

A SELF-HELP GUIDE FOR JOB SEEKERS IN IRELAND

find that **job**



Job Search Made Easy

Interview Techniques

Writing Professional CVs



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Evaluating Your Career

Whether you are starting your career, making a career change or considering your options in light of the current climate, the starting point should be the same. You need to take time to reflect on where you are now in your career, what you have learned, and then work out where you want to be. Once you know that, your job search and overall career path become far simpler. If this means you sit down for several days working out what your possible career could be, then it is time well spent. I have met many people in careers that didn't suit them; finding the right career sets them free.

Having worked with people at all levels of seniority from all kinds of organisations, I have observed something which you will know makes sense: nobody achieves full job satisfaction doing a job that they don't like.

Taking the time to reflect, working out what type of career or work you're looking for and planning the steps to find it should give you a better chance of finding what is right for you.

This section of the book is about helping you understand what it is you might excel at. After working through this chapter, you will know how to approach the following:

- Planning your Career Move
- Understanding your Achievements
- Auditing your Skills and Competencies
- Working out your Motivations, Interests and Values
- Where do you want to be?
- A Balancing Act – Work/Life Balance

Planning your Career Move – Where are you Now?

The career planning process is a journey that involves a number of simple steps. The questions in this section are designed to help you to think objectively about yourself – and to review and understand your achievements, personal strengths and skills – to help you make better career

choices. Armed with this self-insight and knowledge you will be better able to clarify your future goals.

This is an opportunity to ask yourself questions you may have never asked yourself in the past, to help clarify where you are on your career path.

Using the following template, track your personal Life and Career path, listing significant milestones and dates since you left school. List the corresponding jobs you did and any courses you took. Depending on where you are in your career you may be summarising and grouping roles from twenty years ago – or making your four months on a J1 Visa in New York in second year in UCD sound like you ran the trading floor in ABC stock exchange!

Life and Career Path Template

Start by getting it all down onto paper for now as follows:

Date	Milestone	Important Details
1996	<i>Started college – UCD</i>	<i>BA Economics and Politics Got a first in exams</i>
Summer 1997	<i>J1 Visa – worked in New York office</i>	<i>Admin in accountancy 4 months</i>
1997	<i>Part-time job through college</i>	<i>PR work</i>
Summer 1998	<i>Summer placement in local AIB branch</i>	
1999	<i>Graduation</i>	<i>First class honours</i>
Summer 1999	<i>Internship in ABC Financial</i>	
Jan 2000	<i>Graduate Programme ABC Financial 9 month placements in 4 departments</i>	<i>Banking, Insurance, Commercial, Lending and Foreign exchange</i>
Apr 2001	<i>Started accountancy course</i>	
Sept 2003	<i>Appointed Senior Bank official</i>	<i>Projects role in lending section</i>
	<i>And so on . . .</i>	

Below is a blank Life and Career Path Template for you to fill in.

Date	Milestone	Important Details

This next section will help you to review your career; the roles and highlights. You'll need to figure out what's important for the next job, and be able to answer some key questions:

- What have I achieved to date?
- What skills do I have?
- What strengths do I have?
- What work do I like or get a buzz from?
- What areas interest me?
- What's my ideal job?

It will be crucial to use this information on your CV and cover letter to highlight your suitability for particular roles and sell your skills. Likewise at interviews, you'll need to be comfortable explaining your achievements and linking them to the role you're seeking. So . . .

Understanding your Achievements

This is the one question candidates tell me they hate at interview; but it is the one question interviewers love to ask and probe. *Why was X actually an achievement? And so what exactly did you do? And why was that important?*



Considering Your Options

This chapter encourages you to think about your preferences at work. What type of roles are you best suited to? What type of cultures or environments do you enjoy most? Are you someone who needs a high degree of autonomy or do you require a team environment to keep you motivated?

Once you are clear on the type of organisational environment and team structures that work best for you, you should actively seek roles that have these characteristics. This increases your chances of finding a job that you'll enjoy and succeed at.

Think back over the various job roles you have held and list the characteristics of these roles that most suited you. Use the following headings as a guide.

In this chapter I will help you to consider the options available to you and to understand:

- Work Preferences
- Ideal job roles and sectors
- What you have to offer

Work Preferences

What is my preferred style of working?

Relationships

- With my manager
- With colleagues
- Individual or team

Work Environment

- Organisation culture
- Values
- Goals
- Recognition
- Growth and development
- Purpose
- Autonomy/control

Describing Your Ideal Job

What does your ideal job look like? What are its components – your “wish list”? Many clients I work with find that their ideal or dream job is not in their current field. Often they find that it’s in a field related to their broader areas of interest and the tasks and responsibilities provide an opportunity for them to use their strongest skills.

Reflect on your strengths, skills and personal achievements. Think about your interests and work style or preferences. A clearer picture of the characteristics of your ideal job should now be emerging.

Key components of my ideal job

For example

1. *Helping or teaching people*
2. *Team leader or supervisory role*
3. *Small organisation with clear mission and explicit values and delivery in past*
4. *Opportunity to use my counselling and psychology training*
5. *Salary expectations of €xx,000*
- 6.
- 7.
- 8.
- 9.
10. *Near where I live*

Go back now and highlight those components of your ideal job that you will not compromise on. Know the ones that would be nice to have but aren't necessary for you to achieve job satisfaction. List possible job roles or fields of work that interest you most *and* meet the above criteria.

Preferred job options and fields of interest

- 1
- 2
- 3
- 4
- 5



Writing a Professional CV and Cover Letter

In the jobs market, the first impression is made by your CV, cover letter and/or your application form. Your application needs to provide critical evidence that you have the required skills, experience, knowledge, abilities and personal qualities to do the job well. And if your letter can stand out from the others then that also helps.

This part of the book is designed to help you do just that. You will learn how to write an honest CV that summarises what you bring to the job. Your CV will reflect the skills and achievements discussed in earlier chapters and will be clearly focused on the job role in question. I will take you through:

- Writing your CV
- Main Sections on a CV
- CV Dos and Don'ts
- Sample CVs
- The Executive CV
- Europass CV
- Key Components of a Cover Letter
- Sample Cover Letter
- Preparing Application Forms

Writing your CV

Having coached so many people over the years who are going for job interviews, I'm sometimes amazed when I read the description of the role they're going for and then read their CV. Often there is very little overlap, and they've made little or no attempt at linking the two. The good CVs, on the other hand, stand out from the rest of the pile because they have clearly

tried to establish links. These CVs are more than just a list of dates and headings. In them, people attempt to:

- ✓ Show they can do the job in question
- ✓ Demonstrate and confirm how well they did previous jobs
- ✓ Indicate enthusiasm about the new role.

They do enough, in other words, to get called for interview.

An effective CV should highlight the features that make you an interesting candidate for this role and the benefits you might bring to your prospective employer. Your CV should:

- ✓ Reflect what the employer is looking for
- ✓ Clearly identify the relevant key skills you have

You need to consider your skills carefully and clearly identify:

- ✓ What skills or experiences make you stand out?
- ✓ What evidence backs this up?
- ✓ What skills do you have that are transferable to this company?

Refer to the Transferable Skills Audit on page 7 to help you identify the skills you need to outline on your CV. Employers will screen applicants on the basis of their CV and may take less than a minute to scan your CV. So make sure everything on your CV is explicitly relevant to the role.

There is no one layout or style that is the “right” layout for a CV. Ensure it is clearly laid out and easy to read, with the most important information at the top.

No matter what format or style you settle on, there are some key components and sections you should include:

- Personal Details
- Profile
- Education and Qualifications

- Employment History
- Interests
- Referees

Main Sections on a CV

Personal Details

This is simply your name, address and contact details, including your personal phone number (not that of your current employer) and a personal email address. Make sure that your personal email address looks professional, i.e. not containing a nickname or joke that may have seemed funny when you set it up, but wouldn't amuse a prospective employer. You do not need to include your marital status, family circumstances, race or religious beliefs in this section.

Profile

This is also referred to as Career Profile, Objective, Personal Profile or Skills Profile. It is a short statement about you and what you have to offer the employer. It is an executive summary or an overview of your experience and track record. A skills profile should outline your particular skills and strengths for the role.

You need to imagine the employer reading this and deciding on the strength of this statement whether or not to keep reading. In the profile, you give a summary of what you have to offer, keeping in mind what the employer wants and needs.

When writing your profile you might find it useful to ask yourself: "If the recruiter stopped reading my CV at this point, would they think I was right for the role?"

A profile is particularly important for executives and senior people who have had long and varied careers. For more information on this, see "The Executive CV" section on page 43.

Education and Qualifications

Include all professional qualifications achieved, starting with the most recent. You may wish to put an additional heading "Continuing Professional