

## Tips for Finding that New Job – by Mark Greenwood

Most of us will be looking for a new or different job at some stage of our life.

Unfortunately many now have no choice as the 2009 Recession continues to bite and the inevitable rise in unemployment numbers gathers pace. This also creates a much more competitive environment for those seeking employment – even more reason why **you have to take control and make sure you give yourself the best chance of success.**

What follows is a summary of some top tips, recommended by head-hunters and agencies, to assist you in your search for that next role.

### Developing your ‘Killer CV’

Your CV – or Curriculum Vitae translates as the ‘**story of your life**’ and can also be known as a Resume or Profile and is a written account of a person’s education, accomplishments and work experience.

**You should see it as your ‘shop window’ or your marketing document. It is the ‘brochure about you’.**

It will be the first thing most employers know about you when they advertise a job and you apply for it.....so it really is important to follow a few simple guidelines when putting your CV together.....

Starting with the basics.....and even these can trip you up !.....

- **Name and contact details** – at the top of the 1<sup>st</sup> page – and no nicknames !
- **Header & Footer** – use these to add just your name in the Header, and a page number in the Footer. It is better to use the page numbering format ‘page X of Y’ so that any lost pages will be noticed immediately.
- **Photos** – be careful ! Most CV’s will be printed off for the team doing the interview – and rarely in colour, so even the best mug shot can look sinister and suspicious when copied in black & white !
- The **summary profile** – most important – some employers may not read any further! Make sure it captures your roles, capabilities and the industries you have worked in
- **2 pages max is a good guide** – remember you will have the opportunity to add details and match the job description in the cover letter or email you will provide with the CV.
- **Layout sequence – older is smaller!** As you go back in time, progressively reduce the number of words used to describe the roles you had. The employer will be most interested in the last couple of roles you have had.
- **Dates** – reverse order and no gaps – start with the most recent role first and work back in date order – and explain any gaps !
- For each role you describe, **provide a Headline** – company name, size of budget, no/ of people, before you explain the roles you undertook.

- Explain experience – solving a problem – **STAR stories**. The employer has a job on offer because he has a problem to solve – and you could be the solution to that problem ! **STAR stories are vital**. For the roles you have had, find at least one STAR story and commit it to memory. The STAR story is a powerful way to remember what you have actually done in previous jobs and will provide the best evidence that you could perform for the new employer.....**STAR** stands for:
  - S – what was the **situation** you were faced with ?
  - T – what **task** did you carry out ?
  - A – what were the **actions** carried out ?
  - R – what was the end **result** ?
- **Personal stuff** at bottom and brief – include wife and kids if you have them – not too many hobbies!
- **Tailor the CV** – read and re-read the job advert – it’s a bit like an English test at school – the answer is in the question.....
- **The Cover Letter !!!** It is important – read the advert, and in the cover letter, provide the connections between your skills and the specifics of the job advert or brief.

### **Surviving the Interview**

There is a lot you can do to give yourself the best chance at interview !!

Remember for any job there is only 1 successful candidate – and that will be the one who interviews best and solves the problem the employer has. If you fail at the interview stage, it may not be about your ability to do the job, just your skills at handling the interview.....

First the simple stuff :

- **Re-read the job advert and your cover letter and CV** – remember the letter and CV may be all they know about you at the moment.
- **Research the company** – use their website or the local library – you won’t get far if you don’t know what they do, how big they are.....
- **Dress** – what’s the dress code for the company – it is OK to ask. Be smart, but sensible – it’s really not the time to wear that outrageous dress or the rude tie !
- **Turn up at least 15 mins before the interview** time – and that means turn up in reception – get to car park earlier in case there are any last minute problems parking
- And be careful on the **trip to the loo** – there are traps there too – like the water pressure giving you a great soaking !

### **Be yourself – remember – at this stage, at least they can’t sack you !**

- **The handshake** – always a potential disaster – even if you have to practice it – it needs to be firm, not vice like and not a wet fish !
- **The drink** – accept a coffee, tea etc – don’t be finicky ‘I only drink herbal tea etc’.. and be careful – the dripping cup is another bear trap !
- Lots of research tells us that in the interview situation, **success is about 40% skills and experience and 60% chemistry**. Can you fit in ? Could they work with you ?

- **Have your 3 key questions prepared.....**

**‘Tell me about yourself’**

This is really important and you should have a 1sheet of paper reply not with you but committed to memory.

**‘Why do you want this job?’ or perhaps ‘Why do you want to join this company?’**

Again – be ready for this – use the research you have done on the company. Make it clear how this job fits with your own plans to get ahead.

If you look blank here, they will assume you have just applied without thinking – and you will fail

**‘Why are you looking to move?’ or ‘why did you leave your last job?’**

Be confident, relax and say, for example:

- I had a successful career and had done most of what I had wanted to do...
- Bigger job, more challenge
- After 54 years of excellent service they had hit difficult time and a number of us were offered redundancy....
- And remember NEVER criticise you current or last employer.....

**The Offer Letter**

The job offer is no less important than the CV and the interview as mistakes at this stage can be very difficult to put right later. The offer letter and terms & conditions will become your contract with the company so you owe it to yourself to make sure nothing is missing.

Be prepared to write an acceptance letter before you start the job – if you turn up on the 1<sup>st</sup> day with the bundle of forms, your opportunity to discuss anything about the offer is lost !

You should find and check:

- The **start date** – is that OK or do you need more time ?
- **Job Title** – and you may get a copy of the job description to read through
- **Place of work** – one location or many ?
- **Hours of work** – will it require shifts or weekends and can you do that ?
- The **probationary period** – frequently included as an opportunity for the company to end the employment if you are deemed to be failing.
- **Remuneration** – look for clarity and work out what you could earn from pay, bonuses, overtime etc., and how is it paid.

- **Benefits** – this is a huge area, but here is the summary of most popular items for you to check – and if missing add to your questions in your reply letter:
  - Pension – contribute ? defined benefit or contribution? Retirement date?  
Choice of funds?
  - Life insurance cover
  - Share scheme – many companies now offer these schemes. - which can be a good way to save.
  - Expenses – claim monthly? What’s covered?
  - Holidays – first year and holiday year. Ability to carry over or sell?
  - Home working and associated costs
  - Company car or travel allowance

So that’s it – more complicated than you thought ? Good luck in finding your new role !

Need more assistance or have a question ?

**Contact us** through the website on [www.compass-house-consultancy.co.uk](http://www.compass-house-consultancy.co.uk).

**‘Tips for Finding that New Job’ was written by Mark Greenwood from Compass House Consultancy Ltd.**

#### **About the author**



#### **Mark Greenwood**

- An Executive, Consultant and Mentor with extensive experience in leading turnarounds, acquisition integration, and change programmes involving strategy development, marketing and sales management, operations, business process redesign, restructuring and productivity improvement.
- Chartered Mechanical Engineer and Chartered Director