

Getting that job.....

First thing – you need a CV, right? Right.

It's your opportunity to make the employer want to meet you. And you don't want your application to go straight into the "No" pile. So, start with a great CV; it's the first impression an employer will have of you.

You don't get a second chance to make a first impression. Paint a picture of the fabulous person that you are. Of course great qualifications and outstanding skills are the best way of getting an interview but most of us have to "sell" ourselves by writing a great CV. Here's some tips to help you.

THE LOOK

Present a professional approach in whatever you send. If you are creating an emailable CV (which is most common nowadays) use a programme like Word or a text document which will be easily opened. Don't use fancy programmes that no-one's ever heard of. If the employer can't open it, he may not bother to tell you or ask for another.

Keep it brief – a cover sheet and 2 or 3 pages at most.

Don't use too many fonts – 2 is enough. Or vary size and bolding of just one. Choose a fairly common font; if the employer doesn't have the font that you have used, on their computer, it won't print out as you intended.

Keep colours to a minimum or **just use black**. Chances are the employer will print it on a black printer anyway.

Make it look good. Use **simple but professional formatting**, nothing too fancy or wayout. Unless you're after a graphic design job, simple is always best.

Stick to a simple, clear, easy to read layout, anything from 10 – 12 point font size depending on how much detail you are providing. Be careful about the layout and use good formatting so that it prints out as you intended. The employer's copy should look like your own. Use page breaks and tabs if necessary. If you're not a good typist, get someone who is to prepare it for you.

Spelling and punctuation are important. Spell check, but always read it for sense and meaning. Spell checkers can't understand what you meant and don't differentiate between different spellings of similar words.

Make it easy for the employer to read and find out all about you. A simple layout with all the information easily available will increase your chances of getting that interview.

(Do you get the feeling that simple, clear and uncluttered is good? Follow the **KISS** principle – Keep It Simple, Stupid!)

THE CONTENT

A simple cover page, with just your name and "Curriculum Vitae" or "Resume" on the front. You can add the month and year if you wish. If you don't have easy access to a computer to update it regularly tho, don't date it. Some people prefer not to include a cover page, just listing their name and the words Curriculum Vitae as a heading at the top of the first page.

The first page should contain your personal details –

name, address, contact details

(be careful here. If you email a CV to a prospective employer from an existing work email address (dodgy...) a reply may be sent to that address.)

driver's licence details, health (e.g. excellent, non-smoker), You don't have to give your date of birth but most employers can work it out anyway so it doesn't always hurt.

Give your education details and qualifications. Secondary school and later is sufficient. **List any major achievements** like captain of the 1st XV, school swimming champ, participation in team activities or group events. If you've got a BSc with a B+ average, you can say so.

Coursework related to your desired profession. e.g. current courses, wine appreciation courses etc.

Special aptitudes or skills – for instance, if you are an IT wizard or can use a particular set of computer programmes or something, say so. Or **skills and experience** gained during summer jobs – e.g. vineyard or cellar door work. If you're an older person, trying to get into a new industry, chances are you will have loads of **transferable skills** learned in previous jobs and life experiences.

Other skills/qualifications/certificates – **don't send pages and pages of scanned documents**, certificates etc. No employer wants to print out 18 pages showing you have a Growsafe certificate or won the student of the year award or can drive a forklift (but you should list these skills in your CV). By all means have a hard copy of these available in a full CV to take to an interview should you need them. If you're a straight A student, it would make sense to include a copy of your academic transcript.

List your interests. It helps to **paint a picture of the sort of person that you are**. Be considered in what you put here. If an employer is looking for a team player, they're not going to be that interested in someone who lists "singular" or individual interests. If you're looking for a winery job, chances are you would list wine as an interest. (Otherwise what are you doing in this industry??) Think about the sort of image you are portraying. Are you a well-rounded person?

Community involvement etc. If you've done any **extra-curricular activities** or **voluntary work**, list what you have done.

Work experience – **list most recent jobs first and work back**. If you're an older applicant you don't have to list every job you've ever had in your life, just go back say 10 or 15 years. Give a basic idea of what your role entailed and demonstrate some achievements. It's not that helpful to say you were an office administrator and then list your tasks as filing, accounts, telephones etc. That goes without saying. Instead, list some things that you did – i.e. re-negotiated courier contract saving \$5K per year.

Be Honest. Do not tell any lies or misrepresent yourself in any way.

Lots of people (and computer templates) suggest providing an objective on your CV.
e.g. To be a winemaker for a leading NZ winery.

We don't prefer to list an objective but it is a personal choice. They can work against you, particularly if you are applying for a cellarhand job, when your objective states you want to be a winemaker. Most winemakers start off as cellarhands so it doesn't really add any value. If inappropriate, the employer may not consider you further. And, objective statements can need to be changed depending on the job being applied for. An employer at interview will often ask where you see yourself in several years and you can then tell them of your aspirations.

Photo – again a personal choice. Most European resumes that we see tend to feature a photograph and if an NZ employer is wanting someone for vintage work, that's helpful. Generally we don't believe they are necessary (unless you're after a modelling job).

Cover letter – **keep it brief and to the point, and give best methods and times of contact**. You can "sell" yourself a little here if you wish but not too over the top. If you are sending an email application, make sure your message is tidy, correct capitals, sentences etc. No text language or abbreviations!!! Be clear about email addresses as most communications are made that way. Consider also the personal email address that you use – what does yours say about you? joesmith@hotmail.com sounds a lot better than hotpants@hotmail.com....

If English is your second language, have someone local read and check your CV and help you with your English. Most NZ employers are very particular about good written and oral communication skills and migrants don't always find it easy to get jobs – often not because of their technical skills but because of what is seen as poor communication.

If you are posting a CV or taking a hard copy with you to an interview, **assemble it with a single staple at the top left corner**. No need for fancy folders or bulky binders, they can be hard to read from. If the employer wants you to leave a full CV after an interview, make sure you have a spare one that has copies of your certificates. Don't leave your originals with anyone, and don't ask the employer to make a copy for you. Be prepared. It may be a cost to have these done, but look at it as an investment in your career.

DON'T EVER MAKE A HANDWRITTEN ALTERATION TO ANYTHING ON YOUR CV. EVER.

It is an employer's pet hate and we know loads of people who put those applications straight in the bin regardless of a candidate's good points. It indicates sloppiness and laziness. (even if you don't have access to a printer and you have moved house. Somehow, get a fresh copy done.)

Strengths and weaknesses. There used to be a preference for listing these things about oneself but we don't believe they should be included. An employer will ask interview questions that reveal these. However, Personal Qualities can be listed if you wish – such things as Reliable, Motivated, Passionate, Flexible, Great Team Player.... You get the idea.

Referees – most employers will want to talk to someone about you before offering you a job. Choose carefully the **people who will speak highly of you** – and sorry but you can't list your mother... Ask them first if they are happy to act as a referee for you, and list their contact details.

The jury's still out on whether **phoning as a follow up** to a job application is a good idea or not. In the days when applications were mailed, there was a chance of not being received, so a phone call to check wasn't a bad idea. Some people include in their letters such statements as "I will phone you in a few days to arrange an interview." We think that's a bad move. Employers don't like pushy people so we don't suggest phoning. However, if that feels right for you, it's your choice.

Remember, whilst it's important to you that you hear from an employer quickly about your application, filling that vacancy maybe only one of the things on his mind and he may not give it the priority you would hope for. **Be patient.** Unfortunately, there are employers out there who do not acknowledge applications nor get back to unsuccessful candidates... We think that's poor.

WHAT DOES AN EMPLOYER LOOK FOR?

Generally – Outstanding individuals who will be a good fit for the Company, and into the team. Someone who has sound technical skills but most of all a good attitude and positive qualities. Some employers "hire for attitude and train for skill." More workplace issues are caused by an employee's behaviour than their inabilities.

Here's some examples:

Good character	Team Player
Leadership qualities	Self-confidence
Motivated	Healthy, fit
Sound technical skills (inc computer)	Willing attitude
Time management skills	Oral and written communication skills
Presentation	Initiative
Problem solving	Interpersonal skills

SO, YOU GOT AN INTERVIEW.....

What now?

Before you go for an interview, here's some things to think about.

Research the company, check out their website, who their key people are, and find out what you can about them. You'll be able to ask sensible questions and talk confidently to the person interviewing you.

Be clear about the time and place of the interview. Do not be late. (but not too early either). If possible go for a drive in advance so you know the exact location and how long it will take you to get there.

Allow plenty of time. They may want to show you around or introduce you to other people – you don't want to be rushing off somewhere else. If you make an interview appointment in your lunch break and have, say, just an hour, tell them when you make the appointment.

Dress appropriately and be well-groomed. Clean hair, shoes etc. If in doubt you are better to be a bit overdressed than under. Try and find out what other people wear in that environment. If you look good, you'll feel good – and more confident.

If you are a smoker, do not have a cigarette on the way – you and your clothes will "stink" (sorry but it's true) and this may mean you don't get the job. Some **non-smokers just can not stand the smell or thought of a smoker** in their midst.

Don't wear **overpowering perfume or aftershave.** Similar reasons to above. And don't drink alcohol beforehand. Ditto re smell.

Double check the **correct name and pronunciation** of the person you are to meet. Say it out loud and practise it if you need to.

Be confident and greet your interviewer pleasantly with a **firm handshake and smile.** He/she will likely make up his/her mind about you within the first 20 seconds. Scary but true.

You may be asked to fill out an **application form** and sometimes they ask for information that is already in your CV. Rather than fill out every single question you can sometimes put "See CV". Always provide your name and contact details tho. And, you may be asked questions about ACC or health, and whether you have any convictions. Be honest. The Clean Slate Act means you only have to provide information on certain (less serious) convictions going back 7 years.

Don't talk too much. Answer any questions politely and positively and give the information that is required but don't rabbit on unnecessarily. It puts people off and when you're nervous is easy to do.

Sit upright and still in your chair. **Don't wriggle, jiggle, fidget,** wring your hands, tap your feet etc. The interviewer will expect you to be nervous and make allowances for it, but don't show it more than necessary.

Enjoy the process. Well, try to. Use it as a learning experience, gaining confidence all the time. If you miss out on this job, the next interview will be a little easier.

Observe your interviewer's style, then try to pace and match it. Listen to what is being said, and let the interviewer know you've been listening by asking good questions and making insightful comments. Recognise the interviewing style. Some people carry out a formal process, some are informal, more like a chat. If an interviewer doesn't have a formal structure he/she may try to break the ice by saying the dreaded: "Tell me about yourself". If faced with such an open question, you could ask "where would you like me to start?" to get a more definite starting point. You do not have to give personal information.

If you are interviewed by more than one person, speak to that person when you answer their question **but look at and include the others** as well.

Take your time. If you're not sure how to answer a question, it's ok to think about it for a short while before you reply. **Don't rush yourself** and risk saying something stupid.

Answer briefly and intelligently. Don't be afraid to converse, i.e. ask them a question as well if you're not sure you've given them the information they were after.

Some companies put candidates through a testing process. The most common are psychometric tests which give indications of personality types, behaviours etc. Don't be surprised if they want you to undergo such tests. They should usually tell you in advance so that you can allow sufficient time. Most recruitment agencies will test in some way so they can give employers an honest appraisal of your skills or behaviours.

Anticipate the questions. This is important. Many interviews (particularly if conducted by a recruitment company or agency) are designed to find out previous behaviours that indicate a particular competency or skill set. People work on the surmise that "previous behaviours are an indicator of future behaviours."

Rehearse examples of previous situations and events. You'll need to explain how you approached these situations, why you used that particular method or action, and what was the outcome or achievement.

As well as competency-based questions relating to skills, **be prepared for questions** such as:

- What do you know about our company? products? (Remember, this is your chance to show off your preparation)
- Describe your ideal job.
- Where do you see yourself in 2, 5 or 10 years?
- What have you enjoyed most in your career to date?
- Who was your best boss and why?
- What motivates you?
- What does teamwork mean to you? Tell me when you have felt part of a team?
- What has been your most important achievement(s) to date?
- Why did you choose this career?
- What are your strengths? weaknesses? (Always try and turn one of your negatives into a positive where possible.)
- How would your last boss/lecturer/best friend describe you?
- Give me an example of ; or "tell me about a time when.." Your responses will then likely be probed further with: how?, why? and what?

Be also prepared for **incompetent questioning** and try to turn that to your advantage. Some inexperienced people still ask questions such as: "Do you fit well into a team?" or "Are you good at your job?" Questions that could easily be answered by a Yes or No should be given a more detailed answer, with some examples where possible.

Don't be afraid to **take notes**. Prepare some questions in advance and refer to them if you are asked, "Is there anything else you'd like to know?"

Ask intelligent questions as early as you can. e.g. "What are you most hoping to find in the successful applicant?" or "What would be my first priorities on the job?" The earlier you can ask these questions, the sooner you can tailor your answers to get on the same wavelength. More ideas –

- Why is the position vacant?
- What sort of induction and training is there?
- What are the culture and goals of the company?
- What makes a successful person in your company?
- What do you expect the successful candidate to achieve in this position within 6, 12 months? or 2 years?

Human Rights Act. Some people still ask questions that breach this Act and you do not have to answer such things as your age, whether you are married, have children etc.

Never 'bad mouth' or make any derogatory or negative comments about previous managers, staff or companies. It's **a sure-fire way not to get the job**.

If you're already working and after a new job, you will probably be asked: "Why did you leave (or are wanting to leave) your previous/present job?" Describe the reason for your departure, and don't go into details unless asked.

Find out **who the position reports to** – sometimes someone else does the interviewing and you would want to meet your immediate "boss" at some stage.

Salary. You'll want to know what you'll be paid but, Sorry, asking about it is a No No. If salary isn't mentioned at the first interview, don't bring it up. Sometimes though you may be asked what salary you are presently on or what your salary expectations are.

That can be tricky because you don't want to ask for too much or too little. You could say something like: "I would like something in the \$xx to \$xx range, based on the job responsibilities and total package." That way, you still have plenty of room to negotiate after you learn more about the job.

If you are asked what your salary expectations are too early in the process, perhaps say you would rather postpone that discussion until you have more information about the position. Ask, "Could you tell me the range budgeted for the position?"

Don't reply to an ad without **doing your homework** and finding roughly what the position should pay and what you could reasonably expect. If you are asked what wage you are currently on, don't lie and beef it up so that you can try to get more from the new job.

Concluding the interview. You should ensure you have a clear understanding in your mind of the job requirements. Hopefully the interviewer will have outlined the requirements of the role throughout the interview process. If you are unsure about any part of it, ask. In turn, the interviewer may well ask: "What is your understanding of the role and the outcome(s) required?"

If you are interested in the role, state your interest and ask "**what is the next step?**" If you are offered the job and you want it, you can accept on the spot subject to seeing an employment agreement. If you would like some time to consider it, be positive and tactful and agree on a definite time and date when you can give an answer. Don't let the employer think you're not interested though, if you do want the job. They could rescind their offer.

It is a requirement of New Zealand employment legislation that employers have **written employment agreements** in place for all their employees. (and they can be fined if they don't.) If you are not given one, complete with a position description (or clear outline of the duties expected of you), you should ask for one before starting the job.

Thank the interviewer for his/her time and consideration and ask when you might expect to hear back from them.

If you are really keen, it doesn't hurt to **drop a thank you email** to the interviewer afterwards, re-confirming your interest etc.

If you are called in again, for a **second interview**, think of some new questions to ask so that you can appear interested. Be prepared to be interviewed by a new person who may ask questions that you answered last time. Be just as well presented as the first time.

If you don't get the job, try not to be too disappointed. **Use the experience** to help next time. It won't be the first time you are turned down for a job in your career. Some people ask why they weren't successful; some employers don't mind this, some do. Use your own judgement whether you ask or not.

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