

Finding a New Position in a Competitive Job Market

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In today's competitive market, it is essential to network — even if you are not actively searching for a new position. You must also keep abreast of changes within your industry and within in your field and keep your *curriculum vita* (CV) current. Most new job opportunities arise when you are not actively searching for them. Furthermore, you are always more marketable when employed versus unemployed.

If you are searching for a new job, speak with friends, colleagues, and past business associates and tell them you are actively looking to make a change. Invite them to share your contact information with others. Ask if they can refer you to a reputable search firm that specializes in recruiting within your niche. If they do not have that information, you can search the Internet to identify recruiting agencies within your specialty area; call each of them to determine which will best represent you and your needs.

We do not recommend mass emailing your CV or posting it on multiple job boards, which can be the equivalent of dropping it into a black hole. Instead, locate a good recruiter who will represent you to clients seeking your particular skill set. A good recruiting firm will help you determine what sets you apart from the competition. Not only will they help you to obtain an interview, they will also prepare you for it.

Your CV should outline your experience and your accomplishments. You only get one chance to promote yourself on paper, so your CV should be detailed and self-explanatory. It should not read like a book, but it does not need to be less than two pages. Once your CV is prepared, your recruiter will identify some potential opportunities with you, and, with your permission, represent you to clients. These days it is customary to conduct a telephone interview before a face-to-face interview is arranged. Common sense is the most important thing you can bring to any interview. While it is important to prepare beforehand, your ability to think on your feet may be what separates you from the crowd.

Prepare for the Interview **First**, know yourself. Identify your career goals and what experience you would like to gain in your next assignment. Decide if you are willing to relocate. Know your key strengths and weaknesses.

Second, "package your positives." Prepare examples of your work that demonstrate your achievements as well as a list of your major accomplishments.

Third, "package your negatives." Although you shouldn't dwell on past failures, be prepared to acknowledge them and indicate that you have learned from these experiences.

Fourth, learn as much about the opportunity as possible before the interview. Prepare a

list of questions to ask the interviewer and listen carefully to the answers during the interview.

Fifth, take at least three copies of your CV to the interview along with a complete reference list. Request a business card from each interviewer so you can follow up with a thank you note.

The Interview Regardless of the environment, interviewing revolves around questions. Be sure you understand what is being asked. It is important to be specific and concise in your responses. Questions will generally fall into one of three categories: those showing you can do the job (skills, education, experience); those showing you will do the job (work attitudes, motivation for success); and those showing you can get along with others.

Your visual impression and your attitude are just as important as what you actually say during an interview. Generally, you should be dynamic and friendly. Direct eye contact sends a message of trustworthiness and confidence. Never sit until asked to do so by an interviewer, and when you do, demonstrate good posture. Dress code should be professional — consult with your recruiter regarding the client's dress code. Close the interview with a firm handshake and a sincere "thank you" for the interviewer's time. Follow up with a letter within 24 hours to thank the interviewer again for his or her time and consideration.

If you do not use a recruiter, be proactive at the conclusion of the interview and request the timeframe in which the company plans to make a hiring decision. This will help you decide when next to contact them. The general rule is to call human resources for an update five business days after the interview. If you work with a recruiter, contact the recruiter after the interview with an update, and they, in turn, will notify you about further action.