

The Top 2%

**A Guide to getting
your perfect job**

The Top 2% : A Guide for getting your perfect job

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Introduction

Over 95% of all job applications are unsuccessful.

That means that for every 100 job applications made, only 5 candidates will be successful. The true statistic will probably be closer to 2 or 3 applications that are successful. It is a very small portion of the candidates who originally applied.

Only 2%. This statistic alone would imply that only the top 2% of the candidates get all the jobs. This is not the case. The jobs are generally not filled by the best or most suitable candidates on the market. The most successful people at getting job offers are the most successful people at knowing how the recruitment system works and how to use it to their advantage.

It is easy these days to log on to the internet and see hundreds of jobs that look appealing, unfortunately it is this point where many candidates become unstuck and begin to make mistakes. These mistakes may be very small but can significantly reduce their chances on getting their perfect job. Instead of using the system to their advantage they rely on the laws of averages - send 25 applications, should get at least 15 calls back, maybe 6 interviews and hopefully at least one job offer.

What if it didn't have to be like this?

What if you only had to apply to the 5 best jobs, and you had the confidence to know that you would get 5 calls back, and most likely 5 interviews. Instead of waiting to see which job you were offered, and accepting it because it was your only option, you could choose between many different offers and select the best option for you. This is what the recruitment process is like for the top 2% of the candidates on the market.

Unfortunately we are never taught how to get jobs, it is something we are expected to learn through trial and error. This is a free guide devised to help you learn the simple skills, strategies and tactics that will help you join the top 2% of the market who already know the best way to get a job. This guide has been put together with the help of many candidates who have contributed advice and their own personal tips. It has been edited by Barry Cranford and other recruitment professionals who have had many years experience in the recruitment industry. Giving them the chance to:

- Speak to candidates at all levels who are looking for work and monitor which are successful and why.
- Speak to hiring managers to hear their comments on individual CV's & Candidates and realise the recurring themes.
- Work with many other top recruitment consultants and managers to hear their views on the industry.

It is designed to be as a reference point or as a comprehensive guide to getting a job from start to finish. Also included in this guide are sections titled 'the top 2%'. These are sections aimed at keeping you at the top of your game, tips and tactics to really keep you in front of the competition.

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What is in this guide

Applying for jobs – Having found a job that you wish to apply for, what do you do? This section covers how to apply for a job and how to write & present your CV. After you have read this section you should have the confidence that you will most likely receive a call in for an interview for every single application you send.

Preparing for and attending interviews – This is a comprehensive guide on the interview process from start to finish. It will help you to feel confident and prepared about attending interviews and offer additional advice that will make you stand out in the interviewers mind and increase your chances in receiving job offers.

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Applying for jobs

A few harsh facts about applications:

Most CV's will be rejected within the **first few seconds** of being opened.

Many candidates will be rejected within the first few seconds of being spoken to.

This section is about making sure that you get an interview for every job you apply for. It is broken down into two parts.

How to apply for jobs.

The right way to make your CV stand out (And the wrong way)

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How to apply for jobs

It is important to keep track of all the positions that you apply for. The best way of doing this is by using software designed to do just that. I would recommend Job Trawler. It is a package, which is tailor-made to help you find suitable jobs and keep track of all of your job applications. This is very useful when looking for work and I would definitely recommend downloading it.

Download it free at www.jobtrawler.co.uk

The recruitment process starts with the first contact you make with a recruitment agency.

Unfortunately in recent years recruitment consultants and agents have earned a bad reputation in the IT industry. Almost every candidate has received a bad service at some point in his or her career. It is important to remember though that most agents conduct their business professionally and you should not hold one bad experience against all agents, as it is them that are the key to securing your next role.

It is recruitment agents though that hold the cards to you getting the right job and you must remember this when applying for jobs. If you fail to impress your recruitment agent when you make contact with them it is likely that they will not want to represent you at their clients site.

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The right way to treat agents

Most agents are incredibly fickle. Their main concern is to make as much commission as possible. They earn commission from getting you a job. You want your agent to believe that you are the best person for the job, and will interview well enough to get the job and they will put you forward. However if you try to tell them that you are the 'best' person for the job, they will most likely believe that you are arrogant and will not want you to represent them at their client.

The trick to it is to **come across** as someone that will perform very well at interview and is extremely suitable for the role.

Never speak down to an agent, it will make you appear aloof and you will not be put forward for roles. Never speak up to an agent, it will make you appear desperate and you will not be put forward.

To give you the best chance make sure you are friendly, confident and enthusiastic. If you make a friend out of your agent, you will make sure you get put forward for every role they have!

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Step One – make sure that your CV is seen

Firstly make sure that the job is right for you. If the job doesn't suit your experience then there is no reason to apply. Read the advert before you apply. Many applications are from candidates that it is easy to see could not do the job and just want to register their CV in case you have any other positions. If this is the case ALWAYS send a personal e-mail.

If you feel that you are generally right for the position but not quite right, E.G. you have only two years experience and the position requests that you have four years then do not just send an application. Write a short e-mail that asks if you could be considered because you have all of the other skills, but you only have two years (this is the best chance that you have for having your application still being considered)

The first step to most applications is the initial e-mail to an advert seen on an Internet job board.

DO NOT Send an automatic application. Many agents have multiple adverts on job boards and may walk in at 8:00 to see 70+ e-mails from candidates for different positions. They will want to go through these and will have many other things to do within the first hour of being at work. The chances are you will not receive a fair hearing.

Some candidates send general letters along the lines of:

"I have seen your advert on jobserve and I think I am a suitable candidate" followed by a long list of what they can do. 90% of which has no relevance to the individual position. This is another way of making sure your CV doesn't even get opened.

The best way to apply for a role is to send a personal e-mail. About 1 in 20 applications are personal and always stand out. Write something personal in the subject line such as 'John Smith for Java Developer advert' It will stand out in a packed inbox and be easy to find.

When you compose your e-mail.

- Write a very punchy summary of your most suitable points to the advert. Do not include points irrelevant to the job or it will count against you. When you describe yourself speak with confidence but not arrogance (you know that you are a strong candidate but you know there are people better)
- Make a point of saying you wanted to introduce yourself personally (it goes a long way.)
- Suggest different ways of contacting you. (Phones are the general favourite)
- Make sure you come across as interested but not desperate. (This looks like just the sort of thing I am looking for and I think I would a suitable candidate for the role)

This application should guarantee that your CV is looked at. If you follow the advice in the CV guide you will ensure that you are called for the role.

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Step two – make sure your CV does not get rejected

Why am I writing this guide

These days it is almost impossible to get a job without a CV. It is the first impression that a prospective employer will have of you. In about 90% of cases it is the reason why candidates do not get invited in for an interview, even those candidates that if given a chance would excel at the job.

Whether you like it or not you need a good CV to get a job.

The reason I am writing this guide is because as a recruitment consultant I have seen well over 10,000 CV's, enough to see the common mistakes. I have dealt with numerous hiring managers and had many strong candidates denied a chance for interview for the sole reason that their CV was not as good as others submitted. I have learned many keys to successful CV writing.

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A few facts about CV's

There is no way that you can know what will happen to your CV once it has been sent to a client. Possibilities are that:

- Your CV will be sent straight to a hiring manager who will glance at it for 15-20 seconds before deciding whether to invite you in for an interview. (Believe it or not this is the most common fate for CV's)
- It may be taken home and studied overnight by a hiring manager. Examined with a fine-toothed comb for spelling mistakes and unexplained holes in your career.
- It will arrive at the desk of a busy human resources executive, who does little more than scan it for the right technological words before deciding that seeing them only three times on a CV clearly means that you aren't adequately qualified.

It is believed that for every vacancy over fifty CV's will be put forward. Obviously companies are not able to make fifty interviews for each position, so they will make a shortlist of the best candidates (generally between 3-7) this means about 90% of the CV's will be rejected. When writing a CV most people try to be different or stand out when the main thing to focus on is to give the prospective employer no reason to discard your CV and every reason to want to interview you. How do you do that?

Simple!

To keep things simple I have broken this guide into two parts.

Part 1: The way a CV should look.

This is some guidelines and basic dos and don'ts on putting CV's together. How they should look and where many people go wrong.

Part 2: The things you should include.

This is a section dedicated to everything you should put in a CV and what format to put it all in.

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Part 1: The way a CV should look

Professional

The first thing that will be seen about a CV is the way it looks, this will be acknowledged first before a word is read. Many people think that they should make their CV stand out by putting graphics, logo's, pictures, stylish fonts and different colours on their CV. This does make the CV stand out but for all the wrong reasons.

Having had experience of several industries, this is the correct way to construct a CV for a role in the design or advertising industry. However the IT industry is a world where the right experience, achievements and qualifications are what makes a CV stand out.

Every hiring manager wants to recruit somebody that can do the job, and do it well. In my experience some hiring managers like interesting CV's but they are a very small minority few have been impressed by any of the above and these CV's may not even be read. I have never come across a manager that would decline to interview a candidate because their CV didn't have a unique style. Your CV should always look professional and should stand out but only because of the content and your suitability for the job.

Remember do not give the employer a reason not to employ you.

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The best format for a CV

Typeface

- Use a basic font such as Times New Roman or Arial.
- Use the same font through the ENTIRE CV.

Size

- Use font size 11/12 (10 if you have to but no smaller)
- Keep the same size for all information. Do not vary size for more important information.
- Do not try to reduce the size of the font to squeeze more information onto the page – it is always obvious and gives a terrible impression

Bold/Underlining

- Use Bold or Underlining effects very sparingly. Sub-headings, company names are good examples of suitable use of Bold. However when used in the **middle** of **sentences** to highlight things, it can give a messy effect and is unnecessary.

Margins

- It is common for people to change the margins on a page so that they can fit more information on to a page. All CV's will be formatted by recruitment agencies (had a logo and agency address added) The margins are normally changed back to normal and generally create problems and your CV will almost definitely not look quite right.

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Part 2: Information to include

Assume your CV will be read as a personal reference guide NOT read from start to finish as you might read a letter. Many people have set ways of reading CV's; some go straight for the career history, others will examine the skills carefully whilst others will first spend time reviewing a personal statement to see if you fit the company criteria. Your CV has to be fit for every scenario, the only way to ensure yours will be successful is to separate it into sections and ensure that each offers the necessary information as detailed below, no more and no less. This way you can ensure the correct information will not be missed.

The recommended length of a CV varies. It doesn't HAVE to be only two pages as many people have far too much information to enclose in a two page CV. The important thing is the content not the length. Do not sell yourself short, and do not waffle on for the sake of it. When composing your CV write clear concise descriptions and summaries do not repeat yourself in lengthy paragraphs. This will be one of the most important documents you will ever write and will dictate your future so it is important that you get it right. When writing advertising copy, speeches or sales pitches the content is written and edited many times before a final document is produced.

My advice would be to prepare a general version of your CV and save it and then for every role you apply for, make subtle changes to highlight your suitability. See end of guide for a more detailed description.

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Personal information

Name and contact details

Title your CV with your name, change the size of the font and centre the text, feel free to add bold or underline the name. At this point include any Certifications or Qualifications beneath or next to your name.

John Smith BSc

Or

John Smith

Sun Certified Java Programmer

Ensure that all your contact details are on your CV. Occasionally when a role comes up, the right candidate will be found within hours, sometimes minutes. If you only have one number on your CV then you may miss your chance. It may be useful to include two e-mail addresses and a (only in emergencies) number. It could be the difference between getting the job of your dreams and missing the opportunity.

You should make sure you at least include:

- One telephone number
- One E-mail address
- Your full address and postcode.

Personal details

You should include your date of birth, if you are a driver and your nationality (if you are not British you should include details as to how you can work in the UK, even if you are an EU Citizen as most hiring managers don't know full details of the process and it could mean the difference between getting an interview).

Both of the above two subjects should be concise and should not take up much space

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Personal Statement

Most of your CV should be entirely factual and not written in your opinion but this is your opportunity to tell the client who you are and what you can do. Think of how different all of the people that you know, are. The employer has no idea who you are, your personality, how good you are at your job or your proudest achievements.

You should include details such as:

- Your career goals
- A summary of your career
- Your work ethic
- Your proudest achievements
- Your personal attributes and strengths
- Any unique selling points that you have

Please note: The best Salesmen, when making presentations do not list EVERY SINGLE selling point of their product or service. They are selective and only offer relevant information. In other words, don't feel that you have to list every single attribute that you have, just select the most relevant ones to the employer.

This statement does not have to include all of the above information but should be able to give the employer an idea who you are and why you would be an asset to a company that you joined. You should write with confidence but not arrogance. Sell yourself but don't boast about yourself.

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Technical skills – part 1

This is a very important section of the CV. More often these days CV's have to be passed through various people such as Human Resources. They will have to recruit for every role in the company (office, factory, technical, managerial etc) it is a lot to expect them to know of technical skills and although it may be obvious to you, they would not know that Java isn't another version of Windows. Some HR or Personnel departments have received training but it would help you to assume that they have no technical understanding whatsoever and write your CV accordingly.

You should include your Technical skills in a skills matrix at the beginning of your CV as well as in your Career History.

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Technical skills – part 2

Skills Matrix

Very often a slightly unique skill is a highly desirable skill to an employer. You should take this opportunity to include every language, operating system, program etc. that you have used commercially and an idea of your extent of knowledge (expressed either as a rating or length of time you have used.) You should maximise the space available and construct a table similar to fig. 2.

Fig. 1 (lots of wasted space)

Skill	Time
Java J2SE	5 Years
J2EE (EJB, JSP, JDBC, Servlets)	3 Years
Oracle 7/8/9/10i	4 Years
SQL Server 7/2000	5 Years
Struts	1 .5 Years
Unix	5 Years

Fig 2 (include all your skills without wasting space.)

Skill	Years	Skill	Years	Skill	Years
Java J2SE	5	J2EE (EJB, JSP, JDBC, Servlets)	3	Oracle 7/8/9/10i	4
Struts	5	SQL Server 7/2000	1.5	Unix	5

In this section of your CV, include every version of each technology used. Break down each technology e.g. J2EE comprises many different technologies such as EJB, JSP's etc. Many busy HR consultants will discard the CV if they do not see the right words they are looking for.

You can present different tables for different areas EG. Languages, Operating Systems etc.

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Career History

This should be presented with the current/most recent company first, and then in reverse chronological order. Present every company in the same font, size, and format. Include in the title, company name, time period that you were employed there and your job title. Beneath this you should include a very brief description of the company type/industry. NEVER assume that a client will know what the company does. E.G.

Jun 2002 – Jul 2005	JP Morgan Senior Software Developer
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JP Morgan is a leading global financial firm that meets critical financial needs for business enterprises, governments, and individuals.

Next you should include at least a paragraph on what you did whilst you were there. Start with details of the department you worked in or the projects you worked on. Write about your main responsibilities and include any major achievements, successes or problems, which you resolved. Include any other responsibilities you had including mentoring other staff, or speaking to clients. DO NOT include reason for leaving, as this is far easier to justify at an interview.

Finish by summarising all of the main skills you used in the position.

EG: Java, J2EE, EJB, JSPs, Servlets, Struts, Oracle 10i.

Do not write long descriptions for irrelevant non-technical roles unless you learned relevant skills such as problem solving or attention to detail.

Any time that there is a gap for longer than two months you MUST explain it.

E.g.

Between January 2002 June 2002 I was travelling across Asia.

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Supplementary Information

Education

This is important and must be honest, as many employers will check. Include any relevant education that you have had including A-Levels, BSc's, BA's, MSc's, MA's, PhD's and any other relevant certification that you have received. Keep it very simple. If you are a graduate applying for your first role it may be worth explaining your course in more detail.

Hobbies and Personal Interests

Whilst it is important to give the employer an idea of your personality you should not include anything that could give off a bad impression at this point. DO NOT write a comment, which you feel is amusing and shows the employer your sense of humour such as "*Drinking whenever I get a chance!*" (It happens more often than you may think) instead write, "*I am a very friendly person and enjoy socialising with friends on a regular basis.*" Humour is never suggested in CV's as it can come across as cocky, arrogant or carefree, none of which give a professional impression. Other information that you could include could be any clubs that you are associated to or sports that you play regularly, or hobbies. Be very careful not to include anything here that could count against you though, once the client gets to know you I'm sure they will understand your Horror movie fetish, but to include it on CV would not be wise.

References

It is not essential to include anything about references as you will be asked upon successful completion of an interview who to apply to. Many people include "references available on request" This information is obvious and will score no brownie points, but will waste valuable space on your CV.

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The top 2% of CV's

The top 2% -Having seen many times which CV's get interviewed and which candidates get declined, it is not the BEST candidates on the market that get the most interviews. It is the CV's that are most suited to the requirement. Let me repeat that. It is not the strongest candidate; it is the strongest CV. There is a technique, which only a small proportion of the IT Industry use, which allows them to stand head and shoulders above the rest. This technique has always been, and will always be used by the most successful people on the market, the candidates that always seem to be getting interviewed by every company. They are no better than other candidates; they just have more suitable CV's.

It is simple all you have to do is tailor your CV to each role, if you do some research you should be able to work out from a job spec, company web site or job advert a little about what the company is looking for. All you have to do is highlight the areas of your background, which will be most appropriate. The trick to doing this is not to look like you have changed your CV for the role but instead to make subtle alterations to your Skills Matrix, Career History and Personal Statement that looks as though they are part of your general CV.

Examples

If a client is an Investment Bank you could talk about your passion for the financial industry, include any involvement you have had with shares etc. and how your career goals are to end up working for a large investment bank.

If the client is a software development company that specialises in Content management systems and you have had experience working on one (even if it is a small amount) then you could include it as being a major point of interest within your personal statement and expand on your experience within your career history.

If a client has written a job spec that includes information about problem solving and communication skills, write a personal statement that includes why you love problem solving including one of your most complicated problems and how you overcame it. Also include any experience you have had with client facing work, account management or customer service.

This simple technique could take only 20 minutes of your time to alter your CV and could be the difference between you getting your perfect job and you not even being invited for an interview.

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Step three – The phone call or meeting

It is rare for an agent to put your CV forward to a role before speaking to you. Most agents will want to find out more about your background and tell you more about the position that they have. This is your chance to impress your agent enough to make sure that your CV gets sent.

There are already a few rules above about how to treat agents above and they should always be followed. When speaking to agents you should always be friendly, confident and enthusiastic to ensure that they do not reject your application based on their dislike of your personality.

After sending your CV you should ALWAYS follow up with a phone call, I would suggest that you leave it at least two hours to give them time to make contact first.

If they call you after seeing your CV, or you call them you should still look at this as a telephone interview. It is a chance for you to impress the agent enough to send your CV to their client. Make sure that you have questions prepared about the role to show your interest in it. It is easy to create two or three standard questions such as your day to day tasks, the companies background or why the job has come up.

- Avoid being pushy and favour being enthusiastic.
- **If they call you first** – Answer all of their questions to the best of your ability.
- **If you call them first** - Ask the agent if they have time to look at your CV whilst you are on the phone.
- Guide them through the suitable sections of your CV.
- Ask if they have any other questions for you.

- Ask many questions to show your interest in the vacancy.
- Ask the agent what response they have had and honestly if he has had more suitable candidates.

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The top 2% of applicants

The top 2% - Ask if there is any reason why they will not put your CV forward to the client. This is crucial, as it will give them a chance to tell you any reason that they may have and give you a chance to address their concern and re-sell yourself. If they agree they will send you, ask if they mind if you call back in a week to check on the progress.

Meetings

If the agent would like to meet you it is important that you make a good impression. This is also an ideal time for you to get a lot of information about the role. Have a list of questions, which you need to prepare before hand.

Agents often have very good relationships with their clients and if they think you came across badly in the meeting they will warn the client which will give the client a bad first impression to you, which is often, unsalvageable.

Summary

If you follow all of the advice in these sections you should be able to almost guarantee a 100% success rate of application to interview for positions that you are suitable for.

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Preparing for and attending interviews

Interviews are one of the most nerve-racking things that you will ever have to do. Most people hate them with a passion. The aim of this section of the guide is to give you a supreme confidence in attending interviews by offering advice on preparation, building rapport with interviewers and how to best sell yourself in an interview.

The ethos behind interviews is very different to the ethos behind CV writing. CV writing and applications is about making sure that they have no reason no to interview you. However if you get to interview stage then you will most likely be facing several other people who are similarly qualified for the position. The ethos behind successful interviewing is building rapport with the interviewer.

You would not be asked in for an interview if the employer suspected that you weren't potentially right for the position. This is the first thing to remember. The employer likes you already, it is your job to make sure that he doesn't change his mind. You do not have to prove yourself, far more, improve on an already good reputation, and back it up with a strong personality fit.

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Interview sections

There are five sections in this part of the guide:

Different interviews – This section will take you through the different interview format, which some companies offer. It is a good idea to think about what could happen.

Preparing for interviews – This will help you to feel totally prepared about the interview so that you can stride in to the interview room with confidence that you can handle whatever they throw at you.

Attending interviews – This will give you idea's on how to present yourself. It will help you to sell yourself as well as possible.

Typical mistakes – This is aimed at the experienced interview candidate. It will show you many of the common pitfalls in interviews, how to avoid them and a few gentle reminders.

The Top 2% - Here are some optional extra ideas that really will put you in the top 2% of interviewees.

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Interview types

There are two types of interviews, telephone interviews or face-to-face interviews. Often employers will screen their candidates by interviewing many candidates over the telephone before deciding which to pursue to an actual meeting.

Telephone interviews

Telephone interviews - If a telephone interview is arranged it is advised to sit with a copy of your CV in front of you, you can be sure that the client will. The client will most likely be the one controlling the interview and will probably have set questions that he will go through. The general advice here would be similar to writing a CV, give them no reason not to want to meet you. Make sure you have prepared adequately (see **preparing for interviews**) and if you get a chance to build a rapport then make sure you do, but DON'T TRY TO HARD. Your main focus should be to come over as professional and keen. At the end of the interview it is a good idea to ask what the process is moving forward. This can sometimes compel the client to suggest a time that you would be around for a meeting, although do not push for it at this point.

Meetings

Meetings - Once you have successfully arranged a meeting, it will most likely be one of, or a combination of the following four types. It is advised that you find out which interview it will be from your agent and prepare accordingly.

Technical interviews – This will be a conversation with a technical member of staff, generally a line manager. It is important to do your research on what technologies you will be using and ensure you do your homework to make sure you are fully able to discuss any part of your relevant work history.

Human resources interviews – This will generally be a meeting with a member of the HR or Personnel team and will consist of them going through your CV with a fine-toothed comb. They may ask your reason for leaving companies, they may ask you to explain any gaps in your career and will ask general questions about your health. It is important to make sure that you are fully aware of your CV for these interviews.

Team interviews – Meet the team interviews. These are a chance for you to meet some of the people that you will be working with. If you do meet the team then treat them with respect and ask as many questions about their role within the company. Try to refer to them by name and you will make a good impression.

Tests. Tests – These can be technical tests, aptitude tests or Psychometric tests. Try to find out which test it will be and then consult the relevant section.

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Tests

Technical Tests – These can sometimes be written in-house or can be standard example questions. It is advisable to search the Internet to find some mock exam papers. There are plenty of them out there, if you find some please send us a link and we will display it on the site to help other candidates.

Aptitude Tests - Aptitude Tests evaluate a particular ability such as numerical, verbal, diagrammatic etc. The tests are administered under exam conditions and are often multiple choices. There are various practice tests available on the Internet and in books and whilst practicing will not necessarily improve your primary ability, it will help to increase your familiarity with tests. When completing aptitude tests, make sure that you read the instructions and questions thoroughly and understand exactly what is required. If you get stuck on a question, don't spend too much time on it, either put your best idea down or leave it, remembering to go back later on. Most tests get progressively more difficult, so take your time and try not to rush to complete all the answers, remember that it is the number of correct answers that counts!

Psychometric or Personality Assessments - Psychometric or personality evaluations assess your personal qualities by your responses to questions or statements. Unlike aptitude tests they are conducted in untimed conditions and are likely to offer multiple-choice answers. Questions relate to different aspects of your personality, such as your working style, how you interact with other people, what motivates you etc. There are no right or wrong answers; the employer is assessing how well you will fit the role. You should respond naturally and honestly, it is difficult to try and guess what the employer is looking for and it can also be counter productive. These types of assessments often have reliability checks built in to evaluate how realistically you have answered the questions and furthermore if you do not answer the questions genuinely you may end up being offered a job, which does not really suit you! In conclusion, whatever kind of test you come across, treat it as you would any other form of assessment - prepare beforehand, read and follow all the instructions carefully and ask for feedback so you can benefit from the experience for the future.

This should give you an idea on what to expect in most interviews.

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Preparing for interviews

It is always advised to prepare for each interview individually. Candidates always prepare for interviews, some candidates will look at the website others will produce presentation files on them.

The main information to prepare is information on you and information on them.

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Information on yourself

Prepare information on yourself - Firstly you should prepare information on yourself. This should not be something to be recited word for word. It should simply be information that can be drawn on if requested. Compose a brief paragraph advertising yourself on each of the following: Your technical skills and abilities, your greatest achievement, a summary of your career to date & your career goals and your personal skills.

You should also ensure that you know your CV inside an out. It will be the only information that the client will have on you so it is important that you can freely talk about any part on it.

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Information on the company

Prepare information on the company - Secondly you should prepare information on the company, you can get this entirely from the internet. You should know: What they do & their main business ethos, their position in the market & their main competitors. It is also a good idea to search a news website to see if they have featured recently, it feels awful when an interviewee says "I assume you've seen the news about us recently, what are your thoughts....?" And you have to admit that you haven't seen it.

In doing this preparation on the company you should develop some real questions. Many people ask questions in an interview because they think it makes them look interested. It is easy to spot someone who is asking a question because they actually care, and someone who is asking so that it looks like they care. It is also easy to spot which is more successful at interview stage. So when you are doing your research find at least 5-10 questions that you really care about (you don't have to ask all of them, just the most relevant at interview)

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How to beat nerves

How to beat nerves - Often candidates admit that they are nervous about an interview. There are very few candidates that have no nerves about attending an interview but it is important that control this and you do not let nerves get the better of you. A lot of preparation will help with this but there is a trick to never being nervous for an interview again. It is in the way that you look at an interview.

The wrong way to look at an interview is to think of it as a presentation, in which you have to meet a stranger and convince him that you are the right person for the job. Say things that he would want to hear and impress him with every word that comes out of your mouth.

The right way to look at an interview is a chance to meet with someone to find out more about their job, do not think about impressing them with your answers, just answer them honestly. This way if you are the right person for the job then you will get the job. If your answers weren't correct then it is likely that you are not the right person for the job and would not have been happy in it. If you concentrate on finding out about the role and the company then you will forget about your nerves, where as if you concentrate on trying to impress the client then you will likely get flustered and your answers will not be as effective as they could have.

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Final checks

Check money – It is likely at some point that money will come up so make sure you are aware what money your agent has sent you across at. Never bring the subject up, it is preferred to be discussed with the agent, sometimes discussing money can become ugly and it is far better that your agent gets the brunt of it than you. If you are asked though you must have a suitable answer prepared.

Vocabulary lists – These are a fantastic idea for making a good impression. You can find many on the internet by searching for “interview vocabulary”. They are a way of ensuring that words roll off your tongue that you may not use everyday and give you a very educated appearance.

Journey – There are many sites to plan your journey. www.multimap.com is the preferred option for driving <http://www.nationalrail.co.uk> if you are taking the train. If possible it is a good idea to make a dry run to make sure that there are no road works and that you can find the building ok. It is an idea to make preparations to arrive on site about 30 minutes early. This way you can spend 15-20 minutes looking at your research and preparation, as well as checking the vocabulary lists and typical mistakes section. You should do this every interview to keep it fresh in your head.

Night before – Finally it is advised, although often forgotten, to have a good night's sleep the night before and try not to drink too much. It is easy to tell a candidate that is either hung over, or extremely tired. The impression this gives is a total lack of concern for the interview and some people could take it as disrespectful.

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Attending Interviews

There are three parts to how to act in interviews.

- **First impressions**
- **The best way to conduct yourself in an interview**
- **How to conclude**

First impressions – First impressions go a long way to an interviewer. If you give a good first impression then it will start the interview in the right way, give a bad first impression and you will find yourself trying to claw your reputation back through the rest of the interview.

The best way to handle an introduction is to be natural, do not try to be extremely confident, assertive or over friendly.

For the single best introduction ensure that you offer a firm handshake and a smile, retain eye contact and introduce yourself politely. E.g. “Good afternoon, I’m John Smith, it’s nice to meet you”

You want the first few minutes of the meeting to be as smooth as possible so make sure you have enough small talk prepared in case of awkward silences. This is easy to do, by asking simple questions e.g. How is your day going? Have you had many interviews? How are they going? etc.

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How to conduct yourself in an interview

The best way to conduct yourself in an interview – Despite what you may read, the single most important part of any interview is to build a rapport with the interviewer. If you do this then the interview will very quickly become a relaxed conversation between professionals and will give you the best chance to sell yourself as well as you can.

The easiest way to build a rapport is to ask questions. People love to talk about themselves, their products and their companies. Technical staff will love to talk about their products and interesting projects they have worked on. Human resources staff will love to talk about their processes and how happy their staff are. Whenever there is a natural chance ask a question, that the interviewer will be interested to answer and listen intently. If you do this you are well on the way to building a strong rapport.

When asking questions it is important to listen to the response. It is easy to become nervous and be trying to think of what to ask next. This will just make the conversation uncomfortable. So when ever you ask a question it is important that you listen to the response.

Obviously do not badger the interviewer with hundreds of questions just ask a few open questions (who, what, when, where, why) that the interviewer will have to think about and which they will want to answer.

Best question – If you get a chance the single greatest question to ask to build rapport

“How did **YOU** get started in this career/role/company?”

Generally after asking that question the interviewer will smile or laugh, lean back and think for a few seconds before telling you a story about how they got started. The question will work on anyone, try it on the next person you see, ask them how they got started in their career and watch the effect it has. It can enable you to build a rapport with almost anyone immediately. It is also a great way of reminding the interviewer that they once had to be interviewed at this company, which is what you are currently doing. It is a subtle bond, which will most likely mean that you will be remembered.

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Questions

How to respond to questions – Obviously it is a two way street and the interviewer will no doubt have many questions to ask you. It is difficult to know how to respond and many people make the mistake of saying what they think the interviewer would want to hear. They prepare an answer for almost every question and recite it immaculately and believe they have done well. This is not what the interviewer wants.

The interviewer wants honesty. If an interviewer asks a question like: “What skills could you offer to the company?” and you immediately come back with “I am hard-working, punctual and have very good communication skills” it is clearly a prepared answer. It may have all the right attributes but any candidate could say something like that – it gives the interviewer no insight.

Answer the question as if it were a friend asking the question. Think about how you speak in conversations, if someone asks a question about you, you would stop for a few seconds to consider your answer. So when your interviewer says: “What skills could you offer to the company?” start by thinking honestly about what skills you have that the company could want and how you can back that up. Something along the lines of

“Once I get started on a project I don’t stop working until I have finished and I have a passion for solving problems, I remember once working for my last company we came across a problem xxx and I couldn’t sleep for trying to think about how we could solve it. When I finally did it was great and we finished the project just after.”

As mentioned in the CV guide:

The best Salesmen, when making presentations do not list EVERY SINGLE selling point of their product or service. They are selective and only offer relevant information. In other words, don’t feel that you have to list every single attribute that you have, just select the most relevant ones to the employer.

Then present them concisely and back them up with an example.

Finally if you know that you don’t talk enough, or that you have been known to waffle on. Make an effort to practice the techniques above. It is ok to be who you want once you have started at a company, but an interview is all about making a great impression and giving them no reason to say no to you.

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Concluding an interview

How to conclude – There will always be a point in the interview where the interviewer will ask if you have any further questions. It is at this point that you should (if you haven't already) ask some questions that you have prepared before hand (see **preparing for interviews**) These questions should be considered and not just simple questions like: "how long has the company been running?" Having researched the company there should be many things that you are curious about and now is the time to demonstrate your interest in your future by asking some carefully considered questions.

The top 2% - 2 - The best possible way to end an interview is to make the final question that you ask something along the lines of:

"What is the process moving forward?"

You may be lucky enough to be offered the job there and then. Far more likely the client will say something like "we still have some other people to see", or "we will consider your application then be in touch with your agent". No matter what they say you should ask a question about their thoughts on you: "Do you have any immediate objections to me as a candidate" it is a very difficult question to ask but potentially could be the reason you get the job. Let me explain.

Most interviewers will have minor concerns in the back of their mind as to whether you could do the job. They are normally too kind to ever mention their concerns at the time. However these minor concerns grow into major doubts and effectively are the reason why someone else is offered.

If you ask them their objections, they will normally tell you. At this point you have a chance to change their mind. E.g. you ask them if they have any objections, they tell you that they are concerned that you will not stay to the end of the project, because you are young and very keen to move forward in your career. At this point you can politely explain that you have a great deal of integrity towards your job and that in all of your career you have never left early on a project, and you never intend to.

If you do this correctly you will turn a concern of theirs into a top selling point of yours.

Finally you should always thank the interviewer for their time, and make sure you let them know that you are interested in the position.

If you haven't yet been given one, ask for their business card, this will be important later on.

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Typical Mistakes

Here is a list of many typical mistakes. Almost every single interview one of these mistakes is made. It can a small reason like this, why the best candidates do not get the job.

Appearance - Always wear a suit, regardless of dress code. Always ALWAYS wear a suit. Men should not wear open neck shirts. Even on a hot day, always wear a suit. Some interviewers will immediately say don't worry, feel free to take off your jacket or tie. Without question Always wear a suit.

Cover any tattoo's and remove any piercings. This is optional but advised. Body Piercing is not to everyone's taste, it is something that will be perfectly acceptable when you start but could just give you the wrong first impression.

Do not chew gum. Many people chew gum to give themselves fresh breath for an interview. This a good idea but make sure you remember to remove the gum before you meet the interviewer.

Resist the urge to smoke before your interview. Cigarette smoke is very overpowering to non-smokers. Even if you can not smell the smoke yourself, the chances are your interviewer will. If you can not resist and you need to calm your nerves then make sure you carry some deodorant, chewing gum and you have time to wash your hands. I have had many interviews blown because a candidate smelt of cigarettes.

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Mistakes in the interview

When in the interview – Don't keep checking your watch or the time. If the interviewer notices this they may feel uncomfortable or offended and rush the interview. This will definitely stop any chance you have of selling yourself properly.

Don't interrupt the interviewer. Allow them to finish every sentence. It may seem obvious but it is easy to do and is a surefire way to take yourself off of the short list.

Make sure you keep regular eye contact. It is known in body language that looking at your subject and regular eye contact shows that you are interested and focusing on a subject, looking around the room and focusing on other things gives impression of boredom. Likewise leaning forward is a good way of showing you are interested and alert leaning back and slouching shows boredom. Do not fidget in your chair as it will distract the interviewer and not allow for a smooth interview.

Make sure you turn your phone off. Do not put your phone on silent. There is little that is more distracting than the hum of a phone that is on silent and relentlessly vibrating in someone's pocket. It will distract you when in the middle of a great description of yourself. It could distract the interviewer. It is not worth the risk. Unless you are waiting for an emergency, in which case you should tell the interviewer up front.

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Things not to say

Things not to say – Do not lie. It is not worth lying in an interview. This will most likely come back and haunt you. If you don't have enough experience in something be honest and admit it, make a point of saying that you do not want to lie. The chances are you will be praised for your honesty, and it may help you to shine where others fail.

Do not speak badly of your current employers. Some interviewers will try to trap you into saying negative things about your previous employers. It is highly unprofessional to do so, the chances are the interviewer will feel defensive for the company you are attacking. If you did not like a particular company or client, say that you left or are leaving due to a personality clash or for personal reasons. Do not blame them but do not assume the blame.

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The top 2% of interviewees

As with everything in recruitment there are tricks that you can pull that will put you in the top 2% of the market. Here is a list of simple tactics that you can use to make you stick in peoples minds.

Demonstrations – If you have a piece of relevant work that would be of interest to the client and it is something, which you could demonstrate on a computer, then take in a lap top. This is very effective with websites or applications that are difficult to explain.

Aftershave/Perfume – Spray something fresh on just before you enter. It is always pleasant to be greeted by someone that looks presentable but someone that smells nice too can really stick in your mind. Especially when compared to other candidates who smelled the opposite of the spectrum. Who would you rather work with all day.

Take a copy of your CV – You never know if the client has spent the last five minutes frantically looking for a copy of your CV before you arrived. If you arrive with a fresh copy of your CV printed on high quality paper then it will be easy for you both to discuss parts of your Career History and Skills.

Ask for a drink of water – Many people will encourage you never to ask for anything in an interview, however if you politely ask for a drink of water at the beginning of the interview (if you are not offered) it shows a lot of confidence. It is an opportunity for the interviewer to do something for you, which is another way of establishing rapport. It is also handy if after 90 minutes of interview your throat starts to feel dry and distracts you so that you can not sell yourself as well as possible.

Ask for a tour – This is tricky and should only be attempted if you feel that you have struck up a rapport with the interviewer. Ask to see where everything happens, even to meet the team. If the interview is going well then the interviewer will be more than happy to show you the technical centre. This can be a great chance to get one up on the other applicants as it could be a chance to talk more in depth about your technical skills.

Write an e-mail, call the client afterwards – If you have taken the clients business card, use it. If you feel that the interview has gone well and you built a relationship with the interviewer then they will be happy to hear from you. The best way to do this is to find out the process moving forward and then send an e-mail or make a phone call around the time of the final interview to say 'thank you for your time and having considered the role you are extremely interested'.

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Good luck

I hope you have enjoyed reading this guide and feel that you have got something out of it.

If you follow all the advice in this guide it should ensure that you are in the top 2% of the market and should put your success rate far closer to 100%.

I thoroughly hope that this advice can help you to achieve your perfect job and wish you the very best of luck in your search.

I am interested in any feedback that you have on this guide.

Good Luck!