



## **CVs & Interviews**

Sadly, in these tough economic times, many clients are coming to us to ask for help with Career Coaching to help find a new job or career. We get asked so many questions about interviews and techniques for getting into the job market that we have put together what we hope is a helpful sheet of top tips for CVs and Interviews.

Here are our 7 top tips:

### **1. Read about the job/role that you are applying for very carefully**

As an employer, it is very off-putting if you receive an application from someone or even interview someone that doesn't seem to know much about the job. We've even had people send us CVs with the wrong business name at the top. In an incredibly competitive job market, this is one of the fundamentals that you should not ignore.

### **2. Understand and show why you are good for the job**

If a recruiter is doing his or her job properly, they are likely to use some kind of competency based approach. This means that they are looking to see which candidates tick the right boxes (often literally... they will have a sheet with a grid or boxes to tick). Your job is to make their job easy. If they have to hunt through your CV or you don't answer questions in a way that clearly shows why you're right for the job, then you make it harder to put yourself as a front-runner. Often employers give you the information you need in their job description and person specification.

### **3. Think of it like dating...**

When you are going on a first date, you should never open the closet and let all the skeletons fall out at once. Dating is all about making a good impression. You don't want to lie about things (after all, you're going to get found out), but nor do you want to highlight negatives. People are often willing to overlook some negatives in people they like, but it's harder to like someone after seeing the negatives first. Make every effort to show your good side (and this includes dressing smartly). We also advise avoiding the "R" word (redundancy), much in the same way you don't talk about divorce or separation on a first date. Instead of saying "*I am looking for a job because I was made redundant!*", try saying something more positive, such as "*our organisation was restructuring and I took the opportunity to explore new career opportunities that better used my skills, and when I saw your advert, I knew I had made the right choice!*"

#### **4. Practise talking about yourself positively**

Nobody likes someone who is over-confident and brags about all their achievements, but so often in the UK we go so far in the opposite direction that it's amazing any of us are in employment at all! A CV, application form or interview is all about showcasing your talent. If you can't talk about yourself positively in these situations, then you might as well not bother applying for the job.

The solution is to practise, practise, and practise some more. Look in the mirror and give 5 reasons why you would be great for the job. When talking about the successes of an organisation or team, say specifically the part you played in it. Remember, people are trying to see what value you would bring to the organisation.

#### **5. Turn negatives into positives**

As we saw with our redundancy question, it is possible to turn most negatives into positives. Often this takes practise, but you can soon become skilled at talking positively about things. Here are some examples:

- Instead of talking about redundancy, talk about being grateful for the opportunity to develop your career further in a new area.
- When asked to describe your weaknesses, show the strengths you have in self-awareness and the steps you take to compensate (don't just say "I'm a perfectionist").
- If you're more introverted, then talk about yourself as a listener or someone who thinks carefully before they speak. If you're an extrovert, talk about how you love people and are energised by teams.

#### **6. Look after yourself emotionally and physically**

If you've been out of work for a while, or have been going through a stressful time, then it is really important to look after your own well-being. This is not just a "soft touch" approach, but it is a strategic plan to maximise your career opportunities. When you are in good health, your mood tends to improve and your confidence increases. A confident person is more likely to impress through CV and interview. You will also be more inclined to network and meet people who might know of available work. Getting into bad habits, such as late nights, excessive drinking or other self-soothing behaviours can have a negative impact on your job hunting. Top tips include eating healthily, getting regular exercise (it can be free!), sleeping well and maintaining healthy and supportive relationships.



## 7. Don't be afraid to get help or advice

During the month of January 2013, we offered a free CV review service. While some took us up on the offer, many people did not. Sometimes we find it hard to receive constructive feedback and so don't get others to give advice or opinions. However, this can mean we send off a CV with mistakes, missing information or we find ourselves caught off-guard during interviews.

The Craigie Partnership offers a CV clinic and coaching for interviews and redundancy support. Other organisations also have a wide range of advice and support available. Make the most of what is out there and be willing to get input from others. You don't have to agree with every piece of advice you receive, but even one or two nuggets of useful information can be well worth it.

*Article written by David Craigie, a Chartered Occupational Psychologist, Registered Coaching Psychologist and Qualified Test User at the Craigie Partnership.*

We hope you will find these tips to be helpful. If you would like to make an appointment with David Craigie then contact the Craigie Partnership on 0131 215 1066 or email [info@craigiepartnership.co.uk](mailto:info@craigiepartnership.co.uk)

This article is part of a series of self-help articles written by Psychologists at the Craigie Partnership. The full series includes:

- Anxiety
- Anger
- Confidence & Self-Esteem
- CVs & Interviews
- Depression
- Sleep Issues
- Stress

You can find out more about the Craigie Partnership and our team on the following websites:

Therapy & Psychological Services: [www.edinburghpsychologyservices.co.uk](http://www.edinburghpsychologyservices.co.uk)

Careers & Coaching: [www.edinburghcoachingservices.co.uk](http://www.edinburghcoachingservices.co.uk)