



# **C.V. and Interview Preparation Guide**

**PREVIEW PAGES**

**A Comprehensive Preparation Guide to  
Seeking and Winning Employment**



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"Flaming enthusiasm, backed up by horse sense and persistence, is the quality that most frequently makes for success."

**DALE CARNEGIE**

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# Introduction



## Welcome to the Guide

### C.V. and Interview Preparation

A well designed, eye catching Curriculum Vitae will lead the job seeker to the job interview. The recruitment interview, like delivering a presentation, remains one of the most daunting experiences in life.

As with all our job search efforts, we can tackle many of these difficulties and the feelings that we have, through preparation and rehearsal. The C.V. and Interview Preparation Guide has been written by an experienced recruitment interviewer with over 20 years experience in the commercial market. The Guide will help you through this preparation and rehearsal process, providing lots of tips and tactics to design an effective C.V. that gets you noticed and help you 'shine through' at interview. In addition, valuable 'insider' information is given as to what the Interviewer is looking for, and what impresses them most.

We hope you find the Guide useful and an invaluable source of reference. Good luck in your job seeking endeavours!



# Building Your C.V.

## Properties of Advertising

Your C.V. is your self marketing tool – your chance to self advertise.

The properties of advertising include .....

- Eye catching
- Factual
- Brief
- Well laid out
- Colourful
- Believable
- Interesting
- Matches the Market
- Sells the Benefits
- Easy to Read
- Relevant
- Original
- Individual

"We create success or failure on the course primarily by our thoughts."

**GARY PLAYER**



# Building Your C.V.

## Examples of Profiles

### Secretary

Experienced, reliable and flexible **Secretary** with accurate shorthand and word processing skills, particularly enjoying legal work. A good sense of humour.

### Administrator

A highly competent and versatile **ADMINISTRATOR** with excellent communication skills. Capable of working on own initiative or as an effective team member. Ability to work under pressure and used to working to tight deadlines. Computer literate with indepth knowledge of many word processing and business computer packages. Always enthusiastic to learn and undertake new challenges.

### Retail Manager

A highly motivated **RETAIL MANAGER** with over 15 years experience in target oriented companies. Proven ability in the achievement of sales/profit targets. Able to demonstrate strong leadership skills developed in a fast moving customer focused environment. Effective co-ordinator and administrator.

Enthusiastically seeking to broaden retail management skills and experience.



# Building Your C.V.

## Quantified Responsibilities and Achievements

- Successfully managed autocentres over a period of 10 years, consistently achieving a top 5 position out of 60 Centres.
- Won 3 European holidays for Employee of the Year Awards.
- Successfully co-ordinated 12 training courses for approximately 100 people per month.
- Implemented policy which achieved a reduction in requirement of trained staff to 10% of original complement.
- Managed 11 staff in the daily processing and settlement of foreign exchange transactions to the value of 6.8 million UK pounds. Approximately 900 trades daily.
- Responsibility for £230,000 department al budget.
- Solely handled a switchboard operation of some 700 calls per day.
- Achieved a call quality target of 96.5% which was 7% above department average.
- Consistently operating at 18% above the department call rate target.
- Maintained computerised training records for 750 employees.
- Implemented cost cutting techniques including more effective use of materials, resulting in a 20% saving in costs.
- Produced a procedural manual for the Securities Settlement department. This enabled the streamlining of some tasks and the elimination of others, reducing overtime by 25%.
- Increased sales by 60% over 3 years.
- Achieved just over 85% occupancy on courses (client target was 70%).



# Building Your C.V.

## C.V. Checklist

The only proof of a good C.V. is whether or not it generates interviews. The following checklist is not a set of rules – there are none – but a code of practice you may find helpful.

### Appearance

- Is it well typed?
- Is the font the same throughout?
- Is the font size / areas of bold consistent throughout?
- Is it on good quality paper?
- Do the margins have sufficient space for potential interviewer comments?
- Is it no more than two pages (unless you have a lot of work experience)?
- Is it page numbered?
- Do you have your name and phone number in the footer of each page?
- Will it photocopy easily?

### Clarity

- Are spelling and grammar correct?
- Are all the words used in their simplest form?
- Is it jargon free?
- Is there a logical flow to the document?
- Are the qualifications and the job history stated in reverse chronological order?



# On The Day

## Interviewer Strategy

It might be useful thinking about recruitment interviews from the shoes of the Interviewer – What are they doing? What is their strategy? What are they looking for?

The Interviewer is there to:

- Gather information
- Evaluate information
- Make the decision as to who is successful



Interviewers will only be able to make decisions based on what you tell them (on the C.V. and in the job interview). Careful preparation and impactful delivery is key.

Interviewers are looking to get the ‘right fit’ between what the job **requires** and what the candidates can **offer**. Invariably, interviewers don’t get the right fit. They get the **best** fit based on who has applied for the position. Interviewers are often under a lot of pressure to take the ‘best’ without getting the ‘ideal’ (e.g. Human Resource departments often do the first interview. They have to provide a timely service of ample candidates to operational management to undertake second interviews.

Operational management need to get the position filled quickly to avoid inefficiencies, poor department performances and keep the staff happy, particularly if they are covering for vacancies waiting to be filled. All of this means that candidates don’t have to be ‘perfect’. Of course, they do need to ‘tick a lot of the boxes’ however lots of candidates are offered jobs but still have development areas to work on. Employers are prepared to develop successful candidates once ‘in post’. In fact, recruiters actively look for people who have identified their weak areas as it shows a degree of self-awareness – so don’t think all weaknesses are bad!

If you are looking for a position in a skill shortage area, then you have a better chance of competing with less numbers of candidates.



# On The Day

## Preparing for Interviews

- Find out as much as you can about the organisation by:
  - Asking around.
  - Checking out their web site.
  - Phoning the organisation and asking them to send you any literature over and above what is on the website e.g. a product catalogue; a copy of the Staff Newsletter; recent press releases.
  - Looking up the organisation in library business information reference books.
  - Research the organisation on Google.
  - Obtain some trade magazines for references to the organisation.
  - Ask your friends if they know anyone who works, or has worked, for the organisation. What was it like? What was the culture?
- Write out some key facts about the organisation to memorise. You don't need too many – sales turnover, product areas, key clients, competitors, innovations in products / services – at least it shows that you have done some research.
- Find out about the interview:
  - Will you be given a tour of the building/work area?
  - Will you have to sit any tests?
  - Who will be interviewing you? (Can you find out anything about their interviewing style? If the job has come through an agency, they'll be able to brief you on personality, sense of humour etc)
- Read and re-read the job advert, the person specification and job description.
- Use the **Ideal Person Worksheet** in the Appendices to check against skills and qualities you feel they may be looking for and do a self assessment of how you feel you measure up. There are 2 other questionnaires included in the Appendices. One is for service roles (arguably we are **all** in the service game). The other is for team leader / management roles. Both questionnaires do one thing – to help you see your skill sets – what you do well and what you could improve on.

"I know that you understand what you think I said, but I am not sure you realize that what you heard is not what I meant."

**RICHARD NIXON**



## Typical Interview Questions

### Positive Things about your Job/Organisation

- Describe your best achievement in your last job?
- What gave you the most satisfaction in your last job?
- How would you sum up the contribution you made to your last organisation?

### Negative things about your Job

- Why did you leave your last job?
- What was the biggest problem you ever had to overcome?
- Tell me about a time that you've had to handle criticism?
- Describe a situation when your work was criticised?
- Why did you change jobs so often?
- Why did you stay so long with one employer?
- What was the last thing/person to make you annoyed?

### Career Development

- What do you see as the next step in your career?
- Where do you see yourself in 5 years time?
- What is the ideal job for you?
- How ambitious are you?
- How do you cope with repetitive jobs?



# On The Day

## During the Interview

- Don't be put off if the Interviewer:
  - Has 'unwelcoming' body language at times (e.g. doesn't smile very much; has furrowed eyebrows). They may not be aware of the impact their body language makes. It could mean that they are concentrating (and therefore interested) in what you are saying or that they are under particular pressure at the moment, or even they're not feeling very well.
  - Looks at their watch during the interview – this might not be about the impact you are making, but that they need to keep to time because they have an important meeting with their Boss straight after this interview.
  - Doesn't give you much eye contact. Because they have to take notes, sometimes it looks as if you're talking to the top of their head.
- Deliberately slow down your voice. In stressful situations like the interview, we tend to speed up. It's as if our body is trying to minimise the ordeal and get to the end of the interview as quickly as possible. Remember to think in the Interviewer's shoes – it's the first time they've heard this and they need to write things down.
- The essence of your question answering should concentrate on them – what you can do for them. Some people call this the W.I.I.F.Y. (What's In It For You). For example: "I have really good customer service skills and I was pleased to receive 3 customer compliment letters last year. My boss said that we benefited from word of mouth advertising"
- Remind the Interviewer of any Achievements on your C.V., when appropriate. Don't assume that, because it's on your C.V., they will have read it or understood how significant it was.
- Do have your pad of notes and questions you want to ask in front of you. The interviewer can see that you've made an effort and that you don't want to forget a question.
- Make sure you know the next stage in the process / when you will hear from the employer – it shows your commitment and keenness to get the job. A simple question such as "When might you be in a position to make a decision?" can help manage your expectations.
- Always thank the interviewer for their time – it leaves a nice positive impression of you in their mind.



# On The Day

## Listening Tips

- At times, verbally acknowledge what the Interviewer has said to you (even if you don't agree) e.g. if they are challenging you about what you said about being able to cope with pressure, you respond: "It's a good point you are making however ....." and reinforce what you said earlier to them. Or you might respond: "I can understand your concern that..<<**state concern**>>..... however..<<**reinforce your point**>>.."
- Make extra effort to use the Interviewer's name when making comments /asking questions.
- Never be afraid of asking the Interviewer to repeat the question if you're not sure what they mean.
- Don't be afraid to take notes during parts of the interview – this demonstrates your use of tools to help you understand and listen. However, you may want to check that the Interviewer is okay. A quick "Is it okay if I make some notes?" shows courtesy.



# Appendices

## How Good a Service Provider Are You? – Page 1

Using the scale 1-6, rate your customer service skills by circling the number that applies.

		1= NEVER do			6 = ALWAYS do		
1.	Is in control (e.g. knows break times; plans tasks in; materials to hand; Is organised & focused)	1	2	3	4	5	6
2.	Is aware of background (e.g. who's in; new procedures; changes to routines; keeps up to date with industry / organisation developments; reads and absorbs information from emails etc)	1	2	3	4	5	6
3.	Creates a very positive first impression in face-to-face and phone communication (e.g. tidy and organised work space; looks professional; gives warm smile and eye contact; warm, upbeat voice)	1	2	3	4	5	6
4.	Sincerely listens to the customer's needs and feelings and acts on them promptly	1	2	3	4	5	6
5.	Absorbs customer frustration and emotion, without taking it personally, remaining in empathy / solution mode	1	2	3	4	5	6
6.	Takes an interest in the customer and their needs ( <i>'thinks in the customer's shoes'</i> ).	1	2	3	4	5	6
7.	Uses customer name appropriately in conversations and discussions. Takes care to get spelling, pronunciation and form correct	1	2	3	4	5	6
8.	Is warm, friendly, enthusiastic, sincere towards customers (even when under pressure)	1	2	3	4	5	6
9.	Spots and acts i.e. takes ownership of issues, even if the issue belongs to someone else / uses initiative (e.g. checks that someone has actioned something; never says "that's not my job" or "we can't do that"; offers solutions and suggestions; spots and reports trends that may indicate problems for the department; looks for self development opportunities)	1	2	3	4	5	6

- continued



# Appendices

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## Pritti Awar Shah

14 Badsey Lane, Cardiff, Worcs, WR11 3EZ, United Kingdom  
• Tel: 01342 87575 • Mobile: 07774 602378 •  
British

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### Personal Statement

A hard working, diligent worker with attention to detail. Good written and verbal skills who thrives well under pressure.

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### Key Skills

- Written communication skills
- Assertiveness
- Handling difficult people
- Microsoft Word (Intermediate)
- Microsoft Excel (Basic)
- St Johns Ambulance First Aid Certificate

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### Work Experience

#### Customer Service Agent - JLB Customer Management Facilities, Aylesbury

(March 2004 - Present)

- I am responsible to handle customer service enquiries for the whole of U.K. for an electronics company. I take around 80 calls a day. In the last 12 months I have been in the top 3 Call Handlers as measured by volume of calls and quality of call handling. I am also the designated on-job trainer for new starters, which takes up around 3 hours per week on average.

*Reason for leaving: I am looking to join a larger company where the promotion prospects are improved.*

#### Administration Assistant - Habitat Soft Furnishings, Aylesbury

(Aug 2000 - March 2004)

- Main duties were photocopying invoices, chasing suppliers on late payments, filing and various word processing duties. I provided support for 7 busy managers and am capable of prioritising workload and working under pressure. I successfully reorganised the filing system in the company, transferring 50% of paper records onto computer.

*Reason for leaving: Needed more challenges and more money*

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### Education

#### School:

##### The Graig Comprehensive School, Aylesbury (1994-2000)

•7 GCSEs including English (grade B) and Mathematics (Grade C)

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### Achievements

Duke of Edinburgh Bronze and Silver Award

Raised highest amount of money on Scouts Fun Day in 2007 (£359)

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### Hobbies & Interests

I enjoy needle crafts and going to the cinema. I also help out at Guides once per week.

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### References

Available on request



## Curriculum vitae

### Profile

#### **James Alexander O'Neill**

24 Treasdale Avenue

Leeds

WY5 7RJ

Tel: 01906 345897

James.oneill@tiscali.co.uk

Experienced and versatile Information Technology professional, accustomed to working on own initiative in a variety of disciplines including training, installation and support. Excellent communication skills with a positive and cheerful approach, even under pressure.

### Experience

#### **Acme I.T. Support Ltd**

##### **P.C. Support Analyst / Trainer**

2001 – Present     Leeds

Working in a small team at the head office location, responsible for a range of support and training activities on Novell P.C. networks across the country. Designed and delivered all in-house training on company standard software applications. Delivered over 40 training courses encompassing 200 employees in 2008.

Specific responsibilities include the configuration and subsequent support of PCs on a Novell network and the support of the following software:

MS Word	Lotus 1-2-3
Software Bridge	Norton Utilities
Qwark	Harvard Graphics

#### **Bytes Financial Investments**

##### **I.T. Analyst**

1999 – 2001     Bradford

Appointed as Administrator in the I.T. function but rapidly promoted to Support Analyst due to qualifications, aptitude and motivation for a technical support role.

Responsibilities included the purchase, installation and support of company standard hardware and software. Operating system environment was DOS on the PC platforms and UNIX system for core applications.

Undertook all in-house training in company standard applications and also incorporated training consultancy assignments, including project management of £300,000 implementation of new intranet platform.

