

## Effective Job Searching

### Introduction

Looking for work and achieving your goal takes a level of commitment and organisation. Patience is also required as it can take time to get through some recruitment processes depending upon the level of security checks.

However, being patient regarding one application should not be used as an excuse for not making further applications. If you are in receipt of Job Centre Plus benefits you must comply with the rules of your claim.

Users of the New Directions Employment Services must have the required documents to work in the UK. Subject to the Asylum & Immigration Act 1988, all prospective employees are required to show employers evidence that they are entitled to work in the UK.

Do you have a bank or building society account which could receive your wages? If not this is something to arrange. Proof of identity is required: FSA (Financial Services Authority)  
<http://www.moneymadeclear.fsa.gov.uk>

Ensure that you pay attention to detail with your handwriting when completing forms, if the employer has problems reading the information how will they contact you or request references? The same is true of online applications, first impressions count so information should be clearly laid out and without mistakes.

### Who can I ask for a reference?

Always ask for permission and get full contact details in advance. This is often a sticking point when completing application forms, especially online.

**Present employer** – You might want to reserve this option until you have made progress in your job application process. There is sometimes the option of seeking this reference after the interview stage.

**Previous employers** – You might be required to provide a reference from your last two employers. It is especially important to get permission and current contact details if you have not had any contact with a former employer for a number of years. If this is not possible and you need to offer an alternative reference consider briefly explaining your reason. This could be simply recoding 'ceased trading' against the employer details on an application form.

**Former colleagues, supervisor or manager** – This might be an option if a company you have worked for no longer exists but you are still in contact with former colleagues.

**Former tutors and contacts from voluntary work** – This could be an option if you have no previous employment or have not worked for some time. Do ask for permission and get correct contact details.

### Know your labour market and network

Knowing where to look for the type of work you want to do is key to finding it. This may sound obvious but not all vacancies are widely advertised so knowing when and how to make a speculative approach will improve your chances of being invited to interview. Targeting employment agencies helps to keep your job search focussed.

Inform your existing contacts of the type of work you are looking for. They may be aware of current openings or introduce you to new contacts. Never assume that information known about your suitability for a job will be taken into account unless demonstrated on the application form and at the interview.

Sharing information with others that use employment services to look for work could be very useful. For example, exchange details of recruitment events, new employers moving into the area etc. However, beware of becoming reliant upon advice from acquaintances. Seek professional advice from an organisation, which has a quality assurance standard such as Matrix, Charter Mark or Ofsted.



## Prioritise your activities

Identify what you need to do and make a list, it gives a sense of achievement as you work through it.

Employers will expect you to have a bank account that you can receive wages into  
<http://www.direct.gov.uk/en/MoneyTaxAndBenefits/ManagingMoney>

Do you have documents that prove your identity and eligibility to work in the UK? If you were born in the UK and do not have a passport or driving licence do you need to get a copy of your birth certificate?

If you think that you might benefit from Careers Advice or Guidance book an interview - why waste time?

It is useful to have a list of your previous jobs including dates and contact details of former employers should you need this for an application form. This is particularly useful if there are events in your past you prefer not to re-visit. Working out the dates and details gives you a useful reference and a record to refer to allowing you to concentrate on the needs of the present and moving forward.

If a company that you have worked for no longer exists you can add (ceased trading) after the name.

Do not leave unexplained gaps in your employment history; if you need help with a particular problem seek professional advice.

If you book an appointment for help with writing a CV, completing an application form or interview preparation it is your responsibility to arrive prepared with information, preferably written or saved electronically (see CV page)

If you have numerous long application forms to complete check the deadlines and focus on the jobs that you are really interested in and have the skills and experience to make a successful application.

Give these your full attention rather than spending a little time on all of them.

You might be able to re-use some of the information from a good application form with some minor adjustments but ensure that it addresses the need of the job you are applying for.

Keep copies of everything you send either electronically or photocopied. This can save time if you make more than one application to the same organisation and can help you to prepare for the interview.

If you live outside the area covered by our employment services you might find the information and links useful and help you identify help in your local area.

If you have invested in the latest computer system at home don't expect that employers or support agencies will have the latest technology.

It is probably best to save a copy of your CV and job applications in the most widely used format (97 – 2003 rtf). This will allow you to use the documents when using public access PCs and reduce the risk of delay in your application being processed due to an employer being unable to open and read your application or even worse not bothering to contact you.

## Where do I look?

Jobcentre Plus holds a variety of vacancies, which can be accessed from their Job Points, one of which is based at New Directions, Central Reading Centre or you can visit web site [www.jobcentreplus.gov.uk](http://www.jobcentreplus.gov.uk) and there is a phone service called Jobseeker Direct 0845 6060 234

We can offer some useful links and you might decide to register with some web sites to get alerts about new vacancies. An e-mail address, which relates to your name, is the best option for your job applications; a suggestive or comical address might not be appreciated and does not give a professional first impression.

If you are looking for specialist employment agencies it is useful to check trade magazines, which are often online and identify agencies that hold the type of vacancy you are looking for. It is not unusual for the employment agency to hold vacancies in various parts of the country so the office might not be local even though the job is.

## Keep Records & Follow Instructions

Be honest and follow the instructions given by the employer. Be clear in the information you provide and learn from each experience.

Keep copies of all information about the job and your CV and covering letter or application form. This will help you prepare for the interview stage.

If you would like advice regarding your job search it is useful to provide copies of your application forms plus job description/personal specification.

## What should I wear to an interview?

This depends on the type of work you are being interviewed for and the likely 'dress code' for the job. There are some general rules

- If wearing a suit it should fit well, be clean and not appear old and worn. Shirt, tie or tops and accessories should be clean and not be too bright as to distract the interviewer. Skirts not too short and tops not too low.
- If smart casual is acceptable wear something that suits you and makes you feel confident
- Always take a good look in a full-length mirror; what is your first impression?
- Do you and your clothes smell fresh and clean, free from pet hair and lint?

## You should appear well groomed paying attention to

- Hair – clean and tidy, does it need a trim?
- Teeth – our teeth are on show when we smile and talk, they don't need to be perfect but clean and no signs of bad breath are an advantage
- Hands – an interview often starts with a handshake so clean and dry is a good start, nail polish should not be chipped, and clean nails of an even length look best. Nicotine stained fingers can also create a negative impression
- Shoes should be clean and in a good state of repair

## Communication

- Most people suffer some level of anxiety when faced with an interview but remember that this is a two way interaction.
- Don't take over the interview and go off track, answer the questions clearly and completely.
- Don't mistake speaking clearly with speaking loudly; this applies to telephone conversations and interviews.
- Be aware of your body language, if you find it difficult

to make appropriate eye contact talk to an advisor and see what techniques might work for you.

Remember that first impressions are created in seconds and for many employers it is important to recruit not only a person with the right skills set but also someone that will fit in with an existing team. It is possible to get confidential, impartial and honest advice about any of these points from an employment advisor.

## Still not making progress? Be Objective!

If you have been looking for a job for some time and feel that you have been following all of the standard advice it might be that you need to take a really critical look at your actions.

## Review Your Performance

It can be difficult to be objective about your own actions especially if you have no recent experience of having your work or performance reviewed. In this case seek advice from a professional.

If you do have experience of being observed and receiving regular written reviews look back over recent records.

### Good reviews

- Useful for boosting confidence and highlighting strengths.
- Constructive comments of your efforts to address any weaknesses.
- You might find information that will help you complete future job application forms or better answer questions at the interview stage.

### Poor reviews

- Use them as a wake up call and help you identify areas of your performance that might need attention to secure employment.
- Look at reasons for the criticism – there may have been other factors involved. Take responsibility for your actions and think how you might improve future performance.
- Are you likely to be getting accurate but poor references? If this is the case you might need to prove that you can be a reliable employee.

If you are trying to return to work after a substantial break and need impartial advice see a professional. It can also be difficult if not impossible to get an impartial and objective view from family and friends.



## Ask yourself questions?

If you always get stuck at the same point ask yourself some probing questions to identify what has been holding you back from gaining sustained employment.

If you ask yourself the following questions and feel that you need help seek professional advice.

You look for jobs but find nothing suitable to apply for

- Am I seriously looking for work and do I need help?
- Do I have the skills that employers are looking for?
- What do I need to do to improve my skills and my job prospects?
- Am I being realistic about my job goal or do I need to start at a lower level and work towards career progression? Consider short-term and long-term job goals
- Should I consider doing some voluntary work to gain experience?
- Do I just use the free newspapers or would I benefit from the facilities offered from an organisation such as New Directions for Employment services?

There are professional services available at no cost to the individual but they are funded through public money. Please make sure that you attend any booked appointments or cancel in good time so they can be offered to others.

## You send out lots of CV and application forms but get very few or no interviews

- Do I have the skills, experience and qualifications for the jobs I have applied for?
- Would my CV and covering letter benefit from a professional review?
- Do I express a real interest in the position I am applying for?
- Have I developed the lazy habit of writing 'see attached CV' when not invited to do this?
- Do I copy and paste my CV into an application form thus not addressing the requirements of the post in any specific order and possibly missing some points.
- Are there substantial unexplained gaps in my employment history and how do I explain this adequately?
- Have I demonstrated that I am ready to return to work?
- Have I developed a bad reputation that I need to repair?

## You get Interviews but no job offers

- Have I prepared for the interview? See Interview Preparation Page
- Do I make an effort and appear well groomed?
- Have I overdone it with make-up, perfume or aftershave? Or worse could it be that body odour, stale smoke or alcohol smells on clothing could be offending the interviewer?
- Have I developed annoying habits? Such as the over use of a particular word out of context e.g. "like", "right" "you know" "common sense"
- Do I listen to the question and answer fully keeping to the point? Or do I talk over the interviewer, interrupt them and drift away from the original question?

## You make excuses not to take a job or start only to leave within a few hours or days

- Do you have financial concerns regarding the transition from benefit to a monthly salary? Speak to a Jobcentre Plus Advisor as you might be entitled to financial help
- Are you being dishonest in your job application and leaving before shortfalls in your performance become apparent?
- Do you have health problems and need support to get back to work?
- If you are a Lone Parent did you talk to your New Deal Lone Parent Advisor before starting work? Their assistance is vital before starting work if you have been claiming Jobcentre Plus benefits. They can help you understand what help is available and the financial implications so that you can budget for your changed financial circumstances