



GETTING READY FOR YOUR NEXT CAREER STEP?

OUR GUIDE TO STEPPING OFF ON THE RIGHT
FOOT...

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INTRODUCTION

SET YOURSELF UP FOR SUCCESS

When you have a job you love, the last thing you want to think about is job hunting. After all, if you're already doing something you enjoy, your time's probably better spent figuring out how to get a raise or a promotion within the scope of that position—not finding something new, right?

Well, sure—those are great goals. But, you never know what's down the road: Maybe you'll eventually outgrow your current position, decide to leave for a larger (or smaller) company, get a new boss you don't exactly love, or want to move into a different business area. The problem is, if you haven't given any thought to applying to jobs since your last go-round, you and your outdated CV, social networking profiles and interview techniques will be at a disadvantage.

To make it a little easier here is our guide to stepping off on the right foot when it comes to starting the search for your next career challenge. As long as you have these under control, you'll be prepared for whatever comes your way, so before you start job searching take some time to make sure you are setting yourself up for success!

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UPDATE YOUR CV

SET YOURSELF UP FOR SUCCESS.

And we don't mean just add in a new chunk of content and then you're done. Put some thought and effort into it. Think about your next role and what you're aiming for. This is your chance to sell yourself.

We appreciate that updating your CV can be a big chore, but it is an important one for your next career move. We've been there ourselves and it is probably one of the least exciting parts of finding a new role - and our experience shows that often, it is best to start with a blank sheet of paper. Jot down the key areas you'd like to focus on for your next move. Remember, you want to show experience that shines light on the direction you'd like to head in.

For example, if you're going from a 'lead generator' to an 'account manager' - highlight some of those skills you've gained that show you are ready for that next challenge!



Success always comes when preparation meets opportunity

HENRY HARTMAN

Recruiters only spend an average of 6.25 seconds looking at a candidate's CV before deciding whether he or she is a fit for a job!

SO LET'S GRAB THEIR ATTENTION!

- Keep it short and snappy (two pages in length if you can)
- Don't write everything in your CV! Hiring managers are time poor and often skim over CVs looking for keywords - use those keywords in your copy
- Remember you have your LinkedIn profile too - that shouldn't be a mirror of your CV
- Link to your LinkedIn profile in your CV
- Ensure you give correct contact details
- Share your employment history and experience
- Use relevant URLs - don't make your prospective employer Google search!
- Explain your key wins, accomplishments and achievements - if you've doubled the business revenue within your territory or consistently smashed your GP targets, share that sort of information
- Ensure you have correct dates on roles (and that these dates also correspond with your LinkedIn profile)
- Be honest - it'll only trip you up if you're not
- Ensure language is consistent - if the role is in the past, ensure you're using past tense
- Nowadays there are heaps of layout templates available, try to make your CV attractive and clean looking
- USE SPELLCHECK!!! - You'd be surprised how many people don't. It takes no time and could get you an interview for the job of your dreams. Spelling and grammar is so important - and if you're not good at it - ask someone that is, or us!
- Proof read and ask someone else to read it for you - they won't mind or judge you

UPDATE YOUR CV

DOES ONE SIZE FIT ALL?

So is one all singing all dancing CV enough? In a word... NO. As much as this pains you, you're going to have to suck it up and own it. Each job description asks for different skills and experience, therefore your CV should reflect this. If you are applying directly to a company then you should accompany your CV with a cover letter. However, if you are working with an agency to secure your next role, your CV and their recommendation is key.

Take the job description and pick out the key components of the role and ensure those words spring out in your CV. If you are taking a career change, then make sure your CV resonates with that desired change and emphasises experience that shows you are capable.



DO customise you CV for each job



DON'T lie, mislead or inflate your skills

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KEEP NETWORKING

STAND OUT FROM THE CROWD

As a recruitment professional, I love LinkedIn. If you're a job seeker you should too. It's a fantastic resource, albeit one which many people do not use to its full potential. With over 467 million members, it's important to be able to stand out from the crowd and build your personal brand so you can maximise what LinkedIn can do for you.



I consistently rank in the top 1% of profile views amongst professionals like me (i.e. my competitors), it's something that I strive for week in and week out, and probably even more important than how to get yourself into the top 1%, is why should you?

Simply put, if you're a job seeker, recruiters and/or companies can approach you directly rather than you having to apply to them.

KEEP NETWORKING

JOIN LINKEDIN GROUPS.

The truth is, you're busy. And hey, you like your current job, so it's not likely you're going to spend a huge chunk of time digging deep into your career goals if you're not actively job searching.

To make it easier on yourself, combine this with something you do on a daily basis—like checking social media. Start following a few of your dream companies on Twitter and LinkedIn, so you're the first to hear about their company culture, initiatives, and job postings.

If you're not currently on the lookout for a new job, LinkedIn is a great place to network with colleagues, past and present, and also to keep in the loop with regards to what's happening in the market. You can be a member of up to 50 LinkedIn groups so get yourself involved! Also, joining the most appropriate groups can give you access to a wealth of specialised industry information and market intelligence.



You are 70% more likely to get an appointment with someone on an unexpected sales call if you cite a common LinkedIn group than if you don't

KEEP NETWORKING

HOW TO IMPROVE YOUR LINKEDIN PROFILE

✓ **Make sure your profile is 100% complete**

If it isn't, LinkedIn will tell you what you need to do to get this to 100%. Profiles which are complete are given priority in searches.

✓ **Keep it professional!**

As a recruiter one of the first things I do when receiving an application for a vacancy from a new applicant is check out their LinkedIn profile. I'm looking for a professional profile with relevant career and industry experience... You're trying to sell the professional version of you, not the "drunk on a Saturday night with your mates" version so make sure your profile picture is professional, of a good quality and is of JUST YOU! You don't want potential employers left trying to guess which one you are out of the four at the bar in sombreros downing shots of tequila... Remember this isn't Facebook!

✓ **Build your network and keep it relevant**

The more people you are connected to, the more people will view your profile. I would advise only connecting with people who are relevant to your professional area, or people who are current and former colleagues or friends. Having 3000 connections is of no use to you if they are not within the industries/geographical areas that you work or operate in.

✓ **Let potential employers know what you have to offer**

With so many employers using LinkedIn to search for specific job roles just having your job title and the company you work for is no longer enough. There are so many search parameters that we can utilise such as years of experience, industries, subjects studied at University... The list goes on! So make sure you include the information relevant to the experience you've gained to date and the career path you're looking to take.

KEEP NETWORKING

IMPROVING YOUR LINKEDIN PROFILE CONT...

✓ **Make sure that your page contains the right keywords**

People search through LinkedIn by using keywords. These may be competencies, sectors, asset types, job titles, company names, software package names or languages to give a few examples. If you don't have the right keywords displayed, you won't come up in any searches!

✓ **Add the most relevant skills to your profile**

This allows people in your network to endorse skills you say you have, or even suggest other skills. This will add to your online credibility and will also improve your ability to be found in an online search.

✓ **Post regular, relevant and interesting content**

Spamming your network with irrelevant content will only drive connections away. Post interesting industry news which is relevant to your network, become a thought leader within your industry, and if possible post some original content too which may take the form of a blog.

✓ **Seek recommendations**

Don't be afraid to ask for a recommendation. People won't recommend you if you didn't impress them, provide a great service or help them out in their career, and remember that the positive words of another can sell you much more effectively than you blowing your own trumpet!

INTERVIEW PREP & TECHNIQUES

INTERVIEW PREPARATION

The biggest mistake in interviewing is not being fully prepared. Interviewing is a skill and as with all skills, preparation and practice is key and can make the difference between getting an offer and getting rejected.

There is no one “best” way to prepare for an interview but here are some measures that you can take to improve your chances for interview success.

Pre-interview prep should always include...

- ✓ A recent assessment of your skills, interests, values, and accomplishments
- ✓ Research on the targeted company/organization and position
- ✓ Actual practice of typical and targeted interview questions i.e. if it's a competency based interview what competencies are they likely to be assessing, and what examples of your work/achievements/behaviours best represent these?
- ✓ Knowledge of the location of the interview, what to expect, and protocols for follow-up.

INTERVIEW PREP

RESEARCH, RESEARCH, RESEARCH.

Use every possible means to learn all you can about the company, the position and the interviewers/key decision makers.

- Go online to the company's website as well as its competitors' sites - A lot of companies now have a "Meet The Team" page; What can you learn about the team/interviewers from here?
- Check out the LinkedIn company page and profiles of your interviewers - How long have they been with the company? What is their background? Who are your mutual connections? Are there any other commonalities you have with them?
- Does the company have a YouTube page? Have they posted any useful content that will help you understand more about how they operate as a business? Have they shared any videos that give you an insight into the organisations culture?
- Use investor websites to learn what's happening now in the news with this company and its competitors.

Re-assess your CV: Even if you've sent your best-yet CV, which was obviously successful in making the cut, review it thoroughly and know everything that's on it. Be prepared to discuss experiences outside of your CV that might be important to the employer or culture of the organisation



Research is creating new knowledge.

NEIL ARMSTRONG

INTERVIEW TECHNIQUES

Practice typical and targeted interview questions and be able to answer the **“Basic 3:”**

1. Why are you interested in this field?
2. Why are you interested in this company?
3. Why are you interested in this position?

Be prepared to discuss **anything** on your CV and answer questions/issues you really *don't* want to answer. For example:

Your greatest weakness

Your lack of related experience

Why you've chosen a career path unrelated to your area of study

Your lack of leadership experiences

Your record of job-hopping



Prepare questions to ask. These questions should reflect your research on the company and position and should never include questions whose answers are readily available in company literature or website.

Do NOT ask about salary or benefits and DEFINITELY don't ask about your sick day entitlement! (yep I've had one of those before!)

COMPETENCY BASED INTERVIEWS

There are many types of interviews, from the free flowing to the formal, but one that you are likely to come up against at some point is the competency-based interview.

They're designed to make the job application process as objective as possible, removing any conscious or subconscious bias by the interviewer by asking each candidate the same questions. Some people feel this type of interview is more stilted – there can be less opportunity to build rapport. However, they are very common, especially in large organisations and the finance sector, so it's worth refining your technique.

The questions will be driven by a competency framework that's required for the job. For example, an Account Manager may require multi-tasking or problem-solving skills, or a job in Collections may require conflict management skills.

COMPETENCY BASED INTERVIEWS CONT...

The interview questions tend to start with a variation of, "Tell me about a time when..." This may sound simple but, in the heat of the interview, it's easy to give an unstructured answer, miss out key details, or let the story peter to a halt.

One way of avoiding this is by using the STAR method to structure your response.

- S** **Situation;** background/setting the scene
- T** **Task or Target;** specifics of what's required, when, where, who
- A** **Action;** what you did, skills used, behaviours, characteristics
- R** **Result;** outcome, what happened? What would you do differently?

This will give your potential future employer a really great view of what role you played in particular scenarios. We advise that you take this approach when preparing for your interview.

HERE ARE TWO EXAMPLES OF HOW TO IMPLEMENT THE STAR TECHNIQUE:

A candidate for an **Account Executive** role might be asked: *"Tell me about a time that you solved a problem within a tight timescale."* Here's how you could structure your response:

Situation – Set the context for your story. "We were due to deliver a presentation to a group of 20 potential brokers at an industry event and Stuart, the Business Development Manager that was due to deliver it, got stuck on a train from Birmingham."

Task – What was required of you. "It was my responsibility to find an alternative replacement so that it didn't reflect badly on the company and we didn't waste the opportunity."

Activity – What you actually did. "I spoke to the event organisers to find out if they could change the running order. They agreed so we bought ourselves some time. I had already reviewed the content prior to the event but hadn't rehearsed delivering the presentation as, of course, this wasn't my role on the day but as there wasn't enough time to find a replacement I had to step up. As I'd bought us some time I spent the next hour running through the presentation so that I was as familiar with it as possible."

Result – How well the situation played out. "Stuart didn't make the meeting on time but we explained the problem to the delegates and despite being very nervous my presentation went well – a bit rough around the edges but it was warmly received. Stuart managed to get there for the last 15 minutes to answer questions. As a result we gained some good contacts, at least three of which we converted into new clients."

There are a few things to note with this response:

- It's important to speak in specific rather than general terms and quantify your success. In this example, we mentioned 20 delegates, the names of the people involved and quantified three contacts converted to clients. From a listener's perspective, this makes the story more interesting and they are more able to gauge your success. Nameless figures and undefined successes can make the answer feel less convincing.
- Secondly, as there are likely to be many questions - and interviewers have short attention spans - it's important to keep your answers concise: convey the maximum achievement in the minimum time.
- Finally, it's important to finish on a positive note so the overall impression is strong.

In a second example, a candidate for a **Customer Services** role is asked: "Describe a situation when you had to deliver excellent customer service following a complaint"

Situation – "A customer rang up complaining that they'd waited more than two weeks for a reply from our sales team regarding a product query."

Task – "I needed to address the client's immediate query and find out what went wrong in the normal process."

Activity – "I apologised, got the details and passed them to our head salesperson, who contacted the client within the hour. I investigated why the query was unanswered. I discovered that it was a combination of a wrong mobile number and a generic email address that wasn't being checked. I let the client know and we offered a goodwill discount on her next order."

Result – "The client not only continued to order from us, but posted a positive customer service tweet too."

Used at its best, the **STAR** structure is invisible to the listener and it simply comes across as a well-articulated example. Create a bank of answers in this format in advance, so that you don't struggle to do it on the day and can make it appear as seamless as possible.

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STAY INSPIRED

Sometimes, the hardest part of job hunting is simply getting started. At first, it seems like a wide open opportunity—you can do anything you want. But when you start staring at a flashing cursor in the search bar and try to figure out what you want to do next, things don't seem too clear anymore.

Of course, it's easy to forget about that particular job hunt conundrum when you're happily employed. And so, when you do find yourself in search of something new, it's hard not to be caught off-guard. So even when you no have no expectations to job hunt anytime soon, it's important to stay inspired and continually consider your career goals, what you're good at, and the kind of company you'd love to work for. With a firm idea of what you want, you'll feel more confident, prepared, and ready to kick your hunt into high gear.

Don't let your next job hunt take you by surprise. With these four areas taken care of, you'll be able to hit the ground running. With a fresh CV and well-maintained network, you won't lose any time—and can focus on finding your next dream job.

SO WHAT'S NEXT???

If you're ready to take that next career step and would like some more support then do please get in touch...

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