

HOW TO GET A JOB



*Reveals 57 Tactics For Career Planning
and Job Hunting Success*

Your Springboard To Career Success

www.career-dynamics.co.uk

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ProFile Career Dynamics

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SECTION 1

INTRODUCTION

You must have noticed how the number of companies devoted to job listings, both on- and off-line, are multiplying like a plague. But very few of them realise that the job hunt starts way before you ever open a newspaper or log on to your favourite search site. It begins in your current job. And that means today!

So welcome to ProFile Career Dynamics. ProFile's purpose is to accelerate your career. It begins with maximising your potential in your current job and then providing you with the guidance and advice you need to move onwards and upwards.

You see, just as you only build a house brick by brick, so each working day you are progressing your career in some way, adding to your experience, moving towards your annual goals, monthly quota or shift targets. It all adds up to whether you can do your job, are good at it, or are great at it. You either build a town house or a mansion. It just depends on the number of bricks you lay. It also helps to put your best looking ones in full view – a quick self-marketing analogy for you, which will become apparent in the section of CVs.

[Preparation for your next job starts TODAY – in your present one.](#)

But before I jump the gun, let me back track to re-emphasise that it is your current job you need to focus on as preparation for your next job. Because without proof of success in what you do now, the harder will be your task of finding a newer, better one later. Conversely, if you excel at it, the stronger and quicker you will swing up the corporate ladder.

With ProFile as your personal coach, you maximise your chances.

Finding another job is an inevitable juncture in everyone's career. So, as an introduction to the many ways ProFile can help you fulfill your career potential, this report covers the fundamentals of successful job hunting.

The employment market is growing ever more fluid and competition is growing progressively fiercer. To win through – and to win quickly – you will need all the help you can get.

Let me ask you... do you think you would win more at the bookies if you had the inside word from the horse trainers? Would you clean up at the poker table if you had an accomplice telling you what cards everyone else had? Of course you would. And that's the competitive advantage

you get with ProFile. Together we'll swing the odds in your favour. Together, you will hold all the trump cards.

Playing the game is far more fun when you know you can win.

At the time of this writing this edition, unemployment in the UK is at it's lowest for over two decades. "Great!" you would think, "Jobs galore. Easy pickings." Not so. As the number of 'visible' job seekers drops, wage offers tend to rise, there being fewer to pick out of the dole queues. Simple supply and demand. This encourages those already in jobs to jump ship. So unless you're a fresh-faced graduate, who typically have their own specially reserved territory to fight over, you will usually have to compete against more people looking to switch jobs than those looking to get re-employed.

There are advantages and disadvantages in this, depending upon which group you currently belong to – employed or unemployed.

If you're employed, you can more afford to bide your time, waiting for the right job to crop up. You can apply in full confidence that if you don't get it, it's probably no great shakes. You are still getting paid and can wait for the next offer. That takes off a huge amount of pressure and boosts your confidence enormously. This confidence can't help but show through in an interview and that is a big plus in any interviewer's note book.

When you're unemployed, though, the urgency is more real. Every interview counts. To get turned down after all your efforts and all your raised hopes can be tremendously depressing. You have to be tougher, more focused, more determined and more resilient. Ironically, the gravity of the situation focuses the mind wonderfully. And that can bring quick success.

[When you're unemployed, you have the advantage of being a full-time, "professional" job hunter.](#)

Moreover, you get all the time you need to research your target company, practice your interview technique, rehearse your answers and review your performance between interviews. You make job-hunting your full time job. And that makes you more of a professional at it than the others. So do not despair. You do, in fact, have the upper hand in many respects.

This report will reveal many valuable tactics that will help you in your quest. But don't expect prescriptions. Don't expect a tick list to follow which will inevitably bring about *the* job you really crave. Everybody's situation is different and every application unique in some respect. The key is to take the principals on board and apply them to your situation and to your job applications.

Throughout the series of jobs that constituted my "career", I saw many sides of the employment market. I worked in an array of organisations from the fair to the diabolical. And I went through more redundancies in a single year than most people go through in a lifetime. I've been employed, self-employed, part-time, full time, contract, home and abroad. I've contacted just about every recruitment agency in nearly a dozen counties, read every job page in existence in

those areas, sent off hundreds of CVs, been in scores of interviews and taken almost every assessment test there is.

Not an experience I would want to repeat, but most valuable when it comes to understanding the reality of life on the job-hunting front line. Couple that with my business studies, years of experience and my current work, and what you are going to get here is more job hunting insights you can shake a stick at. All of which will give you a distinct competitive advantage in the career market place.

Key words throughout this will be "informed and prepared" – the two most powerful weapons you can carry with you. These should be the two main reasons why you are reading this – to get pre-informed about job hunting and to thoroughly prepare yourself for the task ahead. Keep these two words in mind throughout and you'll find the final experience a whole lot more palatable.

The many ideas and techniques divulged in this report are done via a bit of a history lesson – my own history. I hope in this way you can more empathise with the typical trials of the job hunter and so relate to the practical sources of the ideas for success.

Depending on the level you are currently at, some of the points made here may be a little old hat to you. But this report is intended to help all grades of job hunters. Even so, however skilled you might be right now, you may still find fresh ideas to enhance your current strategy. So let's begin at the beginning.

Happy hunting.



SECTION 2

IDENTIFY YOUR TARGET

Early May. The sun is out, but the curtains are closed. No distractions allowed. The exam automaton was winding up its momentum. For weeks, it seemed I only went out when the food ran out. Walks around the lake – cancelled. Visits to the girlfriend – cancelled. Pub – cancelled. Put the world on hold, it's Finals time.

As the days and night merged into one and the first exam approached, I was living off coffee and Pro Plus and was down to around two hours sleep per night. Loaded with caffeine and with my brain stoked up to meltdown on theories, diagrams, aid-memoirs and calculations, it was impossible to switch off.

It's hard to recall anything about the exam fortnight. It was a case of going from home desk to exam desk and back again without looking up. Still, it wasn't for ever. And, looking ahead, I was adamant that this was to be the last set of exams I would ever take in my life. They were to be a defining moment - the key to a more lucrative life. A little focus now would save years of anguish later on.

Eventually... eventually, it was all over. The heavily-sprung old door of the exam hall haughtily shut me out. I looked up and felt a gentle warm summer breeze on my face. Fluffy white clouds hung in azure skies beneath emerald green lawns. Under the gaze of a handful of casual observers, ducks paddled and bobbed on the lake away to the left.

So this is what Freedom looks like.

Back home, I cleaned myself up, cleared my room of all traces of revision, opened the curtains and windows and went out for some air. Later, I planned to sleep until my name changed to Ryan van Winkle. But a measly four hours was all I could manage. And yet I felt re-born. And also a mite cheated – I had been looking forward to at least 10 hours. It took a full week to get back to a proper night's kip.

I had left the job hunting until after the finals were over. Like I said – no distractions. I had already failed one year through disillusionment, sheer boredom and too many distractions. For my re-sits, I reversed polarity and locked myself away for 3 months. It worked, so I repeated it for my Finals and did equally well.

Now came the easy bit. All that remained was to turn up for a few interviews and wait to be selected.

Oh, poor, mis-guided fool. In the weeks that followed, I accumulated so many rejection letters, I could paste a whole wall with them. Never mind – do enough of them and one would turn up sooner or later. Wouldn't it?! I don't believe it even occurred to me that I was doing anything wrong.

Of course, I was doing plenty wrong. In fact, it's easier to say what I was doing right – nothing. Nevertheless, let's be a little more scientific about it and look at some of the fundamentals.

Basically, my preparation consisted of two things. First, looking up my target company in the careers office. If no company info existed, well, I'd just play it by ear and admit that my ignorance was not my fault – no info had been available.

Secondly, I'd try to explain (unconvincingly) why I wanted to get into production management rather than stick to the science that I had just sacrificed 4 years of my life trying to fathom. Being bored witless by crystal structures, scanning electron microscopy and strain calculations was not reason enough. Yet I didn't prepare an adequate answer as to why the management side was more appealing.

[Company information and personal plans are pre-requisites at interview.](#)

So what should I have done? Let's look at some remedies to these basic misgivings.

1a. Accumulate Company Information

There are basic expectations at interviews and having some company information is one of them. You are unlikely to get an annual report from the company themselves – which are pretty useless anyway, unless you really know how to decipher them – but there are other sources:

Kompass directory. Don protective footwear before dragging these off the library shelves. This pair of massive directories doesn't list every UK company, but does have the basics of many thousands. You may uncover nothing of value, or you may get some useful leads, such as HQ address, other site addresses and telephone numbers. If your target has various locations, each doing something different, find out which site is being recruited for. Start with whatever lead you have and get the phone number of the Personnel department you will be dealing with and give them a call. Use something along the lines of the following script:

"My name is ____ from (town/company/college/university). I'll be talking with some of your people soon about vacancies at your site. I'd like to make the short time we'll be having together as productive as possible, so I was hoping you could mail me out a little company info – the kind of thing you might find on the front desk – company brochure and product info, perhaps. It would be a great help."

If they object, then reply,

"I appreciate you must get a few calls like this, but there really is nothing to go on in the public domain. This interview is extremely important. I really want it to go well and I'd like to do your people the justice of making it worth their time talking to me."

All you're looking for is company basics – products, plans, opportunities, company prosperity, etc. Something to show you have done your homework and can hold a conversation about the

firm you are applying to. There's no worse way to start an interview than answering the opening question of "What do you know about us?" with "Nothing!".

You should get the names of your interviewers and their respective positions or titles on your invitation letter. If not, ask for these also while you're on the phone.

Company Annual Reports

Unless you're already familiar with these and understand them (and how they can mask the truth), then quite simply, don't bother. It'll take far too long here even to explain the basics. And you'll get precious little of practical value from them anyway. All you need is to understand whether or not you are entering or staying in a growing, stagnant or declining business sector. This you can glean from both Mintel and Key Point reports mentioned earlier. Then you can ask how they are dealing with present circumstances.

In any case, you're unlikely to get annual reports from a company anyway. But if you just can't contain yourself, you can get them free from the FT service. Either phone 020 8391 6000, write to World Investor Link Ltd, Hook Rise South, Surbiton, Surrey, KT6 7LD, or order on-line at <http://ft.ar.wilink.com>.

1b. Accumulate Business Sector Information

This is far easier. What you're looking for here are trends, competitor names, current business issues, sector outlook and so on.

Mintel. Short for "*Market Intelligence*". You'll find them in main public libraries only (because of the cost), in report form and on CD-ROM. If you belong to a wealthy educational establishment, you may also find them on campus. Their reports cover every imaginable business sector (almost!) and contain every macro fact and figure you may need.

Key Point. Same thing. Between these two, you'll be most unlucky to come up short.

Newspapers. Don't go raking through acres of broadsheet. Your main public library or campus library will have many of the national papers on CD-ROM. If you were an ancient Greek, there would be a God of IT and his name would be KeyWord Search. You should be able to copy and paste the interesting bits onto a floppy disk file, take it with you and print it out.

For a first interview, it isn't often you need anything more than basic company and product info. Just enough to gain familiarity, to feel confident that you can hold a conversation and to ask some fundamental questions. Mostly they will be interested in you. On the subject of which...

2. Personal Plans

Ah, there's the rub. This is often the most important part of a first interview. Your qualifications will be taken as read, so don't expect to create too much of an impression with your subject knowledge. You will most likely be asked about your current work or studies, why you chose that

field and what you like about it. This is often used to ease you into the session, to get you talking and for your interviewers to get familiar with you. However, don't be mis-lead into thinking that this is only idle chit-chat. They are very real questions. They are probing for sound rationale about your chosen career path and your enthusiasm for it.

If you're in the lower corporate echelons, don't feel obliged to ply them with talk of super success or of wanting to run the company by the time you're 40. You simply have to show you're a thinker, that you know what you're doing and where you are going, that you are aware of your contribution, that it is your *choice* and that you can reason with them about it. Come across as a drifter with no real idea of direction and you'll drift from interview to interview for ever and a day.

Your are recruited for a purpose. If you can't explain to an employer what believe your own purpose to be, they will see no reason to employ you.

Say, for example, you want to be a secretary but you don't want to be a department head PA. If you're happy doing what you do, say so. If your family takes up too much of your time, the extra hours might be impossible to accommodate. Of course, it always looks better if you give your reasons from the company point of view. "I wouldn't be able to guarantee my full support to my boss," for example, sounds better than "I wouldn't want the extra work load." Maybe you want to stay on shifts for family reasons and not take a managerial day job. That's fine as long as you emphasise how your experience can be the bedrock of the department, how you can comprehensively train and coach others and be a link-pin for future management initiatives.

If you're looking for your first job, you will need to have a reasonable idea of where your first post might take you and why you think your chosen career is the one for you. I must confess, this is where I really messed up all those years ago. Even though I was pretty good at it, all the science and lab work had bored me silly. I was offered PhD funding, but turned it down because I wanted out of academia. But I didn't really know what I wanted in its place. And by the number of rejection letters I got, it must surely have come across like that in interviews.

I brought to interview absolutely no evidence of interest in my chosen field except my say-so. No clubs, societies or professional body membership. No work experience and, of course, no direct qualification. So I had no idea what it would involve, what was important in this field and how I should promote myself for that kind of role. Here, I over-looked another valuable source – my friends...

Talk about it. Discuss your plans with your friends, peers and colleagues; pass ideas around; exchange views and opinions. You can get more fresh insights and ideas from a ten minute sounding off than you can get by musing over it all day. In a professional sense you can call this networking. We'll talk more about this later. Some of the large search engine sites and careers sites also have "Expert Centres", where you can ask career questions. And there are always careers centres to visit.

Seek out the experience and wisdom of others when considering any career move. The more research you do, the more focused you will be and the less the risk you will take.

I forget how many first round interviews I went to, but I do know that my success rate was zero, zip, nil. Not one second round invitation. That just shows the difference between being informed and prepared and flying on a wing and a prayer. Then came a break – and boy did I need it.

One firm had opted out of the Milk Round – the ritual procession of big firm recruiters around the country's campuses. British Steel had decided it was too costly, so they'd become more selective and invited just a handful for full day sessions on site. Except for an IT person and a language student, we were all metallurgists or engineers. Makes sense for a steel maker, I suppose. Fortunately for me, my interviewers comprised one metallurgist (the melting shop manager) and the Personnel Director, who was qualification-barmy. As I had both these going for me, the conversation was lively and free-flowing.

I got the job more by luck than by judgement and embarked on an 18 month induction programme of projects, training courses and stints in various departments. After only 8 months, I was scooped up by the Melting Shop manager to be Assistant Shift Manager. I was impressed and put it down to the fact that he had been more impressed by my interview than I had thought and that he recognised talent when he saw it.

There may have been a little truth in that, but I also believe it was a case of "get the graduate before anyone else does – they're keen to learn and they work harder." Whatever the truth was, future employers are never going to get that sort of detail from a reference, so...

Always display yourself in the strongest possible light. Don't lie, but by all means display the Truth as if it were Crufts – all nicely preened and viewed from the best angle.

A little bit of artistic licence can go a long way. You should work on creating your best window display. If you don't, you're not going to get very far. After all, employers do it all the time. Interviews are a two-way process. Your interviewers are also trying to sell the company and the job to you. When I started at British Steel, they were doing this very thing over in Wales. The *day after* taking on their new graduates, they announced the closure of the plant. That means dire corporate straits all round, really. Do you think there was even a hint of that in the interviews? No-o-o-o.

And this has happened to me everywhere I went. Firms supposedly recruiting better people to back their expansion programme. Not a word about the trouble they'd been in for the past few years and this was just their next attempt at putting a bigger bolt on the stable door. I fell for it every time – hook, line, sinker, rod and copy of Angling Times. So what happened each time? A few months later – redundancies. Back to square one.

Now I know I'm not the only one. So the point is, if it's hard for new employees to see through the façade presented by interviewers, then it's just a tricky for your interviewers to see through *your* positive front – provided it is solidly put together.

So avoid negativity, hints of failure and of giving any clues that you are at all fazed by any past hiccups.

Avoid negative talk at all costs. When practicing your interview answers, be aware of complaining, moaning, criticising, put-downs, derisory comments, bad-luck stories and so on. Always frame your comments in a positive light.

So always look at the events in your career positively, no matter what the truth and no matter how bad you feel about them personally. And present that version. Be especially prepared when talking to recruitment agents. You can not re-frame later what you first tell them. Their work codes require them to tell the truth as far as they are aware of it. So what you first tell them goes down as gospel and can not be changed.

OK. To recap. You have all your info together, you've identified your career area and your possible targets. The next task is to start building your application. And I don't mean write a CV. That comes later. If you're not ready for a job move yet, building your application still needs to start now – today. I'll explain what I mean in the next section.

SECTION 3

PROPER PREPARATION PREVENTS POOR PERFORMANCE

My 12 months in the melting shop was the toughest environment I have been in. Not intellectually, but physically and also on the man-management front. It was also a dangerous place to be in. You needed your wits about you. And as a novice who was supposed to be instantly expert in production, I needed a crash course in survival.

I didn't think about it at the time, but I made great use of the experience in that shop. Some had been there 30 years, including my shift manager partner. He told me about danger spots, about potential hazards, about personalities on the shop floor, about team working, about organisational tactics, about shift planning and contingency planning.

I once (and only once) made the mistake of being honest about a casting time that was shorter than the quality documents permitted. I got a ribbing for it off the section manager. [We never got complimented, of course – it was a totally blame culture.] So the shift manager also instructed me on the mystical art of covering your ass. And I listened, every time. Not so much because I knew it was the respectful thing to do, but because it was all completely new to me and I had nothing to say back, except more questions.

Again, with hindsight, I think he enjoyed that. They all did. Especially the more senior guys. They had a shed-load of experience to pass on to anyone who was willing to stand around long enough to listen. In the absence of any recognition from management, it was the closest they were going to get to a compliment and respect.

Furthermore, it turned out I was following in the footsteps of one of the previous year's graduates, who had strutted about the place telling them how it was and how it was going to be, much to their annoyance. The result – arguments, poor working relations and a multitude of production problems.

They had apparently expected the same off me. And it was a breath of fresh air when they found me asking, watching, querying, thanking and most of all, listening. It came as a real compliment to me when more than one of these hairy-arsed beefcakes said they enjoyed being on my shift. There was no arguing and the job got done better than ever.

And the morals from this little tale?

When you are in the company of someone who is more knowledgeable than you, do yourself the favour of shutting up and listening. You will gain respect. And you will gain information and knowledge faster.

Take note of compliments, commendations and recognition for your work. Any sales person worth their salt knows that credibility is an intangible yet crucially valuable asset. And be assured, in any job search, you are selling yourself to the job market place. Again, any such

detail you present will not surface in a job reference. But in interview, it all helps to re-enforce the general positive impression you want to create, as we discussed earlier.

From then on, however, it was all downhill. My next stint was in the rolling mill. A grade higher, but a totally different world. The department was ruled with a rod of iron by a gruff old dinosaur. He was domineering and highly critical. No one liked him, no one trusted him and no one worked for him. They just did the job at their own pace. The title I carried of Shift Controller was a complete misnomer. Actual control was in the hands of the operators. I just did all the admin.

Most operators lived in control pulpits, with a tannoy system between them all. No wonder they found it so easy to control the shift. If the cogging mill driver (the sole gateway for material to the rest of the mill) had a hangover and only wanted to go for 700 Tonnes on the shift, then 700 Tonnes in the shift it was. If he'd scored in the clubs on Saturday night and there was an advantageous rolling plan, records could be broken in celebration. The shift management had no control at all.

Perhaps that's why the shift manager, too, was a miserable old toad. He would slink in and out of the office without a word and told me even less. I guess they all knew the score. And they made no effort to redress it. What's more, after a lifetime of dis-respectful treatment, they were not going to give it up for the sake of a new kid on the block.

I was also being "trained" by a guy who had learnt the "system" years ago and kept it to himself. One glance at the programme and he could organise his cooling beds in half an hour, then put his feet up and let the shift run its course.

Being but a year and a half out of college, I was still naive and enthusiastic enough to believe this was wrong and should be tackled. Now this was hard work. I was treated with acute suspicion everywhere I went.

Hello! Wakey, wakey! Earth calling Ryan!

There's a rule which says you can either live with a situation, change it or leave it. My style of working was totally out of synch with this Land That Civilisation Forgot and there was no way I was going to make any kind of difference to it. The final straw came when the new department manager (a PhD man, of all things), in the absence of any initiatives of his own, had clearly tried to take on the old "beat 'em up" mantle of his predecessor. He told me I should be "kicking their arses around the floor – it's what they were used to."

I couldn't believe my ears. "What year was this? I thought you were educated for Heaven's sake. You're the boss now, let's bring this hell-hole out of the dark ages."

His comments, though, immediately woke me up to the reality of the situation and I said nothing. I was instantly far away, creating visions of other companies, of wearing a shirt and tie and not filthy overalls, a hard-hat that needed shot-blasting and of not having to wash my hands *before* I went to the toilet.

Before I could make a decision (I was beginning to learn a little quicker, but I was still painfully slow at positive action in those days), other options arose. It must have been patently obvious that I was not fitting in, so I was seconded to Industrial Engineering and then to the sister plant on the far side of town for metallurgical projects.

No one had ever switched plants before – each hated the other with a passion. So, on the plus side, I figured I was getting more experience than anyone had ever done. In reality, I was just drifting from one post to the next without any kind of structure. Moreover, the management regime was never going to go away. I would always be a mis-fit. And not being one to keep quiet when my livelihood was at stake, it would stay that way.

However, working as I was from one week to the next and still labouring under the misapprehension that, as a graduate, keen learner and hard worker, my just rewards would soon materialise, I kept my blinkers on and stuck with it without bothering to objectively analyse the situation.

After the rolling mill, my thoughts of escape should have precipitated a plan. And I should have stuck with it. Like being a good party guest, you should always have the foresight to go before you're asked to leave. The lessons to be learned here?

Your personality and working style can more determine your suitability to a job than your qualifications and experience. If your personal approach doesn't fit the regime, you will be excommunicated from promotional lines. Compromising your natural style and even your integrity and values can be a difficult and unsustainable strategy. You should seek out conditions more in-tune with your own style. This brings a satisfaction that can naturally fuel your progress without extra machinations on your part.

Wake up and smell the roses before they have wilted. Keep your options open, keep your eyes on the jobs pages, and always believe you can do better than your current situation.

Trust your sentiments when things don't add up. There are always a number of rational viewpoints that can delay or distort your overall judgement, but your sentiments are true. Go with them.

The first in the above list is becoming ever more evident. Flat organisational structures predominate and demarcation lines are diffuse. Whether they like you and your style can make the difference between success and stagnation.

Conversely, if you get a bad feeling about someone at interview, you can either take heed and flee or you can risk setting yourself up for a rough time if you accept the post. You can waste a lot of time and effort and end up going through the same routine again a year later. It's hard not to feel flattered and grateful when you are offered a post, but a little confidence, objectivity and bravery could see you holding out for a better one. A tough call. Either option is a risk. You either risk spending time in a bad firm and damaging your CV or you risk losing out on an offer. It depends on your personal situation, your own needs at the time and your instincts.

Well, after a pretty good first year, the next four at British Steel (BS for short!) were horrible. Uncertain and directionless. What did it take for me to get to grips with reality? Answer – redundancy. Each year another 10% would be shovelled out. Usually at Christmas. Nice. And each year I stupidly imagined that with less people to choose from, the greater would be my chances of promotion. When I returned from secondment to find *all* my old posts had been cut, there was nowhere else to go.

Yet bizarrely, I had been completely over-looked and forgotten about. I knocked on the Training Manager's door on the morning of January 3rd to find out to which area I should be returning. He looked at me like the ghost of Christmas past. A few hasty phone calls ensued.

I ended up being dropped a couple of grades. Even *I* could not now avoid the conclusion that no new jobs or promotions were ever going to materialise. So from the first day of this, my final post, I began to hatch my escape plan.

I recorded every job I did, categorised them and timed them. I took more work on, expanded the role, then rationalised it to 70% of the original. Then, when the next inevitable round of redundancies came, I volunteered.

All of a sudden, my job became "key". It came as quite a surprise to me to find that, after all these years, I suddenly had some value. It was all garbage, of course. The hidden agenda was this: "We know people don't wantonly volunteer for redundancy. They must have made alternative arrangements. Pretty soon, these arrangements are going to come to fruition and you're going to have to leave anyway. So we're not going to let you go. We'll wait until your time arrives, then you'll have to leave of your own accord. That way, we'll save paying you a wedge of redundancy money."

Unfortunately for them, I was no longer the college kid who was greener than a field full of mouldy cabbages. I had seen this scam before and seen through it. I wasn't going to be suckered into that. My pay off was going to keep me afloat over the next year or so and pay for my MBA course. They asked and asked and asked. And I dodged every sniper shot.

This, of course, is far from being an isolated incident. Everyone can relate to some kind of management deviance, self-servance, political shenanigans or downright dishonesty.

Never trust your superiors. The higher up they are, the more political they are and that means ulterior motives. Have your own agenda and be aware of their hidden agendas. Prepare for a worst-case scenario. Then the only surprise you'll get is likely to be a pleasant one.

To a company, you are an expendable asset, to be used until your value runs out. They are businesses, not charities, so don't expect any. That's why you need to develop your own agenda and plan your own career. Don't rely on the company to understand, appreciate or value what you believe counts for your career. They only value what counts for them personally.

If I'd have opened up, I would never have got my pay off, never have afforded my MBA and never got the consultancy jobs I got afterwards. Of course, that workload reduction went on my CV to show the value I added to the firm. But I never let on about why I really did it. Apart from looking like boasting, I didn't want to give the impression I could be a devious son-of-a-bitch.

Before I could get released, I had to prove I was superfluous. I had to prove I had rationalised my workload and that the rest could be passed on with relative ease. This is really strange. You don't often hear of employees taking steps to prove they are not needed. But it is the proof thing I want to impress on you here.

Keep notes of your work and your progress. It is proof of your value and of the value you have added to the firm. This implies to prospective employers you are capable of doing the same for them. This removes some of the risk associated with taking you on.

Fifteen months later, I was armed with the bees-knees of business degrees. But still empty-headed when it came to the realities of job-hunting.

The course tutors swore blind that, with an MBA under our belts, we would command stupid salaries. No worries. True to the trait of a good little academic, I swallowed it. Instruction was all I knew.

But several dozen rejection letters later and history was repeating itself. This time, however, I wasn't going to laugh it off. I ploughed more research into my target company selection, asked the course tutors for contacts, discussed tactics with other students. Most of the class just went back to their old jobs or back to Daddy's firm. I had neither. That made me kinda sick, a bit angry and a bit cheated that I had been spun this yarn. And more than a bit ashamed that I had been roped in by it.

In a flash of desperation, I had my first independent idea. I asked a couple of the people I had written to where I had fallen down. There was talk of not quite meeting the job spec., of not quite being compatible, even of being over-qualified. While this was all very interesting, it wasn't the real reason. Reading between the lines, the real reason was I had not targeted myself properly. There are a number of implications in this statement.

1. Location, location, location. I was in the wrong place. There is approximately half of toss all in the way of heavy engineering around Cambridge, where I had been studying. In fact any kind of manufacturing was thin on the ground. If you weren't into IT, high tech, farming or wanted to work in London (shudder at the thought), you were in the wrong place. And so I was.
2. Don't explain your life story to prospective employers and expect them to be interested in it. Pick out the relevant points and explain each from the point of view of your target. We'll get back to this a little later when we talk about CVs.

3. Keep your studies in line with your career. I had just wanted to pass and then start looking for work again. A mistake I made first time round. I should have picked an area to work in, found a company willing to offer themselves up for my studies and used this experience to apply around that same business sector. I simply used the course as a means to an end. I was unfocused.

For my part, I took the point from number 1 and moved back to Sheffield. Within 3 weeks I had a job as a management consultant ...of sorts. We were into productivity improvement, but by way of a rigid system, designed to expose *potential* savings to the client, often via firings. Whether they then chose to cash those savings in, was up to them. That was the con.

Once I was in, I also took the point from my last job about keeping records. I copied manuals that weren't supposed to be copied, I kept confidential figures, I made an extra copy of reports for myself. I even got hold of a copy of the letter of recommendation from the client, used by the firm to promote itself to future clients. This letter basically said what a fabulous job I had done. In interviews, that piece of paper was worth more than anything I could say. I wanted it. I also kept contacts from the client and indirectly kept in touch with them, so that when I wanted something else to add to my case, I could get it. So...

- Accumulate as much information from each job as possible. It's all part of your experience and professional value. Get hold of quality documents, work procedures, performance reports, quality controls, work plans, in fact anything that goes into what's called "the management system". This is the paperwork and documentation that keeps the business turning. [The ProFile course "Systems Mapping" tells you all about management systems and how to build and optimise them.].
- Make as many contacts as possible. You don't have to be best mates, but you do need to be genuine with them. Be honest and professional and they are more likely to remember you and be open with you next time you come calling.
- Get recommendations. Even copies your annual assessments may come in useful. Things can get rather political when a company has to lose you, which can play havoc with references.

Although this contract only lasted 9 months, it proved to be perhaps the most valuable tenure of my career. Even before I started I had noticed something unusual about this company. For a start, I met the recruitment officer in the poshest hotel in Manchester. I was impressed.

For all I knew at the time, this guy could have been earning a pittance and living off his expense account whilst enjoying the luxury of seeing the best hotels the UK had to offer. But it looked good. For once, I made an instant note, rather than leaving it to hindsight.

Appear impressive and you will be perceived as impressive.

I now had to live up to the impression given to *me*. It was most certainly down to me to sell myself to him. Bear in mind that the reverse can also work. Appear as if you don't need the job and a need to persuade you to join them will be in the minds of your recruiters.

Something else struck me before we had even sat down. After the first handshake, he scrutinised my apparel – tie, shoes, hair. First impressions were clearly very important to this chap. And he was after someone who could look the part. Again, this was so obvious even to me, it allowed me to put a little objectivity to proceedings. I knew I now had to play the part. To re-emphasise the previous point:

Perception is reality. However others perceive you, that is actually who you are, regardless of the reality you feel inside. Dress rich, they'll think you're rich. Act authoritative, they think you're in total command. And so on.

So as we sat down and accepted our drinks off the waitress, I pictured how a consultant should behave. Board meetings, discussion groups, presentations, professionalism. For the next hour, I *acted* quite superbly.

As he ran his pen top down the side of my CV, I noticed flashes of yellow marker. These were clearly important points. I strained to see which bits he'd highlighted. Having written, re-written, read and scrutinised my CV dozens of times over the past few months, I knew which words were picked out just by their position on the page and the shape of the paragraph. They were 'Productivity', 'Savings' (and the actual figures) and 'Analysis'.

Game on. I now knew what he was after. I could recognise veiled questions and steer my answers towards those key words. I could keep the conversation on those favoured topics and say how much I enjoyed doing them and seeing the results emerge.

I got the job. I also got real and valuable insights into the recruitment psyche.

Find out what it is your target values – and give it to them.

If the job requires a great deal of people work, emphasise that on your CV. Get your interview answers geared around those topics. If there's problem solving and analytical techniques needed, put that at the top. If there's detailed work involved, get hold of facts and figures to show how precise you are. And, just as importantly, keep everything else off, or at least put it after the important stuff.

That's what I mean about targeting. That's what I mean about looking at things from your target's points of view. And this is what you need to prepare, not just before you go into interview but right now, in your current job.

Every day, you are preparing for your next role. That's why you need a plan. Then you work with purpose and that purpose becomes crystal clear as you discuss your next posting. Collect those figures, keep that log, write down those compliments, collect those letters of

praise, copy those charts and graphs. You did it, you keep it. It's your proof of capability, your proof of progress, your proof of direction.

Now let's look more closely at how to target your prospects needs in practice.

Determining Your Target's Needs

Despite my own little story above, it is, however, not a good idea to wait until you are in interview to try and find out the kind of thing that might be covered. So how do you get an inkling beforehand? There's a number of ways. It takes a bit of thought, but it can really pay dividends.

1. The job ad.

If you're applying cold, don't expect much success. In fact your chances are as close to zero as to make it not worth thinking about. So you'll either be responding to a job ad or be going through an agency – which is often one and the same. This is where you get your first clues. The other option is via networking. This deserves special attention. After we've covered the obvious avenues of job ads and agencies, you'll see why. To continue...

Unfortunately, the people who write job ads – and it can be either the company themselves, an agency or a joint effort – know as much about creating good adverts as they do about creating good CVs; i.e. very little.

You will need to read between the lines to get the gist of what they are after. Ignore the buzzwords, ignore the jargon and the empty expressions; ignore the latest fancy management phrases and ignore the self-flattery. Although most job ads lack content, substance, specifics and a proper explanation of the job requirements, they do have one saving grace – they tend to use the same lingo.

You'd never guess that the larger agencies profess to teach their young hopefuls about copywriting. An ironically accurate literal translation of this word reveals all (Copy Writing!). Copying is nearly always the source of this poor advert writing. They all read what other people put in the press and assume that what they see is the way to do it.

I had always suspected this, had seen the evidence, heard the tales and gathered some confessions. When a newspaper editor told me the way to write adverts is to look at others in his paper, it sealed the truth in concrete. That's why such ads all have a similar, tenuous feel to them; short on specifics, long on waffle. Let's look at some examples to show what I mean and to give you an idea of how you should interpret them.

"As part of our expansion programme, we are seeking to appoint a confident, self-motivated individual. Applicants will need an understanding of the integrity and professionalism required for this role. Excellent communication skills and a proven track record in a competitive environment are essential."

I don't know about you, but I have never in my life seen a CV entry that bears a qualification on either confidence, self-motivation, integrity or professionalism. Anyone can bluff confidence for a short time; if you're not self-motivated, you won't get out of bed; and the latter two are pure subjectivity. And yet these are the only 4 qualities required in this advert. And companies pay thousands for this! Unbelievable!

What's more, if anyone had the guts to ask what they meant by 'communication skills', they would likely get a load of waffle which could be summarised by either 'patience and understanding', 'a good listener' or 'can write memos and reports'. There are dozens of ways you can define communication skills and saying "communication skills" isn't one of them. Furthermore, if anyone has had a job before, then they have been in a competitive environment by definition.

The above quote was from a genuine advert. And if you're thinking I picked it specially to illustrate a point, you're wrong. It was the very first one I looked at when I opened this week's paper. Truthfully. The odds of that happening just goes to prove that crap adverts are not isolated incidents. They are everywhere.

Here's another one for a Production / Operations Manager:

"We are looking for a high-calibre individual, ideally degree-qualified, with a strong commitment to customer service. Beyond this, excellent communication and leadership skills are essential. Ideally two-years' experience as Production Team Leader or Production Manager, capable of managing multi-disciplined personnel. If you possess the above skills, are numerate, results-driven and commercially aware, we would like to hear from you."

OK. Here's the run down.

- 'High-calibre' is a redundant phrase. Who looks for a low-calibre individual?
- Do you want someone with a degree or don't you? In any case, the whole ad describes an "ideal" candidate – which are never really found. So picking out the degree as the ideal quality just serves to underline the copy-cat mentality.
- 'Individual' is an interesting word. Ask them about it and they would no doubt prefer a 'team-player'. But notice the term 'excellent leadership skills' later. Excellent leaders do tend to be highly individual and not the touchy-feely type typified by the typical definition of team-player, who would talk a lot about being sensitive to the needs of others. So you would guess the preference is for someone a little more hard-nosed. However, I'd say the word 'individual' is more an attempt at a posh word for 'person' than a concise summary of the desired personality. But there are no guarantees.
- In this case, "communication skills" will mean a talker – morning meetings, dealing with suppliers and customers alike. Someone articulate and persuasive. You usually have to interpret this phrase in the context of the job title.
- There is an apparent contradiction in 'strong commitment to customer service' and 'results-driven'. The former lends itself to an outwards, market perspective, whereas the latter suggests

an inwards, production focus. What this probably means is that production is largely dictated by short-lead times from customers, from which the production arrangements stem.

Most of this is guess work, because I seriously doubt that advert writers are smart enough to write such subtleties into their descriptions. But the more you read an advert with this kind of critical mind, the more of a feel you will get for the real issues behind the jargon. In this last case, you will probably be more favoured if you have worked on a small unit before, with a site-wide remit and had responsibility for a number of functions. In which case, you put examples of this kind of work at the top of your CV.

Now let's put the red pencil aside for a moment and look at one that's actually not bad. It read like this:

"Sales Admin Manager. We are looking for a someone with a positive attitude towards customer service to run a busy sales office. You must be Windows computer literate and be prepared to undertake a wide range of duties."

Again lacking in *real* specifics, but it is short and to the point. There's no mention of the type of work involved or what the "wide range of duties" might be. And there's no salary given. But it is at least possible to fathom this one with a little thought.

First of all, the CV for this one must show direct responsibility for customer service. The word 'Manager' implies the more responsibility you have had, the better will be your chances. Moreover, the positive attitude stipulated must be explainable by the applicant. This is a rather tenuous expression, so to show some appreciation of what is meant by it, you must have already had influence in this kind of job and be able to dredge up evidence to back your theories on customer service. Without this experience, it is unlikely an applicant will be able to explain how they deal positively with the variety of situations presented to them.

Then there is talk of a wide range of responsibilities. Again, this says "experience". But there's another thing. Just because it says Manager, doesn't mean to say the applicant will get to sit in an ivory tower giving out orders and letting others take all the pressure. They are after a hands-on player with the gusto to keep everyone else motivated by example. Again, this will need to be on any successful CV.

What I like about this one (whether it is done on purpose or not) is that there is no statement about years of experience required. So they are not excluding young go-getters who can already show variety and quick progression, or those with many years service to their name.

It's adverts like these you can try your luck at. With a well-written CV, focused on the key points you decipher from the advert wording, you can at least get your foot in the door. Then it's down to your ability to sell yourself face-to-face.

2. The Recruitment Agency

Hmm... I don't suppose there's any point in trying to hide it. You're most probably already getting the impression I don't like recruitment agencies. For lots of reasons. For one, they are purely sales people. Not that there's anything wrong with sales people, but agencies deal with a business' most important asset – it's people. And yet typically they have little grasp of business concepts. They aren't able to get beneath the skin of client company cultures, business drivers and organisational needs. There are exceptions, but they are rare.

Unless you are going for a top flight job, you will not talk to a business person when you talk to an agency. You'll talk to a sales person. Often an ex-telesales person. And any old dimwit can get into telesales. If you've got a clear voice, can read a script and don't mind taking crap from all sides, you'll do.

The reason telesales is important to recruitment agencies stems from their approach to filling posts, which involves making hundreds of phone calls per week. In short, they carpet bomb the job market and hope to score monkey marks. It's a question of speed, and speed alone. Agents have to get through as many people as possible for as many vacancies as possible and pass on a favoured few to the client in order to get their bonuses. Anyone with the qualifications and the will to be interviewed well on the day will pass the test and get the agent their bonus. The actual skill applied in understanding what the business really *needs* and spotting those talents in candidates is next to nil. They metaphorically trawl a net with a particular sized and shaped mesh through the job market and hope a few will stick. Those then get sold on to market. And if you have to buy one fish that day, you are unlikely to throw them all back and send the trawler back out to sea.

When preparing to speak to an agent, get up to speed on your own CV specifics. You will need quick and positive answers to questions about your CV. To focus your answers, get behind the advert language as we discussed above.

If you actually get face-to-face with an agent, consider yourself fortunate. Because you can now ask questions you can't ask of an employer.

- Who will you be seeing? What are they like? What is their background? How long have they been in the job?
- Is the firm losing or making money? What are their prospects?
- What is their real position in the market?
- Why has the vacancy come about? What is their staff turn-over rate?

The chances are the agent won't have much detail on this, but it's a good chance to get an objective feel for your prospective firm and your interviewer(s) before you are subjected to the on-site company sales pitch. And, like I mentioned earlier, personality is critical these days. If you can get a good picture of your interviewer before you go in, you stand a better chance of striking up a good rapport and creating a good first, and lasting, impression.

So now that you have a good idea of who your target is and what they actually value, you need to target these wants in your CV. Let's take a look at how this is done.

SECTION 4

EFFECTIVE JOB HUNTING

In this section we'll set about the job hunt itself... once the preparation is finished! Because there's still one thing left to do – build your CV. There is one golden rule to bear in mind here:

Your CV Is Not A Work History – It's Your National Advertising Campaign

Think about it. Your CV is your first impression. And we all know about first impressions. Fail here and all other preparation you make will be in vain. They will never get to see your bubbling motivation, hear your tales of glory or be inspired by your unquenchable enthusiasm. Your CV has to be the strongest it can be. And that means learning the structures and techniques of successful, professional CVs. If not, you are seriously jeopardising your future and failing to fulfil your potential for the sake of a short investment of time.

Creating Your CV

To do a really professional job is not that easy, unless you've had plenty of practice. If you don't want to leave it to chance, you would do well to consider the services of a professional. There's plenty around and, as with any industry, they are of varying quality and cost. Here are some of the more fundamental issues you should address.

Sell Benefits, Substantiate With Features

One of the first things that was drummed into us in my consultancy days was the difference between features and benefits. Features are essentially assets, facts and figures. Benefits are the same thing expressed in terms of the WIIFM factor (what's in it for me). When you apply to a vacancy, you need to express your work experience in terms of benefits to your target employer. There are various words you can use to bring your benefits to life, called "benefit-generators". Example benefit-generators are:

Enhance, Improve, Enable, Maximise, Minimise, Facilitate, Manage

These words are stronger than, say "raised, made, dealt with, started, supervised" and so on. Benefit-generators add sparkle to your testimony and give strength to your claims.

Proof

Another thing they said was "everything can be reduced to numbers". It may not be a universal phrase, but on the whole, there is a great deal of truth in it. Think about your own job. How many tasks do you perform each day? How many times? How long does each take? How much are you paid for doing them? What, then, is the cost per task? What is your output per day? By how much has it changed over the months? Whatever you do, you can always apply a figure to it one way or another.

So what? Well, once you determine how to measure what it is you do, you can keep records of it. Then you can track your efforts over time, measure improvements and – guess what? – put them on your CV to prove how effective you are.

- "Saved £10k per annum" reads better than "gave a cost saving".
- "Brought in 50k of new business" is more defined than "improved sales in 2 areas".
- "Increased output by 5%" is more informative than "helped increase production".

You get the idea. In this way, employers get a real, tangible picture of just how valuable you really are.

Keep It Relevant

Following on from the features and benefits point, you should clearly look to exclude from your CV anything that doesn't have direct relevance to your target employer. Writing your definitive life history is a sure fire way to bore them silly. They haven't got the time or the patience to sift through everything you have to say about yourself whilst looking for the good bits.

Remember the WIIFM factor and tell them what they want to hear. Your CV should be as short and as punchy as possible, with as many words as is necessary to sell yourself, but not one more. Let me just repeat that last bit:

"Your CV should include as many words as is necessary to sell yourself, but not one more."

That basically sums up the correct approach to *effective* CV-writing.

Other points to note

1. Never hand-write it. Use a good printer or a clean, clear photocopier.
2. Keep it plain and simple. Don't get cute, creative, colourful or flippant.
3. Put your best points on the cover letter.
4. Use bullet points where possible; paragraphs are not an inviting proposition.
5. Make it as short as possible – concise, key and relevant are words to bear in mind. One page is ideal.

Interviews

This is the final part of the sales process, aka job hunt. You have researched your target, identified their needs and wants, focused on these in your preparation and got your foot in the door with your CV. Now they have agreed to see you. They're interested. This is where you close the deal.

There are loads of different types of interview – one-to-one, many-to-one, group interviews, assessment days, consecutive interviews... – all conducted with varying degrees of competence.

Some interviewers can appear nervous, unsure of their approach, uninterested even. Some are planned and conducted strictly, some are ad-hoc.

The best ones require you to do much of the talking, have a general structure to the questioning, but where the interviewer is also skilled enough to dictate the flow of the interview by feeding off the answers you give. Then they are painting a picture of you and not filling in some kind of questionnaire. And you can have the confidence that you are talking to a pro.

Of course, you can do the same. You can feed off the interviewer's comments to focus your answers, look for hints on company performance and management attitude and of the qualities they value. Mind you, this isn't easy and can only come with practice.

Nevertheless, here are some other points you should bear in mind at interview.

Keep An Open Mind

Three times in my salaried career I was given a job I didn't apply for. The first was when I was between jobs and just looking for some pocket money while I did my serious searching. A local division of a major electrical organisation wanted a new team of people. The rate was good, the hours handy, so I applied. They asked me to come back in a couple of days' time.

It turned out their productivity was not good enough, had noticed my previous consultancy work and wondered if I could do a similar job for them. I only had 6 weeks at it before I moved on to a permanent post in a new firm, but I still managed something like a 17% increase in output, which was another useful addition to my CV. And all from a simple roll of the dice.

The second was when I decided to leave the erratic world of consultancy behind and get back to production management. A half hour interview with two directors turned into an hour and a half. Apparently, they had similar ideas to the last lot and decided instead to send me abroad to look at the productivity of their European site, which was undergoing a major re-fit. I dug up so much stuff, a four week project turned into 5 months. Again, a great boost to the CV and another marvellous and totally unexpected chapter in my increasingly varied career.

The third turned out to be my final salaried post. I had come full circle and was talking about a production management job at British Steel. They were also scouting for a Demand Analyst – a trial post to determine demand levels from customers and to translate that pattern into a material supply strategy and production plans. I was to be the only one in British Steel. That meant huge scope for development. Typically, though, their expansion plans were just sand castles that got washed away the moment the tide turned.

Whatever... what I want to point out here is this:

[Apply to jobs that you may not feel totally suited to.](#)

1. [It's good for interview practice in your build up for the more important ones.](#)

2. Keep an open mind and be prepared to say Yes to opportunities that can suddenly be thrown open to you. You just never know your luck. If it can happen to me three times, I'm sure it must happen to others as well.

It's A Two-Way Street

Many people approach interviews with the idea that it is all one-way. Not so. Your interviewer must also sell the job and the firm to you. They are interested enough in your abilities to invite you in, so they too want it to go well. And if you perform on the day, they will leave the room as much hoping that you will accept an offer as you are hoping they will give you one.

And they don't always get their way. Personally? Well, there was one interviewer in Slough that I found particularly patronising. And she hinted at 10-year stints in the post. 10 years! No thanks. After 3 or 4 at the most, I wanted promotion. Another personnel officer (another one of my pet hates) didn't know what KPIs or productivity measures were. And when she asked what M.B.A. stood for, I cut it short and left. I turned down second interviews with both.

Recognising this two-way flow of any interview helps to alleviate some of the tension. That can be a real boost to your confidence. And confidence gets a big tick in any interviewer's note book.

Your Top Quality Isn't On Your CV

Typically, your CV is your first impression. Its purpose is to get you in the door. Once that happens, you'll be lined up against people of similar experience and qualification to you. What now makes you stand out from the crowd is you as a person.

The single most important quality interviewers look for is enthusiasm.

Lack both confidence and enthusiasm and all the qualifications in the world aren't going to get you the job. Fail to exhibit some verve for your job and the employer will consider it a great risk in giving you a chance.

Avoid going over the top, though. False and over-exhibited enthusiasm, like exaggerated sincerity, is not believable and engenders a sense of distrust. Firm, assertive, positive, decisive and honest are key words to bear in mind when gearing up for the key moment.

A Positive Attitude

This is all part of an over-riding trait needed for success at interviews – positive thinking. You need to be positive about your qualifications for the job, positive about your chances and positive in your preparation. Everyone gets nervous before big events and before engaging in something that is unfamiliar. The key is to frame it in a positive light. If you're afraid, you haven't prepared enough. If you are prepared, you are just excited. That's the difference. What may seem like nerves is just expectation at an impending change in your life.

How many runners do you see sitting back and relaxing before a race? How many athletes stroll into the arena, stadium or court and perform some kind of yogic relaxation exercises? None? Pretty much.

Instead, they are gearing themselves up for the final conflict, the moment of truth, the event that all the preparation has been leading up to. And so should you. You should be harnessing your excitement, feeling grateful that your mind is racing and alert and be thankful that you do feel edgy. It means you are alert, that you care about what you are about to do, that you want to win and have the desire to win. Your enthusiasm for the battle will come across as you begin to talk. Try to pretend that this is nothing, that it is easy and that you are a bit nonplussed about the event and you'll impress no one. You can relax as much as you want when it's all over. Right now you should be at your peak.

What if this is your first job?

If you are entering work for the first time, then the above points are especially important. You will probably have no real work history to speak of, so enthusiasm for your work and your future will be top of the interviewers hit list. Of course, if you have extra-curricular work to tell of, then this can only benefit you. Plus, the more you research your target employer and their business sector, the more impressive you will be should the conversation turn that way. And it can give you some good questions to ask your interviewer in return. Other than that, your energy and positive drive are what tip the scales.

You will do well – Guaranteed!

Well, almost! When you are dealing with people, there are no guarantees. However, all an interviewer has to go on is your CV and the job description. If you have spent time preparing your CV, thought about your target's WIFM factor and got a good benefits list together from all the features of your past work, then you are well prepared. For what you have put on your CV you *will* be asked about. You are then focusing on your strengths.

If you have also researched your target, you will be able to frame your answers from their point of view. You'll be better able to play up to what you believe they seek. Again, there are no guarantees, but it will swing the odds well in your favour.

But first you have to find your target. So now, finally, we'll have a look at this aspect.

Where to Job Hunt

Ironically, the job-hunting part of the process actually comes last. That's because you need to identify your quarry and set your sights before you go hunting. You need to be sure of the type of job you are aiming at and why. You need to be focused on the qualities needed to get that kind of job. And your CV needs to be geared towards it. Look first and prepare second and you will waste a heck of a lot of time and effort and quickly become disillusioned and demotivated.

Actually finding the jobs is the easy bit, particularly in this information age. So I'll be swift. The basic rule of thumb is to leave no stone unturned.

1. Get your local newspaper on job day.
2. Do a "jobs" and "careers" keyword search on the Internet. Note your favourite sites and visit them once a week. Some of the more popular ones are:

monster.co.uk
fish4jobs.co.uk
stepstone.co.uk
gisajob.co.uk
gojobsite.co.uk

3. Avoid the national press unless you're on silly money.
4. Get on as many recruitment agency books as possible (more detail below).
5. Tell your friends, relatives and colleagues to keep a lookout. Do the same for them.
6. Keep records of what you do on which days. Keep records of jobs applied for and responses received.
7. Seek feedback from your applications so you can better target your future applications. Keep revising your letters and CV.
8. Keep at it.

Sending Your CV by e-mail

E-mail is an increasingly popular method of sending CVs. The trouble is, not everyone can read what you might send. Always ask for the receiver's preference.

- If it's as a straight e-mail, would they prefer plain text or an HTML version?
- If they prefer an attachment, which software do they use?
- And which version of that software?

I have found that you are less likely to get a reply from an e-mailed CV than with regular snail mail. Why? Who knows. Could be psychological. E-mail is associated with speed. Perhaps it is in the ethos of using e-mail that recruiters imagine they don't have the time to respond to applications that are deemed wide of the mark.

If you think that's just plain ignorance on their part, as I do, then you should call them up. Tell them you have been expecting a reply and ask if they have come to any conclusions yet. If they say No, ask when they will have done so and call them back again. Get their thoughts on your application. Ask where the faults lay so that you can improve for next time.

Recruitment Agencies

Unfortunately, there's not much getting away from this one, despite the fact that they fill only around 3% of all vacancies worldwide.

The principal rule for dealing with agencies is you need to know how to sell yourself by phone.

As I mentioned previously, agents are purely sales people. In their early days – which are quite often their only days, because staff turnover can be quite alarming – they are desk-bound sales people. They scour the advert pages and Internet for whatever leads they can get, phone as many people as is humanly possible in office hours and then cherry pick a few to pass on to the client. For that reason, agents are often ex-telesales people.

To get into telesales, you typically need to be unqualified, uneducated and desperate for £4 or £5 an hour. Their conditions, working schedules and practices make them the satanic mills of the 21st century. These are the people to whom firms entrust probably their most important business issue – getting the best people together.

Anyway, to business... Because these people are simply a filter to the real people – the firms themselves – you have to get past them. So you deal with them as you would a receptionist when you are trying to get through to the business manager.

There are many tactics you can use, which are well-referenced elsewhere, so I won't replicate them here. The reference I would recommend is "Selling By Telephone" by Len Rogers. Follow this link www.career-dynamics.co.uk/booklist.htm and you can read my comments on it and then follow a direct link to the Amazon web page.

Filtering candidates by phone is becoming increasingly popular, especially amongst agents, as it means they can get through the maximum number of names in the shortest time. So if you want to deal with agencies, I do recommend you get hold of a copy of this book.

Networking

All the reports suggest that the majority of vacancies are filled through networking. Whether this includes internal vacancies I don't know. But when you consider the alternatives, it is certainly a highly favoured option. Everyone in the process gets to know each other beforehand, which removes much of the risk – and the cost.

Now, I've just finished a less than flattering exposition on the agency route. And with the traditional CV-through-the-mail-and-two interviews option, there will always be stiff competition. It's a lot of work all round, really. Networking, on the other hand, takes out the uncertainty on both sides. You get to know who is a promising prospect and they get to know you more as a person than they would in the largely artificial sales environments of the other routes.

There's nothing inherently mysterious about networking, but if you're not naturally forth-coming it can appear a little daunting. Some people are more naturally adept at cultivating and maintaining networks than others.

It basically involves talking to people and keeping in regular (not necessarily frequent) contact with them. Delve for information, be open about your intentions, keep records and if you hear of an opening, go for it. You should always be courteous, don't waste people's time frivolously, avoid sounding off about your current predicament and offer up information that could be useful to your contacts, too.

Again, consider the WIIFM factor – you need to make sure you present yourself to the market from the benefits to others angle. Rather than telling people you want out of a lousy firm, for example, you discuss your career plans, your potential and your determination to see it fulfilled "...and, by the way, if you know of someone who needs a good marketing analyst (or whatever), give them my name." You'll need personal cards, of course.

Finally, avoid relying too much on any one channel and don't dis-regard any of them either. You just never know where that one vital lead will come from; the one that will make a lasting difference to your career.

After all, your one and only livelihood is too precious to leave to chance.



Some Final Notes

My brief return to production management from consultancy saw the end of my employed career. Manufacturing was what I had always done and it was fading fast. The numbers of time-served manufacturing professional compared to the decreasing numbers of vacancies made it a daunting prospect. It did mean, though, that you had to be good to succeed. But when supply far out-strips demand, the currency becomes devalued. Even the highest quality items become a commodity and prices fall dramatically.

Although I was still winning through, my final sojourn at British Steel was the last straw. I had the choice of either re-training or going it alone. For the quality of life, the autonomy and the chance of decent wage, I chose the latter.

This report contains all the fundamentals of job hunting I have picked up along the way. If you want to make a serious job out of your job hunting and career planning – and I strongly recommend that you do – Appendix B lists further references that can fill in the detail for you.

Your career is your one and only livelihood. You should protect it, nurture it and invest in it.

You'll have noticed I use the word "invest" in that last paragraph. And that's exactly what ProFile intends to be – an investment in your future. OK, you guessed it – here comes the sales pitch! But seriously, folks, the information you can get from ProFile can add years to your knowledge and experience base, without you having to go through the torture and cost of finding out the hard way. It is your secret career weapon. The cost of any ProFile product is truly tiny compared to the returns you can expect to get from them. And they will be yours to reference again and again whenever you need.

You can get your hands on the kind of information and advice that could cost you thousands in lost salaries while you make the mistakes learning it for yourself. And, conversely, it can earn you thousands more by leap-frogging your experience and knowledge forward many years.

Information is power. And ProFile Career Dynamics aims to be a portal for your career informational needs. Whatever information, advice and guidance you may need in the increasingly turbulent employment sea, we aim to provide it. So if you have any comments about the web site content, feel free to contact us at profile@career-dynamics.co.uk. Or if its advice you're after, send a mail to advice@career-dynamics.co.uk.

It grows ever more difficult to carve a career. The average tenure in an organisation is decreasing, which, conversely, means there is an increasing onus on the individual to look after their own career plans, and their own development and to be adept at marketing themselves. This requires skills beyond those of your job description. To succeed in your future career, you need to add these to your personal skills base.

Alternatively, and regarding yourself as a one-person company, you can do what other companies do when they don't have indigenous talent – they rent it in. A small investment in the

services of a career pro can bring rich returns. However, the difference between ProFile and other careers services is that we prefer to teach you how to fish ...metaphorically. We aim to give you the means to look after yourself in the future.

That's why our exclusive book, Career Magic, divulges the secrets of writing killer CVs (amongst other things). Why there is "The Pro File", an intensive training course to give you the every-day working skills that few people possess or use. Then there's the Advice Centre where you get to ask real people real questions. There's our other training courses to give you a professionalism which you will carry for the rest of your career. And we are always looking to improve on and expand this range.

Still... more about these in Appendix B. Do have a look through these valuable tools. They are all career skills that you can ill-afford to be without. And they will surely bring tremendous returns to you over the years.

Finally, you should re-read this report and draw up a plan of action for yourself. Apply the principals given here to your own personal situation. And, equally, don't wait for the kak to hit the fan before being motivated into action. For then it will be too late. You need to prepare and act now. Stay ahead of the game. Never forget that you are but another expendable corporate asset. In return, you should regard your organisation in just the same way – as the current means via which you are seeking out your career, and personal, goals.

Assess your situation, match your experiences, skills and marketable benefits to the job market, target your employers and build your CV. Then practice, practice, practice. Good luck. Be prepared, be positive and you will succeed.

My best wishes,

Ryan Stephenson

Appendix A

Checklist For Job Hunters And Career Planners

- Your next job starts today. Begin your preparations now.
- Distil your job successes and achievements into numbers.
- Find out where you can get hold of company information – Mintel, Key Point, newspaper CD-ROMs, Kompass, company reports.
- Where do you want to be in 1 year, 3 years and 5 years time? Make your plans, justify them to yourself and discuss it with others to create a water-tight argument for interviews.
- Perception is reality. Work on your presentation. Walk the talk.
- Collect as much information and documentation from your current job as possible.
- Build your contact network and keep it simmering away.
- Measure what you do. Keep records. Monitor changes.
- Follow your sentiments and intuition. Have the courage to move before you are forced to.
- Never believe or trust your superiors. There is plenty they don't tell you. Look after No.1.
- Match your skills, qualities and saleable benefits to the job market.
- Then build your CV. Keep it concise, key and relevant.
- Find out what your target wants and give it to them. Emphasise these points on your CV and cover letter.
- On your CV, sell with benefits, substantiate with features.
- Prioritise these features and benefits according to importance from the point of view of your target.
- Your best points are not on your CV. They are your personal ones. These are the ones that can ultimately make or break an offer. Energy and enthusiasm are pretty much universal traits sought by recruiters. Fake it if you have to – an interview rarely lasts more than one hour.
- Your CV should include as many words as is necessary to sell yourself, but not one more.
- Make job hunting a weekly or monthly routine.
- Learn to sell yourself by telephone.
- Always believe you can do better.
- Keep at it.

And finally, learning the tricks of the trade can be far more valuable than ploughing headlong into your regular work. Books and other materials contain years of experience and knowledge, which you can pick up for just a few quid. Make full use of this inexhaustible, high-value resource and build yourself a competitive advantage.

Appendix B

Further Reading and References From ProFile

ProFile aims to comprehensively support you in your endeavours. Below is a brief outline of the many sources you can use to get ahead of the field – and to start pocketing the difference.

ProFile Free E-Zine

Hot off the "electronic press" each week, up-to-date information and advice from the job-hunting jungle. To subscribe simply log onto the Career Dynamics home page at www.career-dynamics.co.uk. Or send an e-mail to profile@career-dynamics.co.uk, with "Free E-Zine" in the subject line.

You can also get as many back issues as you wish.

"The Pro File"

["Imagine If You Had A Personal Coach Sharing Career-Boosting Secrets With You Every Week Of The Year... How Successful Would You Become?"](#)

This intensive weekly e-mail training programme will let you do just that. And you can trial it without risk – **your first 6 issues are entirely FREE.**

Here you accumulate those core ideas, techniques and pieces of advice that improve every day of your working life. You will be more efficient, effective, productive – and hopefully happier and wealthier, too! Quite simply, if you want to "make it", you have to know this stuff.

- You will gain years of 'experience' effectively over-night;
- Your efficiency and effectiveness will allow you to achieve more in a shorter time;
- You will have the means to confidently raise your level of ambition several floors;
- You will be able to command higher salaries.

Read more at www.career-dynamics.co.uk/newslett.htm.

Remember, your first 6 issues are Free.

Job Hunting and Career Planning

ProFile's exclusive book, "Career Magic", is probably the most practical book on modern day job hunting and career planning available. There are sections on:

- Surviving unemployment,
- 10 steps to constructing your killer CV (including cover letters),
- Strategies for career planning and prospering in uncertain times,
- How to win at interviews, including great answers to the hardest interview questions.

You can read more about it at www.career-dynamics.co.uk/book.htm.

You can get 30% discount on this book when you get your CV through ProFile.

CVs

**"Don't Risk Your Financial Future By Giving An Ordinary First Impression.
Make Sure Your Professional Business Profile Is The Strongest It Can Be "**

Creating a killer CV takes time and practice. ProFile gives you 2 options:

- a). The cheaper, DIY route, using the 10-step process detailed in ProFile's exclusive book "Career Magic", available through the web site and through major on-line book stores. Note, though, that UK P&P is free through the ProFile web site, which may not be the case with the e-stores.
- b). If you prefer not to leave your vital first impression to chance, you can take advantage of ProFile's professional CV service. More details are at www.career-dynamics.co.uk/cv.htm.

Career And Business Books

In association with amazon.co.uk, ProFile offers the cream of business and career books. Includes topics such as:

- Maximising your working effectiveness.
- Personal development.
- Understanding the business you are in.
- Handling change.
- Selling by telephone.
- Power negotiating.

The emphasis is on quality, not quantity. No book gets reviewed unless I have read and own it myself. So they really are personal recommendations.

There is a brief review of each and a direct link to the exact page on the Amazon web site where you can read further reviews and make your purchases.

Training Courses

Practical courses that bring maximum returns for minimum investment of time and effort. Includes:

- **Time Management** – How to slash your workload *without* compromising your output. Time is your most valuable asset. Cut stress; get promoted; get your life back! If you fancy a 4-day week, this is how to get it at minimum effort.
- **Power Presentations** – A skill niche with little competition. How to make presentations with confidence and authority. You'll suddenly become a unique employee.
- **How To Handle Difficult People** – Rid yourself of negative, damaging influences and re-gain control of yourself, your work and your environment.

- **Systems Mapping** – Some firms pay hundreds of thousands to consultants for this. This powerful management tool can literally transform your working practices for maximum control, maximum output, minimum errors, minimum wastage – and maximum profit. If you've ever wanted to make a real impression, this will do it. An exceptionally valuable and marketable skill.

The ProFile web site is growing all the time, with valuable information sources being regularly added.

Can you afford to be without it?

My sincerest wishes for your future success,

Ryan Stephenson