



Job seeking advice: A guide to securing your perfect role



Introduction

Knowing how to find the right job is one of life's most important skills. At Reed Specialist Recruitment we are here to help make the whole process as easy as possible, from helping you source the right role to preparing you for the interview.

This guide will outline the steps you should take to ensure you find the right career to help you Love Mondays again. It has been designed to give you advice and guidance on how to present yourself in such a professional manner that employers will be hard pushed not to offer you an interview.

From producing an eye-catching CV, to writing a cover letter which entices an employer to hear more, the following strategies will give you the best opportunity to get your foot in the door and secure your dream role.

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Finding suitable jobs

Sometimes trying to find the right role can be like looking for a needle in a haystack, which is why we are here to help you. Even if you know the sector and role you are looking for, finding the right organisation and location all form part of the perfect fit. Below are steps you can take to ensure that you are well-informed about the jobs you are applying for.

Step

1

First, you need to set yourself some parameters. This centres around why you want a new job in the first place. Whether you just need a change of scenery, want a more senior position, a new challenge, a change of location, or even want to switch sectors entirely – identifying what it is you really want from that new role will help to narrow down your options.

If you have a very focused career progression plan, then chances are you will already know the sector and role you want, but just need to find an organisation offering the right opportunity.

However, you may have a less structured focus on a designated pathway and be open to a variety of new roles, particularly if you are looking for something primarily to pay the bills. In this case, decide if you only want to find permanent work, or if you would be open to temporary and interim positions.

You should also consider how flexible you are on the type of organisation you work for. Would you work for a start-up, or are you only looking at larger, more established employers? Is a strong corporate social responsibility record and organisational purpose a prerequisite for you? How important are company culture and training opportunities?

Step

2

Once you have found a job advert, or been referred an enticing role by us, the first thing you should do is to examine the job description as thoroughly as possible. We recommend going over it a minimum of five times.

This may seem excessive, but you would not make other potentially life-changing decisions on a whim, so use the same care and attention when it comes to finding a job as you would when you buy a house.

Start by picking out and highlighting the key elements of the role; from the most important tasks and duties, to the essential skills needed to carry them out. Using this, you will be able to match your own experience and abilities accurately, helping you to see if the role is a good fit and assist you in tailoring your CV and cover letter.

With each skill you have picked out from the description, write down examples where you have clearly demonstrated it. Again, this will help you to compose your CV and cover letter, as well as helping you to have examples in mind when asked about them in an interview.

Step 3

Of course, when examining a job description, your eye will naturally be drawn to the salary on offer. While some roles will list a specific salary, others will have a band, or even list salary as simply “depends on experience (DoE)” or “competitive”.

You should also consider the benefits listed in the job description. At this point, you should decide whether you are interested in flexible working opportunities, a generous pension scheme, health plans or even gym memberships.

If you are unsure of where to begin when researching salary and benefits packages, Reed’s annual salary guides are a great starting point. The guides list the regional salary bands for key jobs across our specialisms, helping you to understand what the ‘going rate’ is for your desired role.

They also contain expert advice on the benefits available in each specialism, and what benefits employers need to offer to attract jobseekers. Ask your Reed consultant for the latest versions.

Step 4

If you are happy with the job description and the salary and benefits, it is time to do some in-depth research into the organisation. Not only will getting to know your potential employer increase your chances of getting hired, it can also help you to decide whether the organisation will be a good cultural fit for you, and whether you want to go ahead with your application.

The company website is the best place to conduct your initial research.

You can also use the company’s social media profiles to assess the organisation.

Additionally, you may want to use sites like Glassdoor to find out what employees say about their organisations – both positive and negative.

Not only should you use this research to decide whether to proceed with your application, but you can also demonstrate your knowledge of the business in your CV, cover letter and at an interview.

Top tips

By doing all of these things, you will not only be fully-briefed and confident heading into your application and interview, you will know that you are applying for a role which is a great fit for you.

How to write a CV

Curriculum Vitae (CV) means life story. When you meet a new person, you do not tell them everything that has ever happened to you – the same goes for a prospective employer – tell them the highlights.

A hiring manager or recruiter looks at a CV for an average of seven seconds. This means you have mere moments to attract their attention and convince them to progress you to the next stage of the hiring process.

Your CV should be a concise and relevant account of your skills and experience. It is best to focus on the last five years of your work experience, unless you feel something else particularly relevant from earlier in your career needs to be mentioned.

Information you must include on a CV

1 Personal details – name, email, contact phone number and address

2 Personal statement – this is your opportunity to sell yourself in a few sentences. Tell the employer why you are suitable for the job, highlighting the relevant skills you possess

3 Work experience – clearly list your job title, time in the post, responsibilities, and the name of the organisation. Include any relevant or helpful voluntary experience

4 Education – list all formal qualifications and any training and development undertaken

5 Hobbies and interests – keep it brief and relevant to the job you are applying for

6 References – typically, including a reference list in your CV is not a necessity, but it can be effective for impressing employers and adding credibility to your qualifications and experience. Here are several reasons why you should include references in your CV:

- The employer requests your references
- The job description instructs you to include them
- If you received accolades from a reference
- If you have additional space for a reference list



The devil is in the detail

Relying on your job title, organisation, and a line or two from your job specification is not enough to make you stand out from the competition. Here is a common example of a line on someone's CV:

"Administered email marketing campaigns"

If you want to sound more impressive, add in a bit more detail so the recruiter or hiring manager can get a better understanding of your abilities. For example:

"Administered three weekly targeted email campaigns to a database of 46,000 subscribers"

See the improvement? We can go one step further – share how you went above and beyond. The more you can demonstrate this, the more impressed a hiring manager is likely to be. Building on the initial statement, you should aim for something like:

"Administered three weekly targeted email campaigns to a database of 46,000 subscribers, improving open rates by 25% over a three-month period by undertaking analysis of subject lines."

You might not have this amount of detail for every element of your work, but ensure you do use what you can, as it shows a good level of professionalism and will set you apart from other candidates.

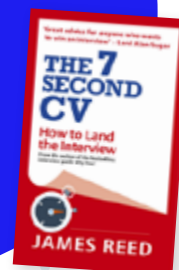
CV presentation

Keep your CV to a maximum of two sides of A4 and laid out in a logical order. Ensure that you list what is most relevant to the role you are applying for at the top of the page. While this will normally be your most recent and relevant work experience, it may be that a qualification is more relevant and more attractive to the hiring manager, in which case put this first.

Make sure hiring managers take your CV seriously by using a professional font and ensuring there are no spelling errors or typos. If you are applying for a role which places importance upon creativity and design skills, designing your CV rather than using a traditional Word document – perhaps as an infographic – will create more of an impression on your potential employer.

For more information on how to write the perfect CV, our Chairman, James Reed, gives some amazing tips in his book, 'The 7 second CV: how to land an interview'.

[Find out more >](#)



How to write a cover letter

Writing a cover letter is an essential part of almost every job application. Not only do you have to make sure it sells your skills and abilities to recruiters, you also need to do it in a clear and concise manner – that ultimately persuades the reader to want to meet you.

How to structure a cover letter

Although there are no set rules on how your cover letter should be structured, making sure it flows well is vital if you want to impress recruiters.

The in-depth research you did about the role and the organisation will be hugely beneficial in helping you to create your cover letter. Here is a guide on what to include and how to structure the letter to have the best impact:

The top of the letter

Let them know who you are and state who they are

Research the job you are applying for, and where possible, find out who the hiring manager will be to address it to them directly. If you find out their name, start with “Dear X”, and if you do not have a name, then begin with “Dear Sir or Madam”.

You should include the job title of the role you are applying for somewhere clearly – in an email this could well be the subject line, or in a letter it could be in your opening paragraph. You should also include your contact details; address, phone number and email address, at the top of the letter on the right-hand side.

Opening the letter

Why are you getting in touch?

The opening paragraph should be short and to the point, explaining why you are getting in touch. It is also useful to include where you found the job. If someone referred you, mention their name in this section.





Second paragraph

Why are you suitable for the job?

Briefly describe your professional and academic qualifications that are relevant to the role and ensure you refer to each of the skills listed in the job description.

Third paragraph

What can you do for the company?

Outline your career goals (making it relevant to the position you are applying for) and expand on the pertinent points in your CV – including examples to back up your skills.

Fourth paragraph

Reiterate

Here is where you emphasise your interest in the role and why you would be the right fit for the job and company. It is also a good time to indicate you would like to meet with the employer for an interview.

Closing the letter

Use the right sign-off

Sign off your cover letter with "Yours sincerely" if you know the name of the hiring manager, or "Yours faithfully" if you do not.

Relevance and length

Always write a new cover letter for each job you go for – recruiters and hiring managers can spot a ‘copy and paste’ job from a mile away. You should expand upon areas of your CV that are relevant to the job you are applying for and link them to your personal motivations.

If you have a real interest in the company and its products, or you have certain qualifications that are suitable for this job, then say so. If you believe in the company’s values, then tell them. If the role is the ideal next step in your career, explain why. If there is something about you which makes you particularly unique – personal recommendations, previous voluntary experience, or other anecdotes – use them. Remember, you need to stand out as being passionate and likeable.

Everything you write should relate directly to the job at hand. Don’t include irrelevant hobbies, interests or previous experience, and do not just repeat what is on your CV. The cover letter and CV work together, with each filling in the gaps of the other. Use the cover letter to shed additional light on the information in your CV.

The ideal cover letter should fit onto one page – to a maximum of approximately 400 words. You want to entice the hiring manager to find out more about you, not write an autobiography.

Always proof-read

There is nothing worse than seeing a letter that is littered with errors.

Many recruiters will reject all applications with any spelling errors or typos without a second thought, so do not let that be yours. This is especially important if you are going for a job that requires any sort of attention to detail. Check your work thoroughly.

And remember...

Your CV shows you can do the job, your cover letter shows why you want the job. The two should complement each other.



Boosting your attractiveness to employers beyond your CV and cover letter

If your CV and cover letter have done their job and drawn the attention of recruiters and hiring managers, they will want to find out more about you. In some cases, this will be when they invite you for an interview. However, for roles which are highly sought after and hugely competitive, employers may need to whittle down a longlist into a shortlist.

In either situation, there are ways in which you can go beyond the CV and cover letter to showcase your suitability to employers. The following tips are things that you should do all the time, not just when you are seeking a new role.

Cultivate your LinkedIn profile

LinkedIn presence is vital for aspiring professionals, with 93% of recruiters examining a candidate's profile before hiring them. The site acts as a free platform to promote your skills and qualifications, which can be seen by prospective employers and validated by current and former colleagues.

A LinkedIn profile can help your personality shine through more easily than your CV or cover letter. Ensure that you have an updated profile picture and career history, while also listing how you have excelled in your current and previous duties.

But there is more to using LinkedIn than just having an up-to-date profile. You can really impress prospective employers by engaging with the platform. Share engaging content to promote your interests and knowledge, start interesting conversation topics, and connect with important thought leaders in your industry.

When it comes to your prospective employer viewing your profile, they will have evidence of your passion for the sector, as well as your industry experience.



Become a thought leader

Getting involved in industry conversations and really learning your subject matter should not just be limited to LinkedIn. If you can display in-depth knowledge about your sector, and lead thoughtful conversations about industry news, potential employers will identify you as a committed and engaged candidate who would be a great addition to the team.

There are many ways to go about doing this. Firstly, research the key industry news sites, blogs and influencers, and aim to consume as much of their content as possible. This will help to bolster your knowledge, allowing you to join conversations and debates between industry experts.

As well as posting thoughts and analysis on your social media channels, you could even create your own blog or vlog to help you to join the industry conversation. If you do, make sure you link to it on your social media channels, and include a link in your CV too.

Network, network, network

Writing CVs and cover letters is all about getting your name noticed. Imagine if a recruiter or hiring manager comes to your application and already knows your name. Networks are critical for professional development. Building networks enables you to enter dialogue with likeminded professionals who can provide you with career opportunities.

There are many ways to build a network, from connecting with people on LinkedIn to attending industry events and courses. While networking can feel awkward initially, like all skills it is something you will get better at the more you do it. Make sure you are armed with a few interesting conversation topics and you will begin to find people approach you, rather than you approaching them.

You can also get involved with community groups on social media. As well as acting as an area for like-minded people, you can pick up useful tips and discuss industry stories and trends in these groups.

Networking not only increases your connections, it also helps to build your knowledge of key topics. You can apply this knowledge in your current role and demonstrate it when looking for future positions.



Have a social media audit

Organisations will search your social media profiles when you apply for an open position with them. Before making your application, you should check what you have posted both recently and in the past.

If there are any posts you would not want a potential employer to see, you should preferably delete them, but you could also impose the most stringent privacy settings on your account (although there is a chance an employer could still find the picture or post).

No matter what your privacy settings are, your profile picture will still be available for all to see on many social platforms. Make sure this is either professional-looking – or at the very least does not reflect badly on you.



The benefits of using a recruiter

Recruiters can be critical allies in your search for a job. In the same way that you would not buy a car without expert advice, getting support in finding a new job – something just as life-changing – boosts your chances of finding your dream role.

Expertise

- We specialise in recruiting for 20 industries, this means we have the capability to source jobs across all industries and skill sets.
- Our consultants are experts in their chosen discipline and we are therefore confident to offer our candidates the best advice on how to best reach their chosen career.
- We have offices across the UK, allowing us to provide you with accurate market intelligence regarding salaries, the best jobs available locally in your chosen specialism, and expert advice on how to make you more attractive to your chosen company.
- We work with many clients on an exclusive basis – allowing access to jobs you would not find elsewhere.

Peace of mind

- We manage the whole process and make sure it runs smoothly. This includes finding jobs which match your needs, advising you on your CV, co-ordinating interviews and providing you with constructive feedback.
- Our specialist market insight allows us to advise you on and negotiate job offers.
- Save time and stress – we have access to thousands of clients across the country and can act fast to find your next career opportunity.
- We offer our clients market-leading guarantees for choosing a Reed candidate – we are confident that you will be confident, professional and love your new role.

Speak to one of our specialist consultants in your local office to get your job search underway.

[Contact your local office here](#)



