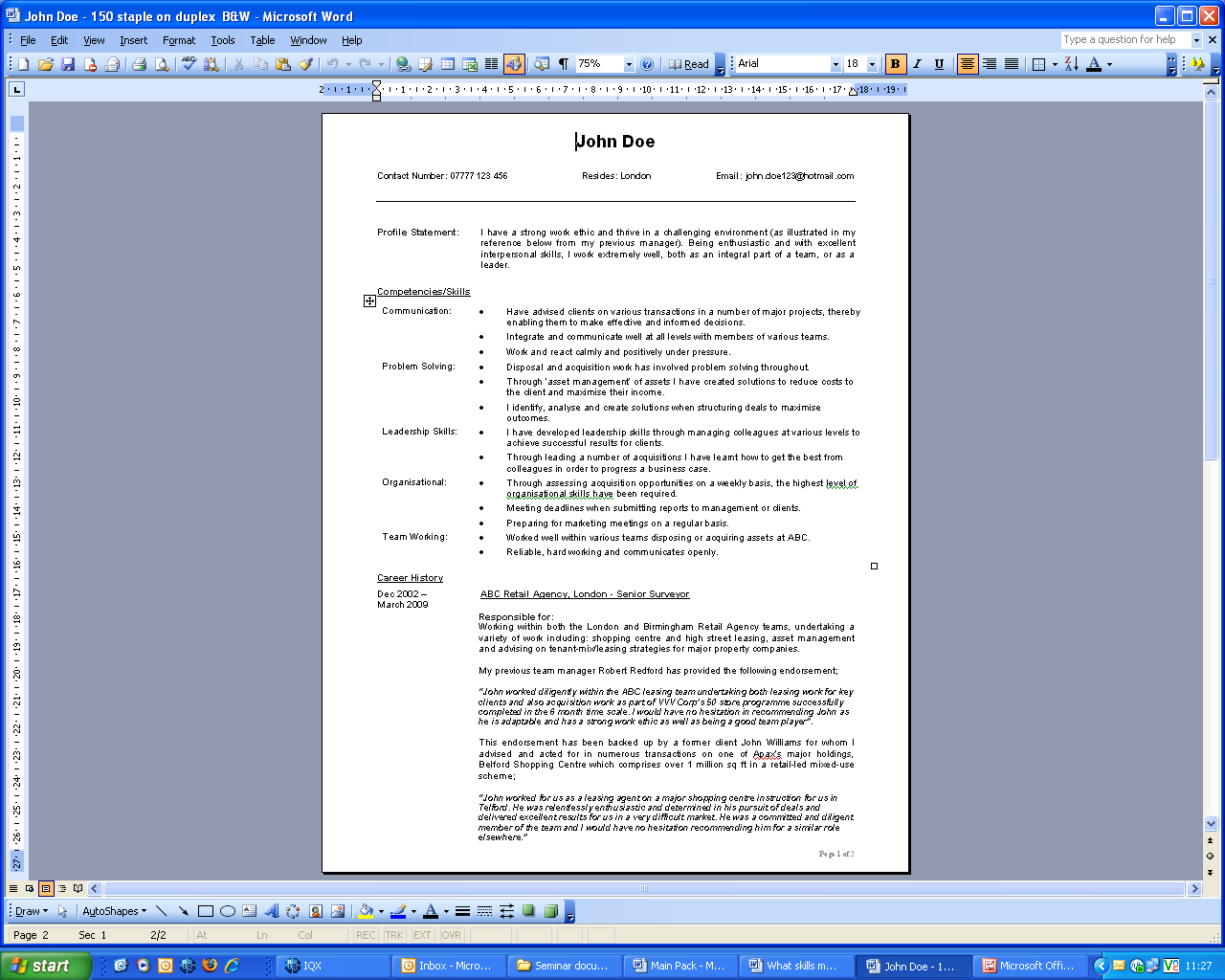
To keep abreast of the latest recruitment information and interview performance trends look at [www.cipd.co.uk/news](http://www.cipd.co.uk/news) or [www.peoplemanagement.co.uk](http://www.peoplemanagement.co.uk/) both of these sites have contributions from senior HR professionals and will often contain articles relating to interviewing techniques and employer selection criteria.

# Seminar Hand Outs

## Descriptive Style CV – Nigella Smith



## Performance Style CV – John Doe



## Recession-beating jobs: The UK's fastest-rising salaries

The green shoots of recovery may still be few and far between, but the latest figures from the Office of National Statistics (ONS) reveal that some professions have enjoyed rising salaries over the last year. We take a look at the fastest pay risers - and the routes into them - and the jobs which have seen the biggest drops.

**Smiths and forge workers - Up 35.9 per cent (average pay £24,549)**Pay for [smiths](http://yahoo.careerbuilder.co.uk/jobs/keyword/smith/) and forge workers saw the biggest rise of all the career categories defined by the ONS in the year ending April 2012. Salaries in the sector went up by more than one third - taking the industry average to a whisker below the national average full time pay packet.

**How to get in:** There is no formal qualification to work as a blacksmith or in industrial metalwork, however many entering the sector choose to take a BTEC diploma in the discipline. It is also possible to get on-the-job training.

**Psychologists - Up 23.3 per cent (average pay £40,276)**[Psychologists](http://yahoo.careerbuilder.co.uk/jobs/keyword/Psychologist/) work in a number of sectors - including the NHS, private healthcare, education, counselling, the armed forces, sport and in the commercial world. On average, it takes seven years to qualify as one - but with an average rise in annual salaries of almost a quarter, it's a field that must look more attractive than ever to students and jobseekers.

**How to get in:** Studying psychology at university is the obvious first step, and psychologists tend to specialise in their chosen discipline as they rise up the academic ladder - from undergraduate degree to postgraduate qualifications.

**Rail and rolling stock builders and repairers - Up 15.6 per cent (average pay £38,711)**Despite the high-profile loss of a big train-building contract to Germany, the [rail building](http://yahoo.careerbuilder.co.uk/jobs/keyword/rail+building/) and maintenance sector still appears to be paying well. It's the third-fastest-rising category in the ONS list and average pay is a hefty £38,711.

**How to get in:** There are numerous routes into the sector, with [mechanical engineering](http://yahoo.careerbuilder.co.uk/jobs/keyword/mechanical+engineer/) and [civil engineering](http://yahoo.careerbuilder.co.uk/jobs/keyword/civil+engineer/) qualifications being the most-likely routes for the train-building and railway-building sectors respectively.

**Fishmongers and poultry dressers - Up 13.9 per cent (average pay £16,531)**They might not be the most glamorous careers in the world - or the highest paid - but it seems the fortunes of the nation's fishmongers and poultry dressers are rising. Whether the sizeable 13.9 per cent average wage increase is down to an increased interest in food authenticity among the general public - or a shortage of skilled knife-wielders - is unclear.

**How to get in:** There is no formal training route into fishmongery or poultry preparation, with on-the-job training and apprenticeships being the most-common way in. The Billingsgate Seafood School offers introductory courses (which can be free) and training for those interested in a career in fishmongery.

**CEOs and senior officials - 11.8 per cent (average pay £85,223)**We might all be in it together, but the top echelons of [management](http://yahoo.careerbuilder.co.uk/jobs/keyword/manager/) are still giving themselves higher pay rises than the majority of the workforce are lucky enough to receive. The average salary for CEOs and senior officials rose to more than three times the national average wage over the last year - and it is unclear whether that includes bonuses, share options and benefits.

**How to get in:** Obviously it's not as simple as sending your CV to Vodafone offering your services as CEO, but there is a clearly defined path into [senior management](http://yahoo.careerbuilder.co.uk/jobs/keyword/senior+manager/) - and taking an MBA from a university or college with a good reputation is the first step on that path for many.

**Fastest-falling salaries...**

The ONS survey also revealed the losers in the big game of salary snakes and ladders, and we've picked out the bottom four to provide a snapshot of the careers which are suffering.

The biggest average pay cut (in percentage terms) appears to have been taken by social and humanities scientists, with a drop of 21.4 per cent to £23,447 - taking the sector below the average national wage.

[Advertising](http://yahoo.careerbuilder.co.uk/jobs/keyword/advertising/) always suffers in a recession, so it's not a surprise to find advertising accounts managers and creative directors second-to-bottom with an average pay drop of 18.8 per cent to £32,458.

And it seems the tourist industry must still be suffering, with [hotel and accommodation managers](http://yahoo.careerbuilder.co.uk/jobs/keyword/hotel+manager/) and proprietors seeing their average salary fall 10.4 per cent to £25,003.

Podiatrists were next on the list, with average pay tumbling 9.9 per cent to £29,097.

*All figures were taken from the Office of National Statistics' Annual Survey of Hours and Earnings*

(Author: Rachel Burge for CareerBuilder.co.uk)

## The Subtle Art of Networking



**The subtle art of effective networking**

Thursday, 30th July 2009 *(Still relevant in 2013)*  
**Manage your connections wisely in order to find that next job**  
Timothy Barber  
SINCE the Eighties heyday of power lunches and bulging Filofaxes, networking – the mysterious art of forming relationships with strangers for somewhat mercenary purposes – has been central to City life. To some it’s a necessary evil, to others it’s exciting – but in a recession-affected job market, it can be the difference between progressing one’s career and falling into the void. After all, the majority of City jobs are now filled as a result of the networking process, and that’s especially true when it comes to recently redundant bankers. Being good at it counts for more now than it ever has.  
  
However, according to Linda Jackson, director of career management firm Fairplace and networking guru, a lot of people still labour under the misapprehension that a bit of banter and flattery followed by an exchange of business cards is enough to call someone a useful contact. In fact, effective networking requires work, dedication and tactics – something some people only realise too late.  
  
“Typically people don’t make enough time to work on it – it’s always easy to let these things slide until suddenly you’re facing redundancy,” she says. At that point, all those accumulated business cards from half-remembered meetings have little value if relationships haven’t been developed.  
  
**LONG-TERM VIEW**  
You have to take a long-term view to networking, building relationships for the time they become of use. That use might mean introducing you to further contacts, looking out for openings and opportunities or feeding you useful information. And the key is to make sure you’re useful as well. After making a contact, arrange a follow up meeting over a coffee or lunch – and it’s here the hard work starts.  
  
“If you can gift somebody something then they’re far more likely to want to help you,” says Jackson. “You need to ask them what challenges they have, and see how you can help them. You might have worked on a similar project to the one they’re dealing with, or be able to recommend them a contact yourself. You have to find that way to add value to them.”  
  
Having built up strong contacts, you have to use your network strategically when it comes to job searching – think about what organisations and people you want to target for an introduction, and who in your network can introduce you. But once you have your target, how do you optimise your chances of hitting it?  
  
Ideally, you’ll be wanting your contact to introduce you in person to their contact – for instance, by inviting you along the next time you meet up – or to forward your details with a recommendation via email. To ensure they act on this, Jackson advises letting them know you’ll follow up in a few days – that way you have an agreement for them to act, and you don’t need to be embarrassed about checking up on progress.  
  
And make sure you thank your contact later, whatever the outcome – you’ll be reassuring them that the connection went well, which means that they’ll be more likely to help you again

## LinkedIn guide

**How LinkedIn will fire up your career**



**W**ant a job with Channel 4? Not on LinkedIn? Not a chance!!! They along with other employers not only want you to be on LinkedIn, but want you to be “following” the company before they will accept any job application.

The recruitment game has changed. Hiring managers are “posting” directly into their status bars, or “tweeting” a link to the job rather than going through the traditional advertising/ job board route. So, you'd better be on the web.

To put a sharper point on it: If you don't have a profile on LinkedIn, you're nowhere. Partly motivated by the cheaper, faster recruiting they can do online, hiring professionals now plan to make a lot of their hires in the next few years through social media.

Facebook is for fun (but can still be very useful). Tweets have a short shelf life. If you're serious about managing your career, the social site that really matters is LinkedIn. In today's job market an invitation to "join my professional network" has become more obligatory - and more useful - than swapping business cards and churning out CVs.

**Getting the most out of LinkedIn**

1. **For starters complete your profile**.  If you want a job, can’t afford to be lazy in looking for one. LinkedIn functions much like a search engine and when it detects profiles with data gaps (blank fields, in other words), it leaves them out of the search results. Don’t leave out your picture.  Employers like being able to put a face to a name. Besides a picture lends authenticity to your profile.
2. **Make yourself available**. High privacy settings are a good idea for those Facebook pictures you don’t want everybody to see, but LinkedIn is a business tool, so make yourself easy to contact. Configure your settings so that you are able to receive pictures and invites from people who view your profile.
3. **Be active**. The more contacts you have the more easily you will be ‘discovered’. Don’t sit waiting for invites to come to you, send invites to friends, ex-colleagues, relatives, everybody you know.
4. **Work your network**.Use your network to pick up valuable information about your dream employers. Have they hired people with your skills? Have they hired a new executive you could be reporting to if you got a particular job? Conducting a company search will indicate to you what the company’s hiring position is and will help you decide if you stand a chance of getting a job in the businesses you’re targeting.
5. **Apply now!** High advertising costs are encouraging employers to promote jobs via LinkedIn instead. Responding to such ads helps you cut straight to the employer. Searching for jobs on LinkedIn is easy — just go to the Jobs tab, use the Advanced search to filter results and generate a list of potential jobs.
6. **Update your status.** You post updates on your social life via Facebook. Do the same for your professional life via LinkedIn. You can update your employment status — just make sure you don’t repeat the ‘I need a job’ mantra many times. Desperation’s not a good look to an employer.
7. **Research your potential boss**. Your employer is definitely looking you up on LinkedIn so why not do the same to him/her? Instead of googling your employer’s name, search LinkedIn to get a comprehensive professional profile of your potential employer. You can search for your interviewer to get those little titbits that will keep the conversation flowing and help you build a rapport.
8. **Seek recommendations**. Contact all your old colleagues, clients, anyone who can help influence your career. Capture their recommendation and store it in your profile for all future employers to see.

## Job Searching and Staying Marketable in a Recession

Job searching is never fun, nor is it something that is particularly comfortable for the majority of people out there. It can be frustrating, but ultimately, it can prove to be an extremely rewarding experience. There are additional challenges that exist, however, when it comes to job searching in a recession.  
  
The term recession is likely to be as frightening to many as a job search. Because of this, it's important to remember that there are ways to simplify job searching in a recession. Whether you are currently employed and concerned about the possibility of a layoff or you are unemployed and eager to find work, the following tips will help with job searching in a recession.  
  
**1. Take an inventory of your skills.** Whenever you are searching for a job, it's important to make sure that you know your strengths and that you are able to identify the areas where you could be stronger. While job searching in a recession, if you are aware of the potential for growth in a given area, you may want to make an effort to develop those skills - particularly if they will make you more marketable to employers.  
  
**2. Identify your long term goals.** When you are searching for a new job, you have a great opportunity to get a fresh start. If you've always felt that you aren't doing the right type of work, you have the opportunity to explore other options - and what you would need to be able to break into a new field - rather than just looking for more of the same.  
  
**3. Step up your confidence.** When you are frustrated and down about your circumstances, it is going to show. The more that you are able to overcome the stress that you're experiencing and exude confidence, the better the position that you will be in to go in for the interview.  
  
Ultimately, confidence is one of the strongest factors out there; when you are committed to doing your best work, when you are focused on learning about the companies that you apply to and you are able to focus on developing the full skill set that they are looking for, you will have an advantage.  
  
Staying marketable is something that you can focus on whether or not you currently have a job and regardless of whether you are starting into a new field or looking for a similar position. When there are strains on the economy, there will be more applicants for various positions and that means that there will be more competition; remember that competition can be a good thing - provided you let it drive you to be your best.  
  
Job searching in a recession, in other words, is really just a matter of ensuring that you are at the top of your game - that you have all of the necessary skills, that you know what you are working toward and that you know that you're able to accomplish all of the things that you set out to do.

Cecile Peterkin (2013)

# COMPETENCY BASED INTERVIEWING

Competency Based Interviewing (CBI) is based around the theory that your past behaviour at work is the best indicator of your future work performance. You may remember we discussed this during the first Optimising your CV section in the seminar.

Questions are designed around the specific competencies required to do the job you are interviewing for. These are called key competencies.

A CBI requires the candidate to think of specific examples from their work experience and stops candidates giving answers that they think interviewers want to hear. Each CBI question is based on 3 steps:

Understanding the situation the candidate is explaining.

Understanding what the candidate did in the situation which should then demonstrate their level of competence.

Understanding what the outcome of the situation was which should then demonstrate how effective their action was.

Therefore, when participating in a Competency Based Interview it is critical to structure your answers that address these probing questions to ensure you deliver enough information to score highly in that competence. Probes are open-ended questions which force you to clarify points.

**An example of the structure of a CBI question may be:**

**Question:**

Can you think of a time when you have worked under pressure?

**Optional Probes:**

What was the situation?

What did you do?

What was the challenge?

What was the outcome?

**Additional Probes:**

How did you feel about the situation?

Being asked how you felt will reveal a lot about the way you approached your work and your preferred style of working.

Whilst conducting a CBI, an interviewer should **not** rate the candidate at all. It is a challenge to stay objective during the interview. Your interviewer should be aware of biases that they may bring to the interview. Like attracts like and interviewers will always tend to rate candidates higher if they like them and have things in common. When people like you they tend to agree with you by using non-verbal communication e.g. nodding and smiling. This means they will encourage some candidates but not others which can be unfair. A fair interviewer will collect information during an interview and seek to understand the candidate without using their gut feeling to make a decision on whether the candidate will get the job. Of course, their gut feeling will usually reflect the evidence you give them during a CBI. The problem with using only gut feeling is that it is subjective, and difficult to justify!

By considering the job specification and the competency definitions you will be able to identify the key competencies for the position. Up to 5 competencies are usually identified, with 2 questions on each. For each competency you need to know what the positive and negative indicators are so you can ensure your responses fall into the positive category, not the negative.

Here are some common key competencies:

Organisation

Team Work

Customer Focus

Problem Solving

Using Initiative

Working Under Pressure / Resilience

Flexibility

#### ORGANISATION

**Positive Indicators**

Organises own workload efficiently

Plans in the short and medium term before starting tasks

Structures own activities

Creates schedules

Prioritises workload accurately

Prepares in advance

Checks progress is on track at regular intervals

Builds in contingencies

Makes realistic time scales

Rarely misses deadlines because of unavoidable circumstances

**Negative Indicators**

Disorganised and unstructured

Starts without planning, tackles obstacles on the spur of the moment without prior thought

Never commits himself / herself

Rarely creates schedules

No clear priorities

Tends not to prepare in advance

Does not monitor progress; fails to use prompts or reminders

Doesn’t build in contingencies

Not concerned about time pressure

Misses deadlines through poor planning

#### TEAM WORKING

**Positive Indicators**

Works best in teams

Fits in well with teams

Develops a good network of contracts at all levels

Supportive and helpful

Acknowledges the contributions of others

Builds lasting working relationships

Shows consideration for colleagues

Tries to encourage people to work together

Creates a sense of team spirit

Balances personal objectives with those of the team

**Negative Indicators**

Works best alone

Dislikes relying on others

Fails to establish networks

Shows limited support of team efforts

Rarely praises colleagues for their input

Makes little effort to sustain relationships

Takes credit for team effort

Does little to improve team relationships

Limited evidence of trying to create harmony

Puts personal objectives first

#### PROBLEM SOLVING

##### Positive Indicators

Anticipates potential difficulties

Chooses between possible causes appropriately

Stays objective

Insightful – gets to the root of the problem immediately

Breaks problems down into logical stages

Has creative ideas

Generates new insights and a range of workable solutions

Assesses the risks carefully

Analyses information accurately with appropriate speed

Draws appropriate conclusions

##### Negative Indicators

Sometimes fails to anticipate problems

Slow to grasp problem or learn from mistakes

Swayed by feelings and intuition

Analyses things with an inappropriate level of detail

Tends to tackle things in a haphazard way

Lacks creativity

Tends to come up with impractical solutions

Gives limited thought to the consequences of a solution

Takes risks

Unsure of the quality of their decisions

#### USING INITIATIVE

##### Positive Indicators

Takes responsibility for own actions and decisions

Ensures he / she understands the task

Can make decisions without referring to others

Only refers upwards when necessary

Handles problems with minimal guidance

Appreciates the consequences of delaying action

Acts without being prompted

Acts on own initiative

##### Negative Indicators

Does not take responsibility for own actions and decisions

Relies too much on others

Constantly referring to others and asking questions

Refers upwards about most issues

Needs considerable guidance

Prepared to wait to act even in crises

Tends to interrupt others at difficult times

Acts only after being prompted

Rarely shows initiative

Limited positive feedback

#### WORKING UNDER PRESURE / RESILIENCE

##### Positive Indicators

Deals with pressure calmly

Remains self-controlled during crises

Able to relax

Rarely tense for long

Optimistic and resilient

Bounces back after setbacks

Open to change – not threatened by it

Reacts positively to change

Not overly sensitive to criticism

Keeps difficulties in perspective

##### Negative Indicators

Allows pressure to get to him / her; infects others with anxiety or panic

Little emotional control; overreacts during crises

Finds it hard to relax

Frequently tense

Pessimistic

Tends to find it hard to bounce back

Prefers stability

Dislikes change – finds it unsettling

Too sensitive to criticism

Lets difficulties get out of proportion

#### COMPETENCY BASED INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

Interview questions should not be hypothetical nor theoretical otherwise you will end up giving hypothetical and theoretical answers. The following questions are examples of CBI questions.

##### ORGANISATION

Organises own time effectively and creates own work schedules. Prioritises and prepares in advance. Sets realistic time-scales.

**Questions you may encounter:**

**Give me an example of when you had to organise a piece of work or an event.**What did you have to do?  
How did you prepare and plan for it?  
What time-scale did you set?  
How well did it go?

**Tell me about a time when you had to prioritise a list of activities**Why was this necessary?  
On what basis did you make your decisions?  
How did this work out in practise?

**Describe an occasion when you had to prepare in advance for a meeting or project**What did you do?  
How much time did you have to prepare?  
What could you have prepared better?

**Give me an example of when you had to work to an important deadline.**How manageable were your time-scales  
What did you do to ensure that the deadline was met?  
How would you organise your activities differently next time?

**TEAM WORKING**

Fits in with the team. Develops effective and supportive relationships with colleagues. Is considerate towards them and creates a sense of team spirit.

**Questions you may encounter:**

**Tell me about the last time you worked as part of a team.**What was the purpose of the team?  
What did you like about working in the group?  
What did you dislike?  
How did you get the team members to co-operate?

**Describe a time when you worked in a really effective team.**What made the team so effective?  
What was your particular contribution to the team?  
How did your colleagues relate to you?

**Give me an example of when you had to support others in the team**Why did they need support?  
What did you do to support them?  
How did that change things?

**Describe an occasion when you had difficulties working with a team.**What caused the problems?  
How did you respond?  
What was the outcome?

**Tell me about a time when you needed to get team members to work together.**What did you do?  
How did the others respond to you?  
What would you do differently next time?

##### PROBLEM SOLVING

Identifies potential difficulties and their causes. Generates workable solutions and makes rational judgements.

**Questions you may encounter:**

**Tell me about a time you were able to anticipate a problem.**How did you know the problem was likely to occur  
What did you do?  
How effective was your action?

**Describe a complex problem which you solved recently for a customer.**What made it so challenging?  
How did you handle it?  
What was the outcome?

**Tell me about when you have had to identify the key cause of a problem.**How did you work out the cause?  
How did you solve the problem?  
What lessons did you learn?

**Give me a recent example of when you came up with different solutions to a problem.**What suggestions did you come up with?  
What did others think of your ideas?  
What lessons did you learn?

**Tell me about a recent situation in which you had to be totally objective when reaching a decision.**What were the facts you had to review?  
How did you weight the different pieces of information?  
Looking back, what do you think of your decision?

**Describe the last time you had to analyse a lot of information or data.**What sort of information did this involve?  
How did you analyse it?  
What did you learn from the analysis

##### USING INITIATIVE

Takes responsibility for own actions and makes decisions without referring to others. Acts on own initiative.

**Questions you may encounter:**

**Tell me about the last time you had to take responsibility for your own actions.**What had you done that you had to take responsibility for?  
Why was this so important?  
How did you stand up for yourself?

**Describe the last time you had to make a spur of the moment decision.**Why did it have to be made so quickly?  
How did your decision affect others?  
What would you do differently if you could do it again?

**Give me an example of when you had to work without any guidance.**Why was this?  
How did you cope?  
What feedback did you receive?

**Describe an occasion when you took responsibility for making a key decision.**What was your decision?  
How and why did you defend your position?  
What was the possible impact of a poor decision?

**Tell me about a time when you referred upwards for help.**What was the background?  
Why did you need help?  
To what extent do you still seek advice in this area?

**Give me a recent example of when you showed initiative.**What were the circumstances?  
In what way did you show initiative?  
What resulted from the initiative that you took?

##### WORKING UNDER PRESSURE / RESILIENCE

Remains calm and self-controlled under pressure. Reacts well to change and stays positive despite setbacks. Keeps difficulties in perspective.

**Questions you may encounter:**

**Describe a situation in which you had to work under pressure.**What was the cause of the pressure?  
How did you feel and react?  
What impact did this have on your work?

**Tell me about the last time you had to cope with a significant change to your daily activities.**What led to the change?  
How did you feel about it?  
What did you do to cope

**Describe a crisis you have handled recently.**What caused it?  
What did you do to resolve it?  
What were your feelings at the time?

**Give me a recent example of when you have experienced a setback.**Describe the situation.  
How did you react to the problem?  
To what extent did others see how you were feeling?

**Give me an example of a time when you were unfairly criticised.**Why was this?  
How did you respond?  
What was the outcome?

**Describe an occasion when something at work was causing you to feel negative or fed-up.**What had caused these feelings?  
How did you approach your work at the time?  
What impact did this have on your friends or work colleagues?

There will be other questions but the above should act as a good guide to what you may experience in your own interviews. The more familiar you become with this style the more confident, articulate and attractive you will be to the employer.

# CV example 1 – John Doe

**John Doe**

**Contact Number: 07777 123 456 Resides: London Email: john.doe123@hotmail.com**

**Profile Statement:** I have a strong work ethic and thrive in a challenging environment (as illustrated in my reference below from my previous manager). Being enthusiastic and with excellent interpersonal skills, I work extremely well, both as an integral part of a team, or as a leader.

**Competencies/Skills**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Communication: | * Have advised clients on various transactions in a number of major projects, thereby enabling them to make effective and informed decisions. * Integrate and communicate well at all levels with members of various teams. * Work and react calmly and positively under pressure. |
| Problem Solving: | * Disposal and acquisition work has involved problem solving throughout. * Through ‘asset management’ of assets I have created solutions to reduce costs to the client and maximise their income. * I identify, analyse and create solutions when structuring deals to maximise outcomes. |
| Leadership Skills: | * I have developed leadership skills through managing colleagues at various levels to achieve successful results for clients. * Through leading a number of acquisitions I have learnt how to get the best from colleagues in order to progress a business case. |
| Organisational: | * Through assessing acquisition opportunities on a weekly basis, the highest level of organisational skills have been required. * Meeting deadlines when submitting reports to management or clients. * Preparing for marketing meetings on a regular basis. |
| Team Working: | * Worked well within various teams disposing or acquiring assets at ABC. * Reliable, hard working and communicates openly. |

**Career History**

Dec 2002 – **ABC Retail Agency, London - Senior Surveyor**

March 2009

**Responsible for:**

Working within both the London and Birmingham Retail Agency teams, undertaking a variety of work including: shopping centre and high street leasing, asset management and advising on tenant-mix/leasing strategies for major property companies.

My previous team manager Robert Redford has provided the following endorsement;

***“John worked diligently within the ABC leasing team undertaking both leasing work for key clients and also acquisition work as part of VVV Corp’s 50 store programme successfully completed in the 6 month time scale. I would have no hesitation in recommending John as he is adaptable, has a strong work ethic and is a good team player”.***

This endorsement has been backed up by a former client John Williams for whom I advised and acted for in numerous transactions on one of Apax’s major holdings, Belford Shopping Centre which comprises over 1 million sq ft in a retail-led mixed-use scheme;

***“John worked for us as a leasing agent on a major shopping centre instruction in Telford. He was relentlessly enthusiastic and determined in his pursuit of deals and delivered excellent results for us in a very difficult market. He was a committed and diligent member of the team and I would have no hesitation recommending him for a similar role elsewhere.”***

One of my major tasks within ABC was to successfully implement an acquisition programme for one of our clients (VVV Corp) as part of a corporate advisory team across the UK and I was individually responsible for acquiring 4 shops.

Simon Tyrrell of VVV Corp has provided his personal endorsement as follows;

***“John was a key member of the team which delivered 50 new stores for VVV Corp during 2008 and 2009. On several occasions we faced problems, John showed great determination to succeed with the acquisitions, managing to create solutions to difficult problems whilst working to a stringent time frame. He was a credit to ABC and his team and I would not hesitate to recommend him for any future role.”***

Whilst on secondment at Skittish & Now, developing strong presentation skills through presenting to the South East region on how S&N UK focused more attention towards acquisitions. Illustrated how S&N UK intend to grow their business through increased Sales through S&N’s estate. This required explanation to the team on how all can assist and contribute towards achieving individual and collective targets.

**Main Achievements:**

April 2005 – May 2006 - Seconded to Skittish & Now Enterprises as Acquisitions Manager for South East Region. The majority of their 1,700 estate is owned and leased to tenants and the remainder are leased from Landlords or run as Houses. I was required to prepare and present business cases to Board members to demonstrate benefits and potential pitfalls for each proposed acquisition.

As a retail agent, acting for Land Estates, I designed a solution to bring 12,000 sq ft of fallow accommodation back into use. This involved working closely with the client and their architects, project managers, engineers as well as negotiating terms with tenants which resulted in generation of £190,000 pa in rent and increasing the value of the asset substantially.

Sept 2001 – **Calliers, Business Space, Birmingham Office - Assistant Surveyor**

Dec 2002

Responsible for: Providing advice for disposals, sales and lettings of development land, offices and industrial/warehouse buildings for corporate clients and private individuals I assisted in providing advice on acquisition work for corporate clients and I undertook a number of rent reviews for corporate clients and private landlords.

**Educational History**

Sheffield Hallam University: Business Property Management - BSc. Hons

Ridge Danyers College: Business Studies – Advanced Level

Bramhall High School: Maths, English (Lang/Lit), Science, Business Studies, French, Geography

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **IT Skills** | I have a broad range of IT skills in Word, Excel, Outlook and PowerPoint. |
|  |  |

**Interests** My main interests are sport related. I am passionate about rugby, enjoy playing golf and football and am a keen mountain walker.

**Referee Contact Details** Robert Redford – [robred@abccorp.com](mailto:robred@abccorp.com)

John Williams – [jwilliams@apax.com](mailto:jwilliams@apax.com)

Simon Tyrrell – [styrrell@vvvcorp.com](mailto:styrrell@vvvcorp.com)

# CV example 2

Curriculum Vitae

**First-name Surname Mobile contact number email address**

**Personal profile** can go here if you really need to use one – or you can have a brief narrative (mission statement) outlining your role or career requirements i.e. I am an experienced technical sales specialist looking to join a business to business organisation in a sales led or customer generation role.

**Key skills/ Key education/ Key training:** Suggest you have a short narrative or bullet-pointed list here

* Example 1
* Example 2
* Example 3
* Example 4

Here is where you can also highlight your **Transferable Skills** if you are applying for roles that you have yet to gain direct experience in but can still bring valuable AND transferable skills over from your historic employment or training.

**Key experience:** Again here you can use either a narrative style description of your key career experience to date, or illustrate it using a bullet-pointed list. Be aware that bullet or numbered lists tend to convey their contents in a shorter time.

**Key achievements:** Finally you should have a section (ideally on page one) where you can highlight your key career or personal achievements to your future employer. Be aware that this is a critical part of your brochure, as employers will look at your **past performance to make assumptions about your future performance!** This is where your brochure should really come alive as you align your achievements to the organisational or critical hiring needs of the role you’re applying for. A classic example here is that if you’re applying for a sales role, one of your key achievements should illustrate how you personally helped to grow sales in one of your previous jobs so whoever is reviewing your CV will see that you can deliver where it matters most. As you would have heard on the seminar your CV also needs to contain **EVIDENCE** that you’re as good as you say you are. Boasting alone won’t count for much! You can provide evidence with a hyperlink to your LinkedIn profile (where you can capture and publish recommendations from past colleagues and/or clients) or you can provide full detailed references as appendices to your CV, or lift out key highlights as shown in the John Doe example.

**Education** can go here if it is critical to the role you are applying for i.e. Degree, A’ level or GCSE passes if it isn’t critical to the selection process move this section further back in your CV

**Industry specific training** – again if you must have passed or completed a particular training session that the employer has already stated is a pre-interview requirement. This has to feature on page one i.e. Qualified Prince 2 Practitioner

MCSE (Microsoft Certified Systems Engineer)

**Work/Career history -** Starting in reverse chronological order

Include the month AND year you joined and left

**March 2002 – June 2009 Joe Bloggs & Co, London**

Sales Director

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**Reason for leaving:** Redundancy due to closure of London office

The above should contain a narrative about what you did at your last role, what your main focus was, how you **ADDED VALUE** to the organisation. Try and include some environmental information about the company, how many staff there were, or that you may have been responsible for. So the reader can begin to visualise not only the job you did but the environment as well. This helps to embed your job in their mind which in turn can influence your CV being selected for interview as they feel more secure about your description than perhaps other CVs they have received.

**April 1998 – Feb 2002 123 Corporation, London**

Sales Manager

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**Reason for leaving:** Career progression

**Oct 1994 – March 1998 ABC Group, Surrey**

Sales Associate

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**Reason for leaving:** To work in London

As you will also have heard during the seminar, apply the inverted pyramid model to the volume of narrative you attribute to your historical periods of employment. The further back in time you go the less information you need to give. The only exception to this is that if the job you are now applying for has an obvious link to one of you previous jobs. You should then illustrate this connection on Page one – either within your Key Skills, Key Experience or Key Achievements sections as well as giving the reader a guide that you worked in a similar industry in your earlier career so they will be looking for the link in your work history.

**Interests/Hobbies** – Most people feel they need to cover this in their CV, but the reality is that this section will rarely influence the interview so don’t feel you have to have this section at all.

# CV example 3

**Your Name**

**Email:** [**your.name555@hotmail.com**](mailto:your.name555@hotmail.com) **Contact number: 07979 555 000**

**LinkedIn Profile:** [**Your Name**](http://uk.linkedin.com/pub/john-bruce/12/bb7/a6) **Resides: North London**

**Summary/Key Achievements**

*This is your chance to give them a couple of career highlights/achievements that show you are right for their job and have added value in a similar, not general, way. Such as;*

Successfully integrated \*company A\* with \*company B\* in a merger worth £xxx, including roll-out of new systems, protocols and supplier agreements. This required working with staff at all levels from administrative to senior management, using my change management training, to provide a smooth transition and emotional support.

Have gained significant experience in office and supplier management including responsibility for budgets of £xxx+ and negotiating preferred supplier agreements saving my employer £xxx over a three year period.

**Employment Summary**

**Various temporary roles November 2009 – date**

Since leaving My Old Company I have worked in various short term assignments across London including;

**Small Local Office, North London**

[**www.small-local-office.co.uk**](http://www.small-local-office.co.uk)*let them find out a bit more about your employers*

Office Manager *where possible keep the job title the same as the job you’re applying for.*

Small Local Office is a niche office services company with a turnover of £xx and 15 staff based in their North London offices.

As office manager (maternity cover) I was responsible for all aspects of ………………. and was the main point of call for staff to……………

During my time here I used my initiative to implement a number of small but effective changes including updating their office filing system significantly increasing the time available to staff to carry out revenue generating work.

*This is your chance to show where you have done* ***relevant*** *work and* ***added value*** *in a**similar capacity. They don’t need to know about every single assignment you had. Any chance to* ***demonstrate*** *a competency should also be taken.*

**My Old Company, London EC2 October 2002 – October 2009**

[**www.myoldcompany.com**](http://www.myoldcompany.com)

Office Manager (Office Services Coordinator) *if your old job title might not make sense to the next employer it’s fine to use their job title and put the “official” one after it.*

My Old Company is a large office services provider with three UK offices dealing with clients including FTSE 250 property companies and several international banks.

My role entailed all aspects of running the busy office (turnover £xxx/quarter) as well as overseeing the finance team and directly managing three administrators. The role required constant reassessment of priorities as well as the ability to cope with changing deadlines.

I was also Integral part of the management team responsible for the merger between My Old Company and Some Other Place in 2007.

Key achievements in this time included:

* Researched and recommended a new operational system to increase revenue of the company. Negotiated with the supplier and successfully rolled out the new system saving them 15% on the price and increasing revenue £200k over three years.
* Successfully recruited, trained and mentored a team of three people, all who consistently exceeded targets and became valuable members of the company.

*Remember, they need to know what is relevant. Tell them about* ***responsibilities****,* ***competencies*** *and* ***achievements*** *that they need and will show you can* ***add value****. If it’s not relevant, ask yourself if it needs to be there.*

**Another Company, London EC4 January 1998 – September 2002**

[**www.giantusfirm.com**](http://www.giantusfirm.com)

Office Manager/Office Administrator

Another Company (now part of Giant US Firm) was a leading marketing research company with international clients ranging from fashion labels to law firms. I joined as an administrator but gradually took on more responsibility and was made office manager in May 2001.

Key achievements included:

* Consistently exceeded personal targets for efficiency and customer service, gaining two promotions and the managing directors “employee of the year award”.
* Organised and ran an advertising campaign to launch the company’s new Nottingham office. Was targeted at finding 20 new clients to attend the launch party but found 30 and as a result brought in £xxx of new business in the first six months of the office opening.

*Again, it’s all about* ***relevance****. What do they need you to do? What* ***competencies*** *do you have evidence of that they have asked for? What* ***achievements*** *can you use that show you have* ***added value*** *before, in a way they would want you to repeat for them?*

**Education and Qualifications**

RSA Business School, London General Diploma - Commendation

Office Management and Business Plans

Local Business College, London MOS – Advanced Microsoft Office skills

St Something College, London 3 A levels (Mathematics, English, Business Studies)

St Something School, London 9 GCSE’s including Mathematics and English

*Summarise! Unless your education is going to be the reason they employ you, they just need the highlights, most relevant first.*

**Systems / Additional skills**

Microsoft Office up to 2007 (Word, Excel, PowerPoint, Access) – Advanced

Eviews, VBA, Developer and Visio programmes

*Keep it brief and relevant but make sure you include anything that you’ve done that they need you to use.*

**Hobbies and Interests**

I enjoy running and have taken part in several charity runs (Nike 10k, Race for Life) and hope to train for the London Marathon in 2011.

I have an interest in languages and have taught myself basic to intermediate French and Italian and hope to learn Spanish in the near future.

*Just a couple of non-contentious things you do/are interested in that you’re happy to talk about at interview when they just want to get to know you a bit.*