

# Spring into life!

## Where do I start?

Looking for a new job is difficult at the best of times, but when the chips are down, many of us can find the thought of moving jobs even more daunting. Whether you've recently found yourself out of work or are looking to pluck up the courage and move to a more enjoyable role, we all need a bit of encouragement and guidance – especially in a tough market.

With this in mind, we've created this useful guide to help ensure you've covered all of your bases when it comes to finding a new job:

- Give some proper thought to your CV's content and design. These simple pointers will ensure you've given yourself the best chance of getting the interviews you want.
- You've polished your CV and got that dream interview, but are you prepared? How do you answer those tricky questions and build rapport? What should you be asking the interviewer? What should you wear and how can you make a Positively Different impact?
- Are you networking enough? 75% of people find their next job through networking. Are you making the most of your network? And how can you get the most out of the recruitment agencies you work with?
- Keeping motivated – looking for a new role can be a long, drawn-out process, especially in challenging times. How can you remain focused and motivated until you reach your goal?

We've asked some top Career Coaches to share their insight on all of these areas. The following pages aim to give you some food for thought and act as a check list to ensure that you're the best-prepared candidate on the market!

Content provided by:

**Claire Owen**, Leader of Vision and Values, Stopgap Group  
**Gareth Jones**, Business Head, Stopgap Group  
**Carolyn Boyes**, Career Coach  
**Nick Gendler**, Career Coach  
**Shayna Main**, Career Coach

## Your C.V.

It's not always the best person who gets the job, but the person who sells themselves best – this starts with your CV!

Your CV is your very own marketing document that will help you to get your next job. When it is well written it will:

- Open doors for you – get you in front of a prospective employer for an interview.
- Present the evidence to your future employer that you have the skills and experience to do the job.
- Act as a guide for both you and the interviewer during the meeting.
- Become the key information piece about you that can be circulated to other members of an organisation after the interview.

**Remember, the average length of time people spend scanning a CV the first time they see it is less than a minute, so make it clear, concise and to the point using the following guide:**

1. Print in black ink, using a standard sans-serif font e.g. Helvetica and try to keep the font size consistent (10-12).
2. Use capital letters / bold for emphasis. It's a much cleaner look than italics, graphics or boxed.
3. Your name should be the focus at the top of the page. There's no need to write CV – hopefully, it should be apparent that it's a CV!
4. Write a strong profile / summary - three to four lines at the top of the page highlighting your key skills and achievements.
5. Leave personal details such as education and interests to the end.
6. Avoid jargon and abbreviations, it only distracts the reader.
7. Highlight your achievements by choosing strong action verbs and using the past tense. To make things easier apply the STAR format for each achievement: **Situation, Task, Action, Result.**

8. Apply the 'so what' rule to everything you include. If it doesn't add value don't put it in.
9. Keep it to two pages maximum.
10. Be honest!

**When you've completed it ask yourself three questions;**  
Does it look good? Does it cover all of the skills I want to use in my next job? Is everything included relevant?

## How to succeed at that interview

**Do your homework on the company and make sure you know your stuff.**

Don't just rely on the website blurb. All companies show their best side on their own site so dig around a bit to try and find an objective opinion. Ask people whose opinion you respect, try to find bulletin or discussion boards online (Google is a good place to start).

**Have a list of intelligent questions ready**

Decide what you want to know from them. This is as much your opportunity to find out if it's a company you really want to work for, as it is their chance to find out more about you.

**Make sure you can introduce yourself clearly**

Practice telling others about what you do and what you can do for their company. If you can't introduce yourself in a minute and get the interviewer interested, practice until you are fluent. This may sound over-the-top but talking out loud about yourself succinctly is very different to thinking it through in your head.

**Review your skills and achievements ahead of time...**

...and summarise them succinctly. Don't just rely on a copy of your CV in front of you to prompt you – break down what you are going to say about yourself into bite size chunks that sound impressive – and know when to stop!

**Practice**

If you can, video yourself in conversation with a friend – you might notice things you weren't aware of like having a tendency to cover your mouth with your hand... your body language can give away how you are really thinking so pay attention to how you stand and sit when you are talking.

**Develop a positive attitude**

Remember to be polite to everyone from the moment you walk in the door – it's not always the obvious person who influences the decision on whether to hire you. The receptionist will have an opinion of you too.

**Listen as well as talk**

Be observant and listen to the interviewer. Notice whether they are reacting positively to what you are saying and make sure you've been understood.

**Be specific**

Give evidence. If you say you have a skill provide a where and when example.

**Avoid talking about salary too early**

Don't talk money until you are certain your future employer has understood your value. Salary discussions should be based on your future value to the company not what you earned last time.

**Be 'you'**

Be as natural as possible. Present the best version of you rather than pretend to be the person you think the other person will want to see. The more the 'real you' comes through, the better impression you will make.

**Stay engaged**

Even if it appears that this is not the job you thought it would be, stay interested and polite the whole time – you never know what leads or contacts may come from this in the future.

**Preparation is the key to interview success! By preparing for well-known questions in advance, you'll be ready for anything the interviewer may ask. Typical questions you should prepare yourself for are:**

- Introduce yourself – prepare a short introduction about yourself that focuses on what you have done most recently, any key achievements and what you think your selling points are as well as where you want your career to go next.
- What can you offer us?
- What are your most recent achievements?
- What competencies / skills did you demonstrate in your last job?
- What are your strengths?
- What are your weaknesses?
- What is important to you in your next job?
- Why should we employ you?

## Networking vs. recruitment agencies

It's a little known fact that 75% of people find their job via someone they already know i.e. their network. This means that if you rely solely on agencies you could be turning your back on a lot of jobs.

Your network isn't just business contacts but includes anyone you know, such as:

- Friends
- Family
- Current work colleagues
- Ex-work colleagues
- Business contacts; suppliers, clients, agencies and anyone else you talk to during the course of your day at work

**How can you best use your network?**

- **Relationship building** – increasing your potential employers by widening your group of contacts.
- **Learning** – it's a way to keep ahead of the market, by understanding what the issues your potential employers are facing and how you can help these issues.
- **Information dissemination** – a way to let people know about what you do – your expertise, and sharing information – they can learn from you as much as you can from them.

**IMPORTANT:** Networking is NOT used to ask directly for a contract/ work, but is used to learn and build bridges to a bigger network. Work opportunities will follow from having a network of people who are aware of your career goals.

Many people feel uncomfortable about networking as they see it as asking for help. We don't like to put pressure on people to do something for us as it might make us appear needy or we don't want to put people in a position where they may have to say 'no'.

### The Steps

- **Identify your objective** - what do you want to learn from the meeting?
- **Prepare a list** of people who may be able to help using your contacts as a start point to reach these people.
- **Make the initial approach** – email, telephone or letter.
- **Prepare for the meeting** – do your research and think about what you are going to ask.
- **At the meeting** – remember this is your meeting, you take the lead.
- **Follow up** – nurture the relationship and keep them informed of how you are getting on and any progress you are making.
- **Use LinkedIn** – a handy online tool for keeping in contact with people in your network and meeting new people in your sector – [www.linkedin.com](http://www.linkedin.com)

## How best to work with recruitment agencies in your job search

In a challenging market it's key that you make the most of all options available to you and one of these is using recruitment agencies effectively. Here are a few key pointers to make sure you get the best out of yours.

### How to identify and choose a suitable recruitment agency to work with

- Perhaps we're being obvious, but it's usually best to go with recommendations from people whose opinion you respect, as well as agencies that have positive brand recognition in your sector.
- When meeting with a consultant make sure you get to know them to see if you can work with them on a personal level – talk to them about things outside of the career discussion and don't let them rush you.

### Benefits of a close working relationship

- The closer your relationship, the better the results will be – the more they know about you, your strengths and your goals, the better placed you'll be against others in a similar situation.

### Things you should avoid when establishing the relationship

- Avoid spreading yourself too thinly – using two to three agencies at most will enable you to build meaningful relationships with the relevant consultants.
- You are selling yourself, not your house! Less can actually be more. A client that is seeing your details across their desk six times from different agencies can leave a negative impression.

### What should you do if you're dissatisfied with your relationship?

- Talk and be honest.

- It's as much about keeping your consultant up-to-date with your situation as it is their responsibility to keep you up-to-date with feedback.
- If you're not getting enough feedback, ask for more – you're entitled to it!

### Three top tips...

1. Don't chop and change – invest the time in building long-term relationships.
2. Remember that the consultant is your best, and only, representative until you get in front of the client yourself.
3. Be proactive – keep in touch with your consultant and call them even if they do not call you.

**First impressions count. You don't have much time before the receiver has made up their mind whether they like us, trust us and crucially, want to employ us! Did you know, that:**

- Only a small part of your communication is WHAT you say.
- 7% of your communication is the actual words that you use
- 38% is conveyed through the qualities of your voice, its tone, volume, speed and pitch.
- 55% is communicated through your appearance and body language; how you look, your posture, movements, gestures, facial expressions, breathing and skin colour changes.

How you express yourself through your accent, your tone of voice and your body language all help the other person make a judgement about you.

Next time you are talking to someone, notice how they are sitting or standing, their facial expression and their gestures. Even without words, you can easily get a sense of what they might be feeling or thinking. Now listen to how they are talking. Imagine if they were to talk faster, or slower, in a different pitch or accent. How would it influence your impression of them?

**From the moment you first walk into a room you are communicating with your body language. The other person will form an impression of you in seconds. So if you want to make a good first impression you should be aware of your whole communication, not just words:**

**State:** Get yourself in a positive state of mind before you walk into the room. The best way to do this is to think of a time when you felt good in the past. It will 'anchor' you into a positive frame of mind.

**Handshake:** Handshakes vary from culture to culture but in the West we generally prefer a strong steady handshake with brief direct eye contact.

**Open body language – relax!** If you feel relaxed your body language will open up and appear approachable and friendly. Be aware of personal space: If someone is a 'space invader' the other person feels very uncomfortable so be aware of not standing too near the person you are talking to. Be observant – if they start to inch back from you, you have gone too close so move back.

**Talk to everyone:** in a group situation make sure you do not just talk towards one person – make everyone feel that they are being equally focused on.

**Dress to fit in:** do some research and make sure you dress in tune with the company you are visiting. If you are uncertain, dress up a little more than you would normally, but pay attention to the style and feel of the environment you are going into. Remember, people like people like them.

## **M.O.R.E.**

**One of the biggest challenges when you're job hunting is to remain;**

### **Motivated Objective Rational Effective**

In a tough market it's more important than ever to keep focussed and know what you want. One of the biggest mistakes people make as they embark on the job-hunting process is not taking the time to consider what their ideal job looks like. How then do you know you've found it?

**Here's a quick and easy way to keep you focussed on M.O.R.E. If you've done all the preparation in the previous pages, this should be an easy exercise!**

1. Take a piece of A4 paper and take 15 minutes to list all of the skills that you have, and want to offer, a new employer. Don't limit your thinking to technical skills – include soft skills such as influencing, communicating and motivating as well.
2. Turn the paper over and list all the things you want your new employer to give you. Consider what's really important to you – it could be a boss that challenges you, job security, working in a good team – whatever it is, no matter how trivial, write it down.
3. Now go through all your skills and narrow it down to just six – your real selling points.
4. Go back to what you want and break them into two lists – 'must haves' and 'nice to haves'. Be confident and stand by your wishes.
5. Take a piece of card that will fit into your wallet – business card size would be perfect. Transfer your six key skills onto one side and your 'must haves' and 'nice to haves' on the other.

It's that simple. Pop it in your wallet and this way you will never be far from them and they will, we promise, help you get M.O.R.E. from your job search! They will help focus you on jobs you're considering by making sure that all your skills are being asked for and, as far as you can tell, will give you what you're wanting back in return.

**When it comes to job hunting,  
the M.O.R.E. you put in, the M.O.R.E.  
you get out in the end.**

**This all looks like a lot of work but trust us, it'll be worth it in the long run. It's a job in itself that requires dedication and lots of motivation. There is more you can do yourself to keep your spirits up and feeling positive.**

- Talk to your friends and family and surround yourself with positive people. Don't spend time with people who drain your energy.
- The networking session talked about doing your homework and asking for advice. There is a lot of free advice out there too – it's just a question of finding it.

**Below are some useful links to get you going;**

**Guardian Unlimited**

<http://jobs.guardian.co.uk/careers/>

**The Times Online**

[http://business.timesonline.co.uk/tol/business/career\\_and\\_jobs/](http://business.timesonline.co.uk/tol/business/career_and_jobs/)

**Career Shifters**

<http://www.careershifters.org>

**Article published early '09 on Guardian**

[www.guardian.co.uk/money/2009/jan/24/work-careers-unemployment](http://www.guardian.co.uk/money/2009/jan/24/work-careers-unemployment)

(please note this URL is correct - despite the slight typo!)  
Take a look at the websites of some of our recommended Career Coaches – they are full of useful tips and pointers;

**Catherine Dudmesh** [www.dudmesh.com](http://www.dudmesh.com)

**Nicola Carew** [www.cwl-coaching.co.uk](http://www.cwl-coaching.co.uk)

**Shayna Main** [www.s2associates.co.uk](http://www.s2associates.co.uk)

**Nick Gendler** [www.workjoy.co.uk](http://www.workjoy.co.uk)

or his blogspot <http://www.workjoy.blogspot.com/>

**Carolyn Boyes** [www.linkedin.com/in/carolynpb](http://www.linkedin.com/in/carolynpb)

**Lizzy Pawsey** [www.linkedin.com/in/lizziepawsey](http://www.linkedin.com/in/lizziepawsey)

In addition, we regularly run coaching sessions that take all of the above issues and run through them in more detail. The groups are small, giving you lots of one-on-one time with the coach and interaction with other candidates in the same situation as you.

If you're interested in hearing about these sessions please email [sarah.lyons@stopgapgroup.co.uk](mailto:sarah.lyons@stopgapgroup.co.uk)