

REJUVENATE INDIA MOVEMENT377, 5th Cross, 1st Block, Jayanagar, Bangalore – 560 011Tel : 6563214; www.indiamovement.org

To:

7th Nov, 2002

Peahlad

C. H. cell

Dear Sir,

Thank you very much for attending our consultation and sharing your insights with us.
Please find attached the proceedings of the consultation.

We have started the process of coming with an action plan for Karnataka. We will keep you updated on the progress.

Regards,



Sindhu Naik

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AP
B
11/11

Proceedings of the RIM-Karnataka: Anti- Corruption Consultation

Date: Oct 27th, 2002

Time: 10:00 a.m. to 5:30 p.m.

Morning Session: 10:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m.

1. Self-introductions by all participants
2. Sindhu Naik welcomed the participants
3. Ravi M. defined the objectives of the one-day consultation:
 - a. capacity building
 - b. to seek feedback and inputs on the two strategies that have been drawn up for Karnataka.

Ravi further mentioned that, while there are several levels to address the all pervading issue of the corruption, the Karnataka movement is considering an agenda to tackle "retail corruption- corruption that effects the common man on a day to day basis".
4. Mr. Rangarajan gave a background of RIM. Its focus on the rural volunteer program and the current status. Dr. Sudarshan added that the issue of corruption being an impediment to all development, RIM-Karnataka chapter has decided to focus on creating a movement against corruption in Karnataka.
5. Mr. P. Rajendra- deputy chief editor from Vijaya Karnataka, was called on to speak on the role of the media in the anti-corruption movement. Mr. Rajendra highlighted the proactive role of the Lokayukta in Karnataka and urged NGOs to make more effective use of the Lokayukta. In his experience, people do not report cases because they are afraid. The NGOs can provide the necessary support system and security which would enable individuals to report cases of corruption. Vijay Karanataka is already playing an active role in reporting cases of corruption being unveiled by the Lokayukta. In a people's movement they will continue to provide coverage to such cases.
6. Dr. Jayaprakash Narayan from Loksatta, Hyderabad, gave a short presentation on the role of civil society in a movement against corruption. Listing out the main causes of corruption, Dr. Narayan gave examples on how our humongous election campaign expenses, create a vicious cycle of corruption. He very briefly touched upon the need for following reforms:
 - a. Electoral reforms: preventing criminalization of politics and checking abuse of unaccountable money power.
 - b. Empowerment of local government: transfer of funds to local governments
 - c. Instruments of accountability: right to information, independent appointment of constitutional functionaries, citizens charters
 - d. Judicial Reforms

Lokasatta has worked on citizen's charters, election watch, initiated a movement for candidate disclosures.

Dr. Narayan ended with some suggestions for a statewide movement in Karnataka:

A group of credible people with an excellent track record. Full time commitment and professionalism

A deep understanding of the political and governance process

A collective agenda and informed assertion.

He suggested that we could focus on 4 areas:

People's watch: to fight against misgovernance

Election Watch

Building National Platform

Identify and work on specific local reform goals

7. Sri. Ramesh Ramnathan then briefly outlined the work of Janaagraha and the latest campaign PROOF, which aims at bringing about transparency and accountability in the Bangalore Mahanagar Palike. The campaign is trying put a process in place to promote periodic and standardized financial reporting by the governmental institutions, starting with the BMP. The quarterly financial statements will be discussed with the public and these discussions are expected to improve accountability and performance. Simultaneously performance indicators are being drawn up for the various services. To begin with PROOF has started with developing performance indicators for the education sector, which will be used to analyze the performance of the corporation schools in the city. Health is the next sector that they are working on.
8. Mr. Nirmal spoke about few case studies where Fifth Pillar has been successful in fighting against corruption and related issues. He narrated how corruption is being accepted by the people at large. Exnora founded a separate initiative called Fifth Pillar basically with a vision that only People's power can fight against social evils such as corruption where as all the other four pillars are doing justice. The fourth pillar - media, according to him is far better than the other three i.e. the legislature, the bureaucracy and the judiciary. Whatever be the issue related to corruption, we need to work on sensitizing people and take people along with us and that alone can help in this kind of movement, he opined. He gave case studies where even the bribe takers have been made to give back the amounts to People at Cuddalore.
9. Parivartan, from Delhi, was represented by Sri. Arvind Kejriwal. Mr. Kejriwal, spoke about Parivartan's work in tackling corruption that effects the common person. He vividly described cases in Delhi where Parivartan has used the right to information act, to get the information on public work contracts and expenditure to people at the block level and mobilized the general public to demand for accountability. The focus of Parivartan is to create an enabling process to get the information to the people, demand accountability and transparency and to improve the implementation of the right to information act in Delhi.
10. Dr. Shenoi felt that we need to work on reform in governance, especially the political process. We need to work on making the governance process more transparent.
11. Sri. Doraiswamy suggested that besides NGOs we also need to involve active consumer forums, such as the ones in Udupi and Mangalore. He felt that we need to focus on building good values in our youth through education. Educational institutions should give a special emphasis to character building.

12. Dr. Yellappa Reddy spoke about his experience with big water projects in Karnataka and felt that there was need for people to work together to fight against suppression of information.

Afternoon Session: 1:30 p.m. to 5:30 p.m.

Dr. Samuel Paul, summarized the morning sessions and made some important suggestions for an agenda for action in Karnataka. Corruption is all pervasive and there many different levels at which it can be addressed. Each method has its own merits and its own impact. The key success factor for an action agenda is not spread itself too thin. He shared Public Affairs Center's (PAC) experience with a research on maternity homes in Bangalore. This research lead to an action plan of a help desk with the help of a local NGO. He mentioned that for a statewide action plan, PAC can help with research, documentation, education material.

Dr. Paul suggested that we should not launch a statewide campaign in the beginning. The idea of beginning with one or two districts was a good one. The choice of the district could be based on where we have set of committed people. Some pointers:

- Strengthening the Lokayukta as a mechanism. Analyze the complaints and focus on areas where launch an intensified campaign based on the analysis. The Karnataka movement could piggy-back on the Lokayukta
- Another option is to focus on collective problems: such as the PDS, Public works like Parivartan is doing in Delhi
- Start small
- Network with people/groups working on these issues in the state
- Specify how to use partners in the network
- Use the wider, national network to learn
- Finally the movement should be lead by a set of committed individuals who can devote full-time to this.

Mr. Ramesh Ramanathan pointed that for an effective network of partnership, the group leading the movement should clearly define the objectives of the movement and their core competence, as well as be able optimally utilize the core competence of its partners. He indicated that Janaagraha could be partner, once more clarity emerges in the action plan and the role Janaagraha could contribute to.

Sindhu presented the two strategies for Karnataka. Sri. Kejriwal pointed out that the first strategy is too Lokayukta focused and could be a constraint for expansion and replication. It was recommended that the two strategies should be combined together.

Strategy 2,: To bring accountability and transparency in Public Delivery Services and Public Works;

will define the goals, short and long term objectives of the movement. The action plan will emerge out of strategy 2. Strategy 1, becomes an action item within strategy 2. RIM-Karnataka needs to further refine this strategy 2 and come up with well-defined, focused action plan.

The following suggestions emerged out of the discussions:

District Focus

Desirable. Select one or two districts where you have a set of committed, dedicated people and credible NGOs e.g. Bangalore –Urban, & Rural, Chamrajnagar

Structure

Revisit, the structure of village level volunteers. What may be more desirable is a team at a block/taluk level as also at a district level. There also needs to be a team at the state level.

Identify local NGOs to work collectively on issues. Be selective and choose credible NGOs, who can work in a movement mode and are not afraid of the impact on government aid received by them for various programs.

In the city, do not limit to NGOs, but work with welfare associations, individuals, consumer forums and other groups. These groups need to provide individuals security against victimization.

The leadership for this movement should be given by a set of highly committed, motivated individuals with an excellent track record and who can give full-time to this movement.

Capacity Building

Capacity building of NGOs/other groups is essential: Right to information act, information dissemination on government schemes, grievance redressal procedures available

Disseminate the Right to Information Act in to local bodies, women's groups, youth groups.

Activities

Taluk and District Level teams to assist people to utilize the right to information to get information on contracts, expenditure

Identify corrupt officials and initiate action through people against these officials

Involve and recognise 'honest' officials.

Citizens charters for every service

Helpline

Create a database of complaints received on the helpline and analyze them for a more focused campaigns

Publish booklets on "how to get certificates/registrations" that people need, and use the library network, student community, sanghas, community based organizations as well as the NGOs to disseminate this.

Using IT

Utilize the cybergram information kiosk for information on schemes, citizen's charters at gram sabha levels

Analysis of complaints received by the Lokayukta

Build a volunteer team

Identify some high visibility, low cost event, which will capture the imagination of the public and

Media

Talk-shows, Call in radio programs, TV skits

Action Items for RIM- Karnataka

1. **Proceedings: Nov 1st**
2. **Work on Action Plan: Oct 31st**
3. **Draft Action Plan: Nov 1st**
4. **Set up an E-group: Nov 1st**
5. **Feedback on Action Plan, by all : Nov 8th**
6. **Discussions with possible partners on Action Plan: Nov 11th to Nov 15th**
7. **District Level Meeting: PAC- Koramangala: Nov 22nd**
8. **Intervention Begins: Jan 1st**

The meeting ended with a vote of thanks to all participants for their valued inputs.

Anti-Corruption Consultation
Oct 27,2002
Venue: Indian Social Institute, Benson Town

Participant List

Name	Organization & Address	Designation
N.B. Nirmal	Fifth Pillar 20, Giriappa Road T. Nagar, Chennai –17; e-mail: exnora@vsnl.com	Founder
Prithvi R. Sharma	India Friends Association 2261, El. Nido Court Camarillo, CA- 93010 e-mail: billababu@aol.com	Gen Secretary
Manjita Pikle	D-3, Kudremukh Colony Koramangala, 2 nd Block Bangalore , 560 034	Architect
Surekha Sharma	India Friends Association 2261, El. Nido Court Camarillo, CA- 93010 e-mail: billababu@aol.com	Sevak
A.L. Rangarajan	RIM- Tamil Nadu A-1 Monisha Sriram Apts #9, Kulothuran Cross St. Chittalapakkam, Chennai- 64 e-mail: alrangarajan2001@eth.net	RIM Tamil Nadu Coordinator
Dr. Jayaprakash Narayan	LokSatta 401/408 Nirmal Towers, Dwarakapuri Colony, Punjagutta, Hyderabad-82 e-mail: loksatta@satyam.net.in	National Coordinator
Dr. P.V. Shenoi	Member, PAC Board 20-C, Ist Main Road RMV Extension, Stage 2, Block I, Bangalore –94 e-mail: Shenoipv@vsnl.com	
Jagdish Damania	605, RMV Clusters Phase 2 Devinagar, Bangalore –94	Volunteer
Prahlad	C.H. Cell, 367, Koramangala 1 st Block, Bangalore –34	Social Scientist
Ananda N.	Fevord-K, No.44, 2 nd Floor, New Bamboo Bazar Road Cantonment, Bangalore –51 e-mail: fevordk@vsnl.com	Executive Officer
Arvind Kejriwal	Parivartan, E-109, Pandavnagar, Delhi –92 parivartan_india@rediffmail.com	Volunteer

Name	Organization & Address	Designation
Samuel Paul	27, SBI colony Bangalore -24 e-mail: pacindia@vsnl.com	PAC
Dr. S Ajai kumar	IHDUA Mysore ajai@aol.com ajai@vsnl.com	Chairman
TK Ramkumar	Advocate 12, Pelathope, Mylapore Chennai-4 t.k.ram@vsnl.com	Advocate
Suchitra Rao	UNICEF-GOK-NGO Magadi child labour project, Bangalore svnarayan@mantraonline.com	
H Doraiswamy		
Vinay Baindur	No. 14, 2 nd Floor, 4 th Main Road, 12 th Cross Road, Vasanthnagar, Bangalore-52 civicblor@vsnl.com	
Ravi M.	RIM e-mail: ilp-india@eth.net	Volunteer
Sindhu Naik	RIM- Bangalore sindhunaik@eth.net	National co-ordinator
Dr. Sudarshan	RIM hsudarshan@vsnl.net	Convener
Subbu Vincent	India Together subbuvincent@yahoo.com	
P. Rajendra	No. 38, A.M. Road, Kalasipalayam Extn., Bangalore -2	Deputy Chief Editor Vijay Karnataka
Ramesh Ramanathan	Janaagraha 198, Nandidurg Road, Bangalore 560 046 janaagraha@vsnl.net ; proof@vsnl.net	

ಪ್ರಪತ್ರ ಸಂಖ್ಯೆ ೧ (ಫಿರ್ಯಾದು)
FORM No. I (COMPLAINT)

(೪(೧) ನೇ ನಿಯಮವನ್ನು ನೋಡಿ)
[See Rule 4 (1)]

ಕರ್ನಾಟಕದ ಲೋಕಾಯುಕ್ತ / ಉಪ-ಲೋಕಾಯುಕ್ತರ ಮುಂದೆ
Before the Lokayukta/Upa-Lokayukta for Karnataka

<p>1. ದೂರಿಗೆ ಸಂಬಂಧಪಟ್ಟ ಎಲ್ಲ ಪ್ರತಿ ವ್ಯವಹಾರಕ್ಕಾಗಿ ಫಿರ್ಯಾದಿಯ ಹೆಸರು ಮತ್ತು ವಿಳಾಸ ... Name and Address of the Complainant for all Correspondence in respect of the complaint ...</p>	
<p>2. ಯಾವ ಸಾರ್ವಜನಿಕ ನೌಕರನ ವಿರುದ್ಧ ದೂರು ನೀಡಲಾಗಿದೆಯೋ ಅವನ ಹೆಸರು ಮತ್ತು ವಿಳಾಸ ... Name and Address of the Public Servant complained against :</p>	
<p>3. ದೂರು ನೀಡಿರುವ ಕೃತ್ಯದ ಬಗ್ಗೆ ಸಂಕ್ಷಿಪ್ತ ವಿವರಗಳು (ಪ್ರಪತ್ರ II ರಲ್ಲಿರುವ ಫಿರ್ಯಾದಿಯ ಅಭಿಪ್ರಾಯವನ್ನು ಲಗತ್ತಿಸಬೇಕು)... Brief facts relating to the action complained of : (complainant's affidavit in the Form-II to be enclosed) ...</p>	
<p>4. ಫಿರ್ಯಾದಿ ಅಥವಾ ಯಾವ ವ್ಯಕ್ತಿಯ ಪರವಾಗಿ ಅವನು ಕೆಲಸ ಮಾಡುತ್ತಿರುವನೋ ಆ ವ್ಯಕ್ತಿಯು ಬಾಧಿತನಾಗಿದ್ದರೆ ತೊಂದರೆಯ ಸ್ವರೂಪವನ್ನು ನಿರ್ದಿಷ್ಟವಾಗಿ ತಿಳಿಸಬೇಕು : ... If the Complainant or the person for whom he is acting is aggrieved the nature of the grievance should be specifically mentioned :</p>	
<p>5. ಆಪಾದನೆಗಳ ಸಮರ್ಥನೆಯಲ್ಲಿ ಫಿರ್ಯಾದಿಯು ಪರಿಶೀಲಿಸಬೇಕೆಂದು ಅಪೇಕ್ಷಿಸುವ ಹೆಸರುಗಳು ಮತ್ತು ವಿಳಾಸಗಳು : ... Name and Addresses of the witnesses whom the Complainant desires to examine in support of the allegations :</p>	
<p>6. ಆಪಾದನೆಯ ಸಮರ್ಥನೆಯಲ್ಲಿ ಫಿರ್ಯಾದಿಯು ಅವಲಂಬಿಸಿರುವ ದಸ್ತಾವೇಜುಗಳ ವಿವರಗಳು : ... Particulars of the documents relied up on by the Complainant in support of the allegation :</p>	
<p>7. ಆಧಾರವಾಗಿರುವ ದಸ್ತಾವೇಜುಗಳು ಅಥವಾ ಅವುಗಳ ಯಥಾ ಪ್ರತಿಗಳು ಫಿರ್ಯಾದಿಯ ಬಳಿ ಇದ್ದರೆ ಅವುಗಳನ್ನು ಲಗತ್ತಿಸಬೇಕು ಮತ್ತು ಅವುಗಳ ವಿವರಗಳನ್ನು ಒದಗಿಸಬೇಕು : ... If the documents relied upon or their true copies are available with the Complainant they should be enclosed and details thereof should be furnished :</p>	

<p>8. ಆಧಾರವಾಗಿರುವ ದಸ್ತಾವೇಜುಗಳು ಫಿರ್ಯಾದಿಯ ಅಧಿಕಾರದಲ್ಲಿಲ್ಲದಿದ್ದರೆ ಅಥವಾ ಅವನು ಅವುಗಳನ್ನು ಹಾಜರುಪಡಿಸುವುದು ಸಾಧ್ಯವಿಲ್ಲದಿದ್ದರೆ, ಅವುಗಳನ್ನು ಪಡೆಯಬಹುದಾದ ಕಛೇರಿ ಅಥವಾ ಇತರ ಸ್ಥಳಗಳು ಅಥವಾ ವ್ಯಕ್ತಿಯ ಬಗ್ಗೆ ನಿರ್ದಿಷ್ಟವಾಗಿ ತಿಳಿಸಬೇಕು ...</p> <p>If the documents relied upon are not in the custody of or cannot be produced by the Complainant, the office or other places or individual from whom they may be secured should be specified ...</p>	
<p>9. 3ನೇ ಅಂಕದಲ್ಲಿ ತಿಳಿಸಲಾಗಿರುವ ಸಾರ್ವಜನಿಕ ನೌಕರನ ವಿರುದ್ಧ ಈಗ ದೂರು ನೀಡಲಾಗಿರುವ ಕೃತ್ಯದ ಸಂಬಂಧದಲ್ಲಿ ಫಿರ್ಯಾದಿಯು ಈ ಮುಂಚೆಯೇ ತನಗಾದ ತೊಂದರೆಯ ಪರಿಹಾರಕ್ಕಾಗಿ ಲೋಕಾಯುಕ್ತ ಅಥವಾ ಉಪ-ಲೋಕಾಯುಕ್ತ ಅಥವಾ ಯಾವುದೇ ಇತರ ಪ್ರಾಧಿಕಾರಕ್ಕೆ ಫಿರ್ಯಾದು ಸಲ್ಲಿಸಿದ್ದನೇ ? (ಹಿಂದಿನ ದೂರಿನ ಫಲಿತಾಂಶದೊಂದಿಗೆ ವಿವರಗಳನ್ನೂ ಒದಗಿಸಬೇಕು) ...</p> <p>Did the complainant make a complaint previously to Lokayukta or the Upa-Lokayukta or any other authority for redressal of his grievance. In respect of the action now Complained of against the public servant mentioned in column (3). (particulars to be furnished together with the result of the previous Complaint.) ...</p>	
<p>10. ಅಭಿಪ್ರಾಯಗಳು, ಏನಾದರೂ ಇದ್ದರೆ ... Remarks, if any ...</p>	

ಟಿಪ್ಪಣಿ : ಕಛೇರಿಯ ಬಳಕೆಗಾಗಿ ಅಭಿವಿಜ್ಞಾನಗಳು ಮತ್ತು ದಸ್ತಾವೇಜುಗಳ ಪ್ರತಿಗಳನ್ನು ದ್ವಿಪ್ರತಿಯಲ್ಲಿ ಮತ್ತು ಎಷ್ಟು ಜನ ಸಾರ್ವಜನಿಕ ನೌಕರರ ವಿರುದ್ಧ ದೂರು ನೀಡಲಾಗಿದೆಯೋ ಅಷ್ಟು ಜೊತೆ (ಸೆಟ್ಟು) ಗಳಲ್ಲಿ ಲಗತ್ತಿಸತಕ್ಕದ್ದು.

NOTE : Copies of affidavits and documents shall be enclosed in duplicate for office use and in as many sets as there are public servants complained against.

ಸ್ಥಳ _____
Place

ದಿನಾಂಕ _____
Date

ಫಿರ್ಯಾದಿಯ ಸಹಿ ಅಥವಾ
ಹೆಬ್ಬೆಟ್ಟಿನ ಗುರುತು

Signature or the thumb mark
of the Complainant.

ಪ್ರಪತ್ರ ಸಂಖ್ಯೆ-೨ (ಫಿರ್ಯಾದಿಯ ಅಫಿಡವಿಟ್)
FORM No. II (COMPLAINANT'S AFFIDAVIT)

[೪ (೧)ನೇ ನಿಯಮವನ್ನು ನೋಡಿ]

(see Rule 4 (1))

ಕರ್ನಾಟಕ ಸರ್ಕಾರದ ಲೋಕಾಯುಕ್ತ/ಉಪ-ಲೋಕಾಯುಕ್ತರ ಮುಂದೆ

BEFORE THE LOKAYUKTA/UPA-LOKAYUKTA OF KARNATAKA

ಸದ್ಯದಲ್ಲಿ _____ ಜಿಲ್ಲೆಯ _____
ತಾಲ್ಲೂಕಿನಲ್ಲಿ ವಾಸಿಸುತ್ತಿದ್ದು _____ ಜಿಲ್ಲೆಯ _____
ತಾಲ್ಲೂಕಿನ ನಿವಾಸಿಯಾಗಿರುವ _____ ನಿವಾಸಿಯಾಗಿರುವ _____
ಉದ್ಯೋಗದಲ್ಲಿರುವ _____ ವರ್ಷದ ಶ್ರೀ _____
ಅವರ ಮಗನಾದ _____ ಎಂಬ ನಾನು ಈ ಮುಂದಿನದನ್ನು ಅಂದರೆ :—

I _____ son of Shri _____
aged _____ years, profession _____ resident of _____
Taluk _____ District _____ at present at _____
Taluk _____ District _____ do hereby solemnly affirm and state as
follows :—

೧. ಈ ಮೊಕದ್ದಮೆಯಲ್ಲಿ ನಾನು ಫಿರ್ಯಾದಿಯಾಗಿದ್ದೇನೆ.

1. That I am the Complainant in this case.

೨. ಶ್ರೀ/ಶ್ರೀಮತಿ _____ ಅವರ ವಿರುದ್ಧ ಆರೋಪವನ್ನು ಹೊರಿಸಿ ಇದಕ್ಕೆ ಒಂದು
ದೂರನ್ನು ಲಗತ್ತಿಸಿದ್ದೇನೆ, ನನ್ನ ದೂರಿನ ಒಳಾಂಶಗಳನ್ನು ಈ ಅಫಿಡವಿಟಿನ ಮುಖ್ಯ ಭಾಗವನ್ನಾಗಿ ಓದಿಕೊಳ್ಳಬಹುದು.

2. I have enclosed hereto a complaint making allegations against Sri/Smt. _____

_____ The contents of my complaint may be read as part and parcel
of this affidavit.

೩. ಈ ದೂರು ಅರ್ಜಿಯ ವಿವರಣೆಯನ್ನು ನಾನು ಓದಿದ್ದೇನೆ/ನನಗೆ ಓದಿ ಹೇಳಲಾಗಿದೆ ಮತ್ತು ನಾನು ಅದನ್ನು ಅರ್ಥ ಮಾಡಿಕೊಂಡಿದ್ದೇನೆ
ಮತ್ತು ನನಗೆ ತಿಳಿದಿರುವಷ್ಟರ ಮಟ್ಟಿಗೆ ನನಗೆ ದೊರೆತ ಮಾಹಿತಿ ಮತ್ತು ಸಂಹಿತೆಯ ಆಧಾರದ ಮೇಲೆ ಅವು ಸತ್ಯವೆಂದು ನಾನು ಘೋಷಿಸಿ
ದೃಢೀಕರಿಸುತ್ತೇನೆ.

...ಎಂದು ಈ ಮೂಲಕ ಶ್ರದ್ಧಾಪೂರ್ವಕವಾಗಿ ಪ್ರತಿಜ್ಞೆ ಮಾಡುತ್ತೇನೆ.

3. That the statements of this complaint petition have been read by/read over to me and
understood by me and that I declare and affirm that they are true to the best of my knowledge
information and belief.

ದಿನಾಂಕ _____
Dated _____

ಹೇಳಿಕೆದಾರನ ಸಹಿ
Signature of the Deponent

ಸ್ಥಳದಲ್ಲಿ _____ ದಿನಾಂಕದಲ್ಲಿ _____
ಇದನ್ನು ನನ್ನ ಮುಂದೆ ಶಪಥಪೂರ್ವಕವಾಗಿ ದೃಢೀಕರಿಸಲಾಗಿದೆ.

_____ solemnly affirmed before me this _____
day of _____ 199 _____ at _____

ಸಹಿ
Signature

ಪ್ರಪತ್ರ ಸಂಖ್ಯೆ ೧ (ಫಿರ್ಯಾದು)
FORM No. I (COMPLAINT)

(೪(೧) ನೇ ನಿಯಮವನ್ನು ನೋಡಿ)
[See Rule 4 (1)]

ಕರ್ನಾಟಕದ ಲೋಕಾಯುಕ್ತ / ಉಪ-ಲೋಕಾಯುಕ್ತರ ಮುಂದೆ
Before the Lokayukta/Upa-Lokayukta for Karnataka

<p>1. ದೂರಿಗೆ ಸಂಬಂಧಪಟ್ಟ ಎಲ್ಲ ಪತ್ರ ವ್ಯವಹಾರಕ್ಕಾಗಿ ಫಿರ್ಯಾದಿಯ ಹೆಸರು ಮತ್ತು ವಿಳಾಸ ... Name and Address of the Complainant for all Correspondence in respect of the complaint ...</p>	
<p>2. ಯಾವ ಸಾರ್ವಜನಿಕ ನೌಕರನ ವಿರುದ್ಧ ದೂರು ನೀಡಲಾಗಿದೆಯೋ ಅವನ ಹೆಸರು ಮತ್ತು ವಿಳಾಸ ... Name and Address of the Public Servant complained against : ...</p>	
<p>3. ದೂರು ನೀಡಿರುವ ಕೃತ್ಯದ ಬಗ್ಗೆ ಸಂಕ್ಷಿಪ್ತ ವಿವರಗಳು (ಪ್ರಪತ್ರ II ರಲ್ಲಿರುವ ಫಿರ್ಯಾದಿಯ ಅಪಿಡವಿಟ್ಟನ್ನು ಲಗತ್ತಿಸಬೇಕು)... Brief facts relating to the action complained of : (complainant's affidavit in the Form-II to be enclosed) ...</p>	
<p>4. ಫಿರ್ಯಾದಿ ಅಥವಾ ಯಾವ ವ್ಯಕ್ತಿಯ ಪರವಾಗಿ ಅವನು ಕೆಲಸ ಮಾಡುತ್ತಿರುವನೋ ಆ ವ್ಯಕ್ತಿಯು ಬಾಧಿತನಾಗಿದ್ದರೆ ತೊಂದರೆಯ ಸ್ವರೂಪವನ್ನು ನಿರ್ದಿಷ್ಟವಾಗಿ ತಿಳಿಸಬೇಕು : ... If the Complainant or the person for whom he is acting is aggrieved the nature of the grievance should be specifically mentioned :</p>	
<p>5. ಆಪಾದನೆಗಳ ಸಮರ್ಥನೆಯಲ್ಲಿ ಫಿರ್ಯಾದಿಯು ಪರಿಶೀಲಿಸಬೇಕೆಂದು ಅಪೇಕ್ಷಿಸುವ ಹೆಸರುಗಳು ಮತ್ತು ವಿಳಾಸಗಳು : ... Name and Addresses of the witnesses whom the Complainant desires to examine in support of the allegations : ...</p>	
<p>6. ಆಪಾದನೆಯ ಸಮರ್ಥನೆಯಲ್ಲಿ ಫಿರ್ಯಾದಿಯು ಅವಲಂಬಿಸಿರುವ ದಸ್ತಾವೇಜುಗಳ ವಿವರಗಳು : ... Particulars of the documents relied up on by the Complainant in support of the allegation : ...</p>	
<p>7. ಆಧಾರವಾಗಿರುವ ದಸ್ತಾವೇಜುಗಳು ಅಥವಾ ಅವುಗಳ ಯಥಾ ಪ್ರತಿಗಳು ಫಿರ್ಯಾದಿಯ ಬಳಿ ಇದ್ದರೆ ಅವುಗಳನ್ನು ಲಗತ್ತಿಸಬೇಕು ಮತ್ತು ಅವುಗಳ ವಿವರಗಳನ್ನು ಒದಗಿಸಬೇಕು : ... If the documents relied upon or their true copies are available with the Complainant they should be enclosed and details thereof should be furnished : ...</p>	

<p>8. ಆಧಾರವಾಗಿರುವ ದಸ್ತಾವೇಜುಗಳು ಫಿರ್ಯಾದಿಯ ಅಭಿರಕ್ಷೆಯಲ್ಲಿಲ್ಲದಿದ್ದರೆ ಅಥವಾ ಅವನು ಅವುಗಳನ್ನು ಹಾಜರುಪಡಿಸುವುದು ಸಾಧ್ಯವಿಲ್ಲದಿದ್ದರೆ, ಅವುಗಳನ್ನು ಪಡೆಯಬಹುದಾದ ಕಛೇರಿ ಅಥವಾ ಇತರ ಸ್ಥಳಗಳು ಅಥವಾ ವ್ಯಕ್ತಿಯ ಬಗ್ಗೆ ನಿರ್ದಿಷ್ಟವಾಗಿ ತಿಳಿಸಬೇಕು ...</p> <p>If the documents relied upon are not in the custody of or cannot be produced by the Complainant, the office or other places or individual from whom they may be secured should be specified ...</p>	
<p>9. 3ನೇ ಅಂಕಣದಲ್ಲಿ ತಿಳಿಸಲಾಗಿರುವ ಸಾರ್ವಜನಿಕ ನೌಕರನ ವಿರುದ್ಧ ಈಗ ದೂರು ನೀಡಲಾಗಿರುವ ಕೃತ್ಯದ ಸಂಬಂಧದಲ್ಲಿ ಫಿರ್ಯಾದಿಯು ಈ ಮುಂಚೆಯೇ ತನಗಾದ ತೊಂದರೆಯ ಪರಿಹಾರಕ್ಕಾಗಿ ಲೋಕಾಯುಕ್ತ ಅಥವಾ ಉಪ-ಲೋಕಾಯುಕ್ತ ಅಥವಾ ಯಾವುದೇ ಇತರ ಪ್ರಾಧಿಕಾರಕ್ಕೆ ಫಿರ್ಯಾದು ಸಲ್ಲಿಸಿದ್ದನೇ ? (ಹಿಂದಿನ ದೂರಿನ ಫಲಿತಾಂಶದೊಂದಿಗೆ ವಿವರಗಳನ್ನೂ ಒದಗಿಸಬೇಕು) ...</p> <p>Did the complainant make a complaint previously to Lokayukta or the Upa-Lokayukta or any other authority for redressal of his grievance, In respect of the action now Complained of against the public servant mentioned in column (3). (particulars to be furnished together with the result of the previous Complaint.) ...</p>	
<p>10. ಅಭಿಪ್ರಾಯಗಳು, ಏನಾದರೂ ಇದ್ದರೆ ... Remarks, if any ...</p>	

ಟಿಪ್ಪಣಿ : ಕಛೇರಿಯ ಬಳಕೆಗಾಗಿ ಅಫಿಡವಿಟ್‌ಗಳು ಮತ್ತು ದಸ್ತಾವೇಜುಗಳ ಪ್ರತಿಗಳನ್ನು ದ್ವಿಪ್ರತಿಯಲ್ಲಿ ಮತ್ತು ಎಷ್ಟು ಜನ ಸಾರ್ವಜನಿಕ ನೌಕರರ ವಿರುದ್ಧ ದೂರು ನೀಡಲಾಗಿದೆಯೋ ಅಷ್ಟು ಜೊತೆ (ಸೆಟ್ಟು) ಗಳಲ್ಲಿ ಲಗತ್ತಿಸತಕ್ಕದ್ದು.

NOTE : Copies of affidavits and documents shall be enclosed in duplicate for office use and in as many sets as there are public servants complained against.

ಸ್ಥಳ _____
Place

ದಿನಾಂಕ _____
Date

ಫಿರ್ಯಾದಿಯ ಸಹಿ ಅಥವಾ
ಹೆಬ್ಬೆಟ್ಟಿನ ಗುರುತು
Signature or the thumb mark
of the Complainant.

ಪ್ರಪತ್ರ ಸಂಖ್ಯೆ-೨ (ಫಿರ್ಯಾದಿಯ ಅಫಿಡವಿಟ್)
FORM No. II (COMPLAINANT'S AFFIDAVIT)

[೪ (೧)ನೇ ನಿಯಮವನ್ನು ನೋಡಿ]

(see Rule 4 (1))

ಕರ್ನಾಟಕ ಸರ್ಕಾರದ ಲೋಕಾಯುಕ್ತ/ಉಪ-ಲೋಕಾಯುಕ್ತರ ಮುಂದೆ

BEFORE THE LOKAYUKTA/UPA-LOKAYUKTA OF KARNATAKA

ಸದ್ಯದಲ್ಲಿ _____ ಜಿಲ್ಲೆಯ _____
ತಾಲ್ಲೂಕಿನಲ್ಲಿ ವಾಸಿಸುತ್ತಿದ್ದು _____ ಜಿಲ್ಲೆಯ _____
ತಾಲ್ಲೂಕಿನ ನಿವಾಸಿಯಾಗಿರುವ _____ ನಿವಾಸಿಯಾಗಿರುವ _____
ಉದ್ಯೋಗದಲ್ಲಿರುವ _____ ವರ್ಷದ ಶ್ರೀ _____
ಅವರ ಮಗನಾದ _____ ಎಂಬ ನಾನು ಈ ಮುಂದಿನದನ್ನು ಅಂದರೆ :—

I _____ son of Shri _____
aged _____ years, profession _____ resident of _____
Taluk _____ District _____ at present at _____
Taluk _____ District _____ do hereby solemnly affirm and state as follows :—

೧. ಈ ಮೊಕದ್ದಮೆಯಲ್ಲಿ ನಾನು ಫಿರ್ಯಾದಿಯಾಗಿದ್ದೇನೆ.

1. That I am the Complainant in this case.

೨. ಶ್ರೀ/ಶ್ರೀಮತಿ _____ ಅವರ ವಿರುದ್ಧ ಆರೋಪವನ್ನು ಹೊರಿಸಿ ಇದಕ್ಕೆ ಒಂದು ದೂರನ್ನು ಲಗತ್ತಿಸಿದ್ದೇನೆ, ನನ್ನ ದೂರಿನ ಒಳಾಂಶಗಳನ್ನು ಈ ಅಫಿಡವಿಟಿನ ಮುಖ್ಯ ಭಾಗವನ್ನಾಗಿ ಓದಿಕೊಳ್ಳಬಹುದು.

2. I have enclosed hereto a complaint making allegations against Sri/Smt. _____

_____ The contents of my complaint may be read as part and parcel of this affidavit.

೩. ಈ ದೂರು ಅರ್ಜಿಯ ವಿವರಣೆಯನ್ನು ನಾನು ಓದಿದ್ದೇನೆ/ನನಗೆ ಓದಿ ಹೇಳಲಾಗಿದೆ ಮತ್ತು ನಾನು ಅದನ್ನು ಅರ್ಥ ಮಾಡಿಕೊಂಡಿದ್ದೇನೆ ಮತ್ತು ನನಗೆ ತಿಳಿದಿರುವಷ್ಟರ ಮಟ್ಟಿಗೆ ನನಗೆ ದೊರೆತ ಮಾಹಿತಿ ಮತ್ತು ಸಂಹಿತೆಯ ಆಧಾರದ ಮೇಲೆ ಅವು ಸತ್ಯವೆಂದು ನಾನು ಘೋಷಿಸಿ ದೃಢೀಕರಿಸುತ್ತೇನೆ.

...ಎಂದು ಈ ಮೂಲಕ ಶ್ರದ್ಧಾಪೂರ್ವಕವಾಗಿ ಪ್ರತಿಜ್ಞೆ ಮಾಡುತ್ತೇನೆ.

3. That the statements of this complaint petition have been read by/read over to me and understood by me and that I declare and affirm that they are true to the best of my knowledge information and belief.

ದಿನಾಂಕ _____
Dated _____

ಹೇಳಿಕೆದಾರನ ಸಹಿ
Signature of the Deponent

_____ ಸ್ಥಳದಲ್ಲಿ _____ ದಿನಾಂಕದಲ್ಲಿ _____
ಇದನ್ನು ನನ್ನ ಮುಂದೆ ಶಪಥಪೂರ್ವಕವಾಗಿ ದೃಢೀಕರಿಸಲಾಗಿದೆ.

_____ solemnly affirmed before me this _____
day of _____ 199 _____ at _____

ಸಹಿ
Signature

GEN-1.



KOGAN PAGE

Dr. Kallath

Job Hunting after University or College

JAN PERRETT

Published in Association with



DE MONTFORT
UNIVERSITY

Job hunting after university or college

The Transferable and Learning Skills Series

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Job hunting after university or college

CVs and application forms

Being interviewed

Second interviews

Jan Perrett



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66 Part A: CVs and application forms

66 Introduction

- 72 This part aims to provide an introduction to the basics of written applications, to enable students to make the most effective use of the three main marketing tools: the
- 96 application form, the curriculum vitae and the covering letter. It will also address the
- 99 underlying need for self-awareness and job analysis.
- 101 If you have not completed graduate application forms before or if this is your first attempt at a CV, *don't worry* – this is a skill which can be learned and, once learned,
- 102 will be useful to you throughout your future career.

Objectives

At the end of the exercises in Part A, you should be able to:

- recognise and understand the different usages of the application form and curriculum vitae;
- apply the principles of self-assessment and job assessment to any application;
- design and organise a good curriculum vitae and understand the benefits of updating it;
- complete a standard application form;
- compose an appropriate covering letter.

This book is designed to enable you to work at your own pace and, although each part is written as a complete unit, you may select the sections or exercises most appropriate for you at any given time.

Throughout Part A you will be presented with information about the process of making applications and will be questioned to check your understanding. You will perform exercises as you go through the text, including compiling a practice CV, which will form the basis of your own CV for present use and for future reference.

Good luck!

1 Self-marketing

Since you've picked up this book, I assume you're thinking of making an application for something. Whether it's a job or a postgraduate course, your objective is the same – through that application you will get what you want! But before you put pen to paper, there are some important things to think about.

Application = marketing

So what are we marketing here? Right – it's you. You are selling yourself and if you don't want to end up in the end-of-season bargain basement, you have to use a strategy.

Consider the following assumptions:

- I have qualifications from my university/college, therefore employers know my capabilities.
- I have spent several years in higher education, so I deserve a good job.
- If I give details of my courses and qualifications, that's enough.
- Selection is so hit-and-miss, there's no point trying to tailor my application.
- Every accountancy job is the same, so I can send the same standard form to loads of firms. I haven't got time in my final year to spend hours on applications.

You probably feel that several of these statements come close to the truth; you may even agree wholeheartedly with some of them. But they skirt around the main issue, which is that getting a job is your responsibility – very rarely can anyone do it for you (unless you're very well connected! *Giz a job!*). So it's in your interests to look seriously at the two most important aspects of preparing to sell yourself:

- *self-assessment*
- *job analysis*

This section of the book will get you started and tell you where to go to get further help.

Self-assessment

The instant reaction from most people to this subject is 'Oh no, not those questions again like "What are you good at?" or "Where do you see yourself in 10 years' time?" and the endless questionnaires which give a picture of your personality and values in just 20 minutes.'

This cynical response to self-assessment can be due to the way it is presented. Often it isn't linked to anything else, so you come away thinking – 'I'm a "social" person who values independence, variety and status (join the club!) – so what?' Or, because the

whole idea of analysing your skills, interests, values and personality is so alien to our natural reserve (you must never talk about yourself), you push it away with distrust.

However, selectors do need to see some glimpses of your abilities and personal qualities in your application. How can you answer a question like this, from the Marks & Spencer form, without giving some thought to your personality and behaviour?

'Give an example of where others have disagreed with your views (or you with theirs). How did you deal with this and what was the result?'

No? You're not interested in retail management anyway are you? (Coward!) Well, what about this one from a recent Lloyds bank form?

'What have been the most important events in your life so far? Explain what happened and why they are of significance.'

So you don't feel you're suited to finance either! You can't keep running away from these questions. Wherever you turn, you will find a similar one. Whatever you feel about the employers who use these questions, you've still got to fill in the forms, so try to be positive about it.

One way of being positive is to understand what the selector is looking for. In most cases they are not judging your answer on the facts, but rather on the way you use the facts to show skills and personal qualities. So you can see that knowing yourself is the only way you can come up with the goods. Well, you could take on another persona (maybe your best friend's), but it would be very difficult to sustain this through an application form, aptitude tests and two interviews! Anyway, you're not that bad, are you?

Skills and personal qualities

Most selectors have a clear idea of the skills needed for a job and also a checklist of desirable personal qualities. Some of these lists have been written down and you can find examples in your Careers Advisory Service (CAS) (see Chapter 4, Bibliography, page 37).



Activity 1.1

Let's take a typical graduate 'management' position – don't worry about the details. What skills and personal qualities do you think you need to present?

I bet you had 'communication skills' – everybody gets that one!

If you struggled with this exercise, it's probably because you haven't got the vocabulary yet. You may know what you're good at, or what your strengths are, but not be able to give them a 'name'.

Have a look at this typical list and cross check it with your own list. Don't assume that this is an exhaustive list and don't assume that you have to have all these skills – that would really make a nonsense out of the selection process.

- a Communication skills** – the ability to communicate both verbally and in writing. Being able to express ideas in a clear, positive and appropriate way.
- b Problem solving** – a capacity for analytical thought and the application of this process to problems. Evidence of the identification of key issues and priorities.
- c Leadership** – the effective organisation of people and events. This will include some evidence of developing and channelling the ideas and potential of others.
- d Flexibility** – the ability to adapt to changing circumstances. A proactive approach may be sought, which also checks out *initiative* and *motivation*.
- e Planning and organisation** – the ability to produce logical action plans and to follow them through with appropriate strategies to a successful outcome.
- f Team working** – the ability to work effectively with colleagues towards the accomplishment of a task.
- g Achievement** – although not strictly a skill, evidence of the ability to achieve is an indication of management potential.
- h Networking** – the ability and confidence to seek out named contacts and to use them as a source of personal introduction to further contacts.

There are many more of these skills, and when we look at job analysis you will learn how to seek them out. The most important thing to remember is that you will have to give evidence of situations, work/learning methods, experiences, etc which helped you to develop those skills, so start to think about yourself, what you've done and what you've got to offer *now*!



Activity 1.2

Let's take two of these skills and see if you can start to think of evidence. Team working is a popular one with employers – it is rare that you would work totally

alone in any job. Write down now what activities or experiences would demonstrate your ability to work as an effective team member.

How did you get on with that? Did it occur to you to include seminars and projects, as well as sport? Did you get a spread of academic and extra-curricular activities? Can you specify what your role was in the team – leader, coordinator, facilitator, scribe, etc?

Now, *problem-solving*. See what you can make of that...

More difficult? That may be because you're interpreting 'problem' in a very narrow way. Think about an employer's requirement and look at the definition again. The emphasis is on your approach – how you face and overcome difficulties and how you develop strategies for coping. For instance, the need to change your project because of unforeseen circumstances, or handling a tricky situation with your landlord – these would be acceptable, it doesn't have to be a major disaster that you recall.

Let's try this out on an application form question. Look at that second one again and see if you can draft an answer, using some of the skills vocabulary.

'What have been the most important events in your life so far? Explain what happened and why they are of significance.'

How was that? Read it through from the employer's point of view. What does it say about you? Is it a purely narrative account with facts and figures? If so, you're missing a great opportunity. Or does it *evaluate* the events – giving reasons for their significance in terms of your personal development or subsequent actions? Does it give clues about your ability to deal with situations and your response to challenge? If not, have another attempt.

What about this one?

'List two or three words which a friend may use to describe you. Can you give examples of actual situations which would have merited this description?'

Well done! You're getting the hang of this now, aren't you?

Job analysis

Knowing what you've got to offer is all well and good, but you also need to take into account the other side of the equation – what does the job require?

With most advertised jobs you get some form of job description. This can vary from a glossy brochure with lots of profiles of young graduates to a paragraph in a newspaper. Whatever details you have, make the most of them, by analysing the content. Selectors want the best people, so it's in their interest to give enough information to attract the best people. Sometimes it's easy to find out all you want to know, but sometimes you need to read between the lines.

Let's take an example. This excerpt from the graduate brochure of a leading retailer is explicit:

'Drive and determination, plus resilience and stamina are the basic requirements needed to succeed on this scheme. As you will be running your own department after only six months, you will also need to demonstrate strong leadership qualities and excellent interpersonal skills.'

No excuse, here, for failing to target your application. Obviously you need to give evidence of the ownership of these skills and also to find more explicit detail about the tasks of the job – but that's usually available in the brochure.

Another example, this time for marketing with an international consumer goods business:

'What we look for in you: intellectual rigour, analytical ability, commitment, determination, enthusiasm, debating skills and flexibility.'

Rather a tall order – but at least you're prepared. So when you're filling in this company's application form and they ask you about suitability for the job, or about achievements, you can refer to their list of qualities and make your response accordingly.

If you're saying to yourself – 'That's easy. With that sort of list I can use the words and make my statements fit in with what they want, even if I haven't got all the qualities' – beware. Recruitment is a two-way process – the recruiter wants the right person and you want a job – but *the right job*. So be honest with yourself when you're reading these job descriptions. Is it really for you? Will you be able to meet those expectations? Will you want to work for a company which has those expectations? If you are doubtful, get more information or talk to a careers adviser. If the answer is no, then forget it, you'll only have to go through all this again next year, when you eventually realise your mistake and leave.

Sometimes you don't get the full picture from a job description and you have to work harder to draw out the qualities. Let's look at the profile approach favoured by some recruiters.

'I'm now with Our Price Videos in London, and it is very different from

WH Smith Retail. It's a small but rapidly growing business. There are very few ground rules and almost no hierarchy – it was the MD who taught me to use the computer!

'Communication is very important in this job. I need to know what is happening in the video business. I talk to the buyers, but I've also developed my own contacts with the video suppliers who I speak to practically every day. If there is a new title or range to promote I discuss with the suppliers how we are going to do it and agree a charge. I then have to brief a design agency on exactly what we want for the advertising display. They can come back to me with some rough designs from which I select one.'

'Decisions have to be made quickly in this business and because it's so small and new you have to be a real entrepreneur, prepared to do everything yourself. I wouldn't recommend it to everyone, but it certainly suits me.'



Activity 1.3

Write down the skills/personal qualities required of this last job.

Reading between the lines, are there other things you can say?

I hope that this has given you an insight into the importance of reading job descriptions with an attentive eye. Don't miss the implied qualities, or the suggested ethos of a company. It may make all the difference to your application.



Activity 1.3 – solution

Here's my list. Compare it with your own.

- a Communication skills – oral and written.
- b Team work and the ability to mix at all levels.
- c Networking.
- d Liaison skills.
- e Taking initiative and working independently.
- f Planning and organisation.
- g Decision making including sound judgement.
- h Entrepreneurial skills (encompasses many of the above).
- i Flexibility.
- j Rapid assimilation of information.

And implied – the style and words of the profile:

- k Commitment (probably involves irregular hours).
- l Outgoing personality.
- m Capacity to thrive on pressure.
- n Interest in product, not just the job.

You may very well have got different qualities or a longer list – whatever you managed to glean, well done – this is an important stage in tailoring your application. You can apply this method to any job description, short or long, and come up with extra information to give you an edge over the other applicants.

Before we go on to look at the process of writing applications, let me restate the importance of the exercises you've just done.

Looking at yourself and looking at the job are essential before you put pen to paper.



Activity 1.4

Summarise what you've learned from these exercises.



Activity 1.5

Now note down any further action you need to take, eg look at self-assessment material at the CAS, or use *Prospect* (see Chapter 4, Bibliography).

We are now going to move on to the practicalities of written applications, starting with the *curriculum vitae*. So maybe now is a good time to have a break and return refreshed and ready for the fray!

2 The curriculum vitae

The term 'curriculum vitae' means 'the course of life', but this should obviously not be taken too literally. Employers are generally not interested in events before the age of 16 unless you were in the child prodigy league! Rather you should look at a CV as a reflection of your adult educational and work career and, by implication, a dynamic device. I know what you're thinking, *Yes, that's me – dynamic!*, but actually I mean dynamic in the sense of moving/changing/developing, not static. This may be the first CV you've ever written, but it won't be the last. You won't be able to take it out of your file in five years' time, dust it down and send it for that internal promotion you've just heard about. So, as we look at the basic components and structure of a CV, I'll remind you constantly about updating and reviewing it, so that it always does you justice.

A note, here, about the relationship between the CV and the application form, which differ from one another in purpose and usage. Both are marketing tools and you will be presenting the same kind of information on each, but whereas in your CV you have a great deal of choice over content and presentation, with a form you must work within given parameters and still sell yourself effectively. I deal with the CV first, since you will have to work through some very basic concepts in order to design the best possible CV for you, and this will help you to avoid the pitfall of rushing at an application form without thorough preparation.

The basic sections



Activity 2.1

I expect you have an idea of what should go into a CV. Note down the sections you would include (just the headings, not the details).

As we go through the main sections, you can check whether you included them in your list and also whether you had additional sections (you'll need to look carefully at the checklist of 'optional extras').

Another thing to bear in mind when you're writing a CV is that you should have a *reason* for everything you include. This is not like an application form, where the selector calls the tune; this is *your* marketing tool: *use it well*.

Personal details

What are you going to include in this? Have a look at these possibilities, consider their relevance and tick one box per entry.

(1 = Essential; 2 = Not sure how important; 3 = Unnecessary)

	1	2	3
surname	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
first name	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
other names	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
title (eg Mr, Ms, Dr)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
marital status	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
nationality	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
religion	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
home address	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
term address	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
telephone number	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
age	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
date of birth	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
place of birth	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
maiden name (if appropriate)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
disabilities	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
driving licence	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
father's occupation	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
dependants	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
geographical mobility	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>



Activity 2.1 – solution

That's quite a list, isn't it? How many of them did you think were essential? The following would be generally regarded as essential:

- surname
- first name
- home and term address
- telephone number
- date of birth (probably).

The rest is optional or, in some cases, irrelevant. If you think that your nationality is important, especially if you are an international student who would need a work permit, then include it. Equally if you would argue with me that marital status, and possibly even dependants, conveys messages of stability, maturity, etc, that's your decision.

Certain things on that list are important but would be better put elsewhere. *Driving licence* is not really a personal detail, and would be better under

additional information. Any mention of physical disability needs sensible handling – give it the most appropriate place. Do you need it in personal details, or can you make a positive statement about it elsewhere on the CV? This would be particularly important if you see your 'coping' as an achievement or a difficulty overcome. Then you could incorporate it into details of education, work experience or leisure activities or even under additional information. Are you getting the message?



Activity 2.2

Certain personal details are essential. List them now.

Other details can be added at your discretion. Always ask yourself why you're adding them and whether they are relevant.

You should now be able to complete the personal details of your CV. Turn to the CV headings on page 31 and do that exercise now. Don't worry about presentation, we'll get to that later.

Education

Selectors are always interested in your education and exam results as an undergraduate or postgraduate, so it's important to present them in the most positive light. Remember that as you progress in your career the detail of your academic courses becomes much less significant as it is overtaken by work experience. However, getting the information together now will save you lots of panicked phone calls home in the future, demanding your O-level/GCSE certificates. So start searching now.

'How far back should I go?'

As a fresh graduate or college leaver, you'll still need to mention O-levels/GCSEs and A-levels, as well as your course. If you're studying on a postgraduate course, you can afford to ignore the O-levels, or at least condense them dramatically. 'What about BTec, how on earth can I condense that list of subjects?' many of you will be saying. The answer is, you can't. Give the main detail in the body of the CV and then, if you feel it's necessary, attach a photocopy of your results certificate.

'What about me – I'm a mature student?'

I agree that it may seem silly to be presenting exams which you took 15–20 years ago, but you probably did some more recent study before coming to university, eg A-levels, Access or OU, and these will compensate for any previous gaps or failures. Remember, also, that vocational qualifications, eg City & Guilds or SRN, should not

be overlooked, as they show what you have already achieved. When you're considering what to include in this section, look at it from the selector's point of view – recent events will normally be of greater interest. Your past educational training may be fascinating to you, it may represent your 'roots', but does it need to claim more space, or even as much space as your degree?

'What about my failed A-level Greek?'

How important is the subject to your application? Will the selector be pleased that you have studied the subject even without a pass grade? If so, then include it: 'studied Greek to A-level standard'. Yes, I know – anybody with any sense will know that you failed it! But it's a lot more positive than saying 'A-level Greek grade F'. If the subject is not important, or if you retold it the following year and passed, then don't include the failure.



Activity 2.3

Write down what you will include in the Education section of your CV, and make a note of any questions. Next time you look at the CV headings you'll probably know the answer, but if your query is very individual you may need to consult a tutor or a careers adviser.



Activity 2.4

Before I say anything about work experience, make a list of all the jobs you've done.

Did you include every single one – even the Saturday job in the paper shop when you were 14? Any more?

Now, look at the list with a selector's eye. What is s/he looking for in your record of jobs? Here are a few suggestions:

- relevant experience
- a commitment to holiday work
- evidence of the skills learned
- something to talk about in the interview
- an inkling of 'real life experience'.

Can you think of anything else, especially in your own case? Make a note of it.

Work experience

Most students have to work in their vacations in order to pay off debts and, often, to keep themselves. Very few can find stimulating or relevant jobs, when the only place that's offering work is the local pie factory. But it is work (and it may be all you've got to put down) so make the most of it. If I had to choose from my list, I would say that selectors are looking mostly for evidence of skills learned. So what skills did you learn packing pies in the aforementioned factory? Remember what I said earlier about skills – consider personal skills as well as technical/professional skills.



Activity 2.5

Take any one of your jobs. What did it teach you about yourself, about the work environment? Why would a selector want to know about it? Copy the table below and fill it in. I've given you a starter for free.

Job title	Employer	What did you do?	What did you learn?
Sales assistant	Boots	Served customers, operated till, stacked shelves	Tact, patience, working under pressure, communication skills

Refer back to the earlier section on skills for the key words which tend to crop up in job descriptions. Use them to make the most of your work experience. Don't get carried away though – I have seen examples of excess, eg making a counter job at Pizzaland sound like the managing director of an international company! Have another go with a different job and think hard about what you gained from the job.

Are you beginning to use the right words now? What you have just done is an exercise in analysis. When you are writing your CV you won't have much space, so you will have to condense what you say and cut out any unnecessary detail.

'I've got hundreds of casual jobs, I can't include them all.'

Group casual work together, and give a summary of what you learned generally.

'Some of my work experience is really relevant, but the rest is not. Should I only include the relevant stuff?'

Obviously your relevant work experience will interest an employer particularly, so you need to give it precedence. But if you only include the one relevant job it may

look as if you haven't done anything else. Why not split your work experience into two sections: *relevant* and *other*. That way you get the best of both worlds.

'My work experience was so long ago!'

If you're a mature student who's brought up a family you may be presenting jobs you did 15–20 years ago, and then nothing for the last 10 years. This is not really a problem, since selectors accept that mature students (and career changers) are using education as a way of changing direction. You can still note down your previous work and what you learned from it, or you can write a short paragraph about your progress into higher education, including reference to former jobs and your 'time out' with the family and linking it to your present and future plans.



Activity 2.6

Are you ready to fill in this section now? As you're doing it, look always for the positive aspects, but keep it short and concise. Turn to the CV headings on page 31 and do it now.

Let's think about this dynamic CV again. What you've written down for this section reflects the 'newly qualified student' looking for a first permanent job. As I said about the education details, recent events overtake the past and your GCSE/A-levels will gradually fade into insignificance as you accumulate degree and professional qualifications. This is even more true of work experience. In five years' time, when you go for internal promotion, you won't be including your holiday jobs or jobs you did before you came into higher education, you'll be concentrating on your professional experience. So the exercise you've just done has taught you a way of breaking down jobs into tasks, responsibilities and skills, and you will need to do this again and again as you progress through your career.

Activities/interests



Activity 2.7

Why do selectors want to know what you do in your spare time? Tick which of the following you think are most likely:

- a idle curiosity ☐
- b something to talk about in the interview ☐
- c evidence of personality type ☐

- d to distinguish you from the other 200 geography students who have also applied ☐
- e to see the 'whole person' ☐

All are valid reasons, except a. If you ticked it, you need to keep this kind of cynicism under control! Perhaps the most dubious reason is c, which tends to suggest that selectors are making judgements about you. For example, if you wrote as your interests 'reading, playing patience, listening to music on my personal stereo and solo hill-walking', does this necessarily mean that you are introverted and unable to relate to your peers? Yes, probably it does! So one of the messages must be to give a broad span of interests, *but without inventing any!* You'll be found out!

Another important point about activities/interests is that if you want to say something about yourself, through the things that you like doing, you should give enough information. A list of interests will get the selector yawning in no time, but if you include tantalising detail, s/he may actually want to see you to talk about it. For example, compare the following two examples:

'I enjoy photography and sport, mainly football.'

'I enjoy photography, particularly black and white studies of towns and cities, and I have learned recently to process my own film. My other main interest is sport, mainly football, and I have played for the Hall team this year. This not only keeps me fit, but gives me an opportunity to be part of a team and to mix socially with students from other courses.'

The interests are the same, but the effect is very different.



Activity 2.8

Write down now what you have learned about this student from the second statement.

One more thing before you complete this section. You should be presenting not only what you do for recreation, but also what you do in the student community, eg membership of societies, community action, AIESEC. If you are secretary or a committee member, look at the section on optional extras, but if you are involved in any way it is worth mentioning.

**Activity 2.9**

So turn to the CV headings on page 31 and do the exercise.

Additional information

You may be wondering what on earth can be left to say! Any thoughts on a few extra things you've got to offer? Look back at the details you've given under the CV headings, and then jot down anything else you think might be important for a selector to know.

Did you include any of the following?

- a school prefect
- b swimming certificates
- c other qualifications, eg typing
- d foreign language skills
- e driving licence
- f computing skills
- g treasurer of the Parachute Society.

Certainly **c**, **d**, **e**, and **f** are worth including with some detail, eg which language and to what level? use of own car? what computer skills, systems, packages and languages? If you wrote something similar to **a** or **g**, then look at the optional extras section. You may have included other things which haven't occurred to me, so think how important they are, and where you should put them. This may be the place where you want to say something about your health in a positive way. No, I haven't forgotten the swimming certificates. I would merely ask that you consider carefully their relevance to your application.

Referees

It is usual to include the names of referees in a CV, although as you progress through a career this can become awkward. Your first CV as a recently qualified student should include one academic referee – probably course leader or a tutor who knows you well – and, if possible, a work-related referee. This may be relatively straightforward if you have done a placement as part of your course, but if not you can use a vacation employer. Should you feel that this is not appropriate for some reason, you can use a second academic referee or someone who has known you for a long time – not a relative though.

Remember to ask permission. Most academic tutors complete references for students all the time, but you may need to check that they know your career interests.

For other referees, it is useful to give them a copy of your CV, just to remind them who you are!

**Activity 2.10**

Turn to the CV headings (page 31) and make a note of possible referees. It is always useful to have at least three to choose from, in case of the absence of any one of them.

Optional extras**a Positions of responsibility**

Some companies are keen to see evidence of leadership skills, so it's often worth including your committee or society jobs, back to 6th form at school. If you have lots, such as team captain for several sports, county standard, Student Union posts, you need a separate section. If, on the other hand, you have only one or two, or none at all, don't worry – not everyone has the chance or the desire to be captain of everything from the age of 5. You simply include what you've done in your activities/interests section.

b Awards/scholarships/exhibitions

If the above applies to you, you should be proud of it – after all it's an achievement. For some students, for example, of visual/performing arts, it is crucial to include details of awards and exhibitions, and you would certainly need to create a special place in your CV for this. For other students it may be just the one award, eg science prize at school or best student award at university. Again, you can include it under additional information, but if you want to highlight it, then let it stand alone.

c Personal statement

For some people this is cringe time as it smacks of self-publicity. In fact, it can be very effective to make a statement about yourself and your aspirations in a CV. It doesn't have to be over-the-top or brash – it's better to make it precise and clear, so that a selector knows exactly what you want and what you feel you have to offer. Think about it. You'll find an example on page 29. If it appeals to you, then try drafting your own. If you're still not tempted, then that's OK.

I've outlined three areas of optional extras, but there may be others which are appropriate for you. As I keep saying, this CV is yours – you can add other sections as you wish, so long as you bear in mind the basic guidelines about length and clarity.

In summary: facts alone will not do. You know, from your job analysis, what the employer is looking for. You know, from your self-assessment, what you have to offer. Put the two together, and make your answer interesting and appropriate.



Activity 3.2

Now fill in the questions on page 2 of your form, referring to your notes under the CV headings on page 31.

Page 3

Here we have what might be termed the 'crunch' question – *why do you want the job and why should we appoint you?* This is where the marketing becomes explicit and any natural reserve has to take a back seat. You want this job, don't you? (If you don't, then you have a strange way of passing the time!) So you have to tell the selector why and then give enough 'evidence of suitability', ie personal skills, experience, job knowledge, and so on, to get an interview.



Activity 3.3

Make a first draft now, using a job you're considering.

'Explain what attracts you about the type(s) of work for which you are applying and offer evidence of your suitability.'

Now look at my checklist and tick off what you achieved.

- a Did you think about the requirements of the job before you put pen to paper (in a real situation this would mean re-reading brochures, job descriptions, etc)?
- b Did you describe the origins of your interest, eg arising out of the course/work experience/leisure activity, and plot its progress?
- c Did you mention action taken, eg the pursuit of relevant work experience, voluntary work, attendance at presentations?
- d Did you mention aspects of the job/training specifically? This shows that you know something about it.
- e Did you then link what you know to what you have to offer – academic/technical skills (if appropriate), experience and personal qualities?
- f Did you say positive things about yourself, using your 'skills vocabulary'?
- g Did you mention some aspect of the company/organisation

specifically, so that it didn't look as if you wrote the same thing on every form?

- h Does it impress you when you read it through or does it make you cringe? (You may have to come to terms with the 'cringe factor'.)

If you ticked a fair number of these questions, then you're on the right lines. Remember this is not a comprehensive list, but just a few prompts to bear in mind when you read it again. Many forms will allow you a whole page for this statement and will invite you to attach additional sheets, so it has to be tackled thoroughly.

The remainder of page 3 is generally a mix of questions on various aspects of administrative importance, eg health, mobility. Two are particularly significant: the question of points for interview and the additional information item. The former is probably just an aide for the future interviewer, so s/he can prepare any specific facts, but it also gives an indication of your interest in the company and the job. Equally, the latter is an opportunity to present information which does not fit into other questions, but will interest the selector and may gain you extra points.

I have discussed choice of referees on page 16, so you can refer to this if necessary before completing this page of the form.

Have you noticed where you must sign and date the form? Failing to do this can lead to automatic binning!



Activity 3.4

Now turn to your SAF and complete page 3, re-drafting your answer to the 'crunch' question, if necessary.

Page 4 of the SAF is for monitoring purposes and will not appear on every employer form.

Once you've completed this exercise, you will be able to keep this form as a good reference for any other you complete.

I do not intend to instruct you in how to complete individual application form questions. If you have read and understood the sections on self-assessment and job analysis you should be ready to tackle anything thrown at you. Simply remember that the function of an application form is to *inform* and *interest* the selector. You must regard it as a marketing tool, so include details of *suitability*, *skills*, *personal qualities* and let your *personality* show through. Impress the selector with your knowledge of the job/course and *be positive – distinguish yourself*. That's the way to get an interview. Objective achieved!

The covering letter

A note about letters with application forms. These do not really need to be the full covering letter described in When to use a CV on page 26. In fact, you may find that any extra bits of paper are detached by a secretary. However forms do merit a short accompanying letter, indicating the position applied for and the source of the vacancy. You can also use the letter to point out any unusual features of your application, eg that the company is not visiting your institution or the implications of semester dates for interviews. An example is given next.

13 Green Road
Barnsley
BS2 8TR

12.5.96

Ms S. Tempest
Blake's Emporium
Chattel Road
Leeds
LS5 9YO

Dear Ms Tempest

I enclose my application form for the Trainee Manager vacancy, as advertised in Blankfield University Current Vacancies.

As stated on my form, I am in the final year of a degree course in Emporium Management and will be available for interviews at any time except from 9th to 23rd June, when I have my exams.

I look forward to hearing from you in due course.

Yours sincerely,

John Mason

4 Bibliography

Self-assessment

Bolles, R. N. (1990) *What colour is your parachute?*, California, Ten Speed Press. A practical manual.

Hoopson, B. and Scally, M. (1991) *Build your own rainbow*, Lifeskills Associates. Very user-friendly.

Careers Advisory Service resources

Your Careers Advisory Service holds a great deal of information about self-assessment and job-hunting, much of which is produced by AGCAS (The Association of Graduate Careers Advisory Services). The following material is particularly relevant:

Where next? Exploring your future. A practical career-planning workbook.

Applications and interviews. A very useful booklet containing hints about CVs and application forms.

Write giving full details. A 20-minute video on written applications.

Many university careers services have a computer program, *Prospect*, which serves as an aid to self-assessment and career choice.

Part B: Being interviewed

Introduction

This part aims to provide an introduction to the basics of interview preparation and performance, to enable students to make the most of this opportunity for self-marketing.

If you have limited experience of interviews, or if that experience has been negative so far, don't worry – your performance can be improved through a greater understanding of technique and presentation.

Objectives

At the end of the exercises in Part B you should be able to:

- understand the purpose of the selection interview and be familiar with two different models;
- prepare for standard areas of questioning and predict specific questions by analysing an application form;
- develop a strategy for the unstructured interview;
- analyse your own competence in verbal and non-verbal interview behaviour and design an action plan for future improvement.

This book is designed to enable you to work at your own pace and select the chapters or activities most appropriate for you at any given time.

In this part you will be presented with information about interview preparation and procedure and then questioned to check your understanding. You will perform exercises as you go through the text and these will form the basis of your preparation for any interview which you may attend in the future.

Take the challenge!

5 What is an interview?

Silly question? Everyone has an idea of what to expect from an interview – usually a battery of questions. But what is the purpose of an interview? Silly question again! Obviously the purpose of a selection interview is to select someone! But how does the interview achieve that? Asking questions and getting answers will not alone allow the interviewer to make a decision. It is the interpretation of the answers which counts and, perhaps more importantly, the communication which develops between interviewer and interviewee.

So, it's not an interrogation. Nor is it a kind of victimisation. The ideal of the interview is two-way communication. Unless you are encouraged to talk, and unless you take the opportunity to talk, the interviewer will learn very little about you and will not be able to decide about your suitability for the job.

Perhaps this is the point at which to allow you to grumble about all those awful interviews you've had where two-way communication certainly didn't happen and you came out wondering what had hit you!



Activity 5.1

Think about those occasions and make a note of why the experience was not a good one.

Now look at your comments. What went wrong? It will normally be one of two things:

- a** you were not well-enough prepared;
- b** the interviewer was not competent.

You have to be very honest here – it's always easier to say '*the questions were stupid*' than to admit that you couldn't answer them. Putting the blame on the interviewer may make you feel better, but you won't learn anything from the experience.

This part is about performing well at interviews and much of that is to do with preparation – so we can deal with any problems in that area. However, what you can't control is the behaviour of the interviewer. Some are just not very good or haven't been trained. This may make the experience very frustrating for you, but it does not negate the need for preparation. You should approach every interview expecting the highest level of 'good practice' and, if it turns out differently, then at least you can attempt to take some control of the proceedings. More of that later.

So start being positive. Put all the bad experiences behind you and see how you can make the most of it next time.

Styles of interviewing

The majority of people involved in recruitment are trained in selection interviewing. They will not all be trained in the same way. Individual companies design their own application forms and their own interview assessment models. You will not know what these models are, but I can introduce you to one very common type – that of the behavioural interview.

Now, settle down, this is not going to be a psychology lecture. It will take only a few lines, but they may be the most important few lines you will read for a while!

What is behavioural interviewing? It is, quite simply, getting a candidate to describe events in the past (or sometimes the present) which can be used to predict whether the individual will, in the future, demonstrate skills which are important for a specific job. Just as on application forms you are asked to describe achievements in terms of 'when you did it', 'how you did it', 'what the results were' etc, so similar questions will crop up in the interview, eg:

'Give me an example of a time when you were able to persuade someone of your point of view.'

'When you had to do a piece of work in college which was really uninteresting to you, how did you deal with it?'

Can you see the connections? By looking at your past achievements and at the way you have handled situations, selectors judge how well you will cope with particular aspects of a job in the future.

In terms of your preparation for the interview the message is clear. You should give concrete evidence to support your statements – general comments like *'I'm good at talking to people'* are not enough; you will receive the challenge *'Give me an example.'*

Not all interviewers will use a behavioural model – some will have a fixed assessment schedule, as described in the next section. However, all selectors will appreciate specific information rather than generalisms, so preparing for this model will ensure that you have covered the ground thoroughly.

Now that you can see, in theory, what the interview is all about, let's consider your practical preparation. In order to prepare well, you must look at it from both sides: the interviewer and yourself.

What do you think an employer wants from the interview?



Activity 5.2

What do you think an employer wants from the interview? Tick the ones you agree with.

- a To look at you ☐
- b To see if you match up to your application form ☐
- c To check what you know about the job ☐
- d To have a friendly chat ☐
- e To find out why anyone would want to study nutritional biochemistry with Serbo-Croat ☐
- f To see if you are basically suitable for the job ☐



Activity 5.2 – comments

These may all be valid reasons for wanting to interview you, except for **d**. Recruiters, these days, can't afford 'friendly chats'. There's a purpose to everything, so don't think that 'the gift of the gab' will get you a job without very careful and thorough preparation to back it up. Let's look at the other reasons.

- a The way you look does matter. If you didn't tick this, remember that the impression you make is based on a number of things including your appearance. We will look at the 'non-verbal' aspects of an interview later.
- b I'm sure you ticked this. Getting an interview means that you did a good written application – now you've got to live up to it, expand on the information and show off your communication skills.
- c Here's where all that research in the Careers Service pays off!
- e OK, it's unlikely that an employer would interview you just for this alone, but s/he certainly will be checking out the details of your course, since there is so much scope for 'optional extras' these days.
- f Absolutely! This is the real purpose of the first interview and it takes in all the preceding reasons plus a few more.

For example:

- to talk about your work experience;
- to see how well you respond to 'difficult questions';
- to get some idea of your personal qualities;
- to talk about your interests;
- to give you a chance to 'sell' yourself.



Activity 5.3

Are there any other things you can think of that an employer might want from an interview? Note them down now.

Most employers will have some kind of checklist to fill in after the interview – some are more structured than others. This not only helps them to remember who you are, when they get back to the office, but it also allows the interviewers to assess candidates on the same criteria. This is particularly important when the forms are passed on to someone else who was not in on the original interview, but who has to make decisions about second interviews.

So, let's look at one example of a typical interview evaluation form.

	Excellent		Adequate		Poor
	A	B	C	D	E
Appearance and manner					
Suitably dressed?					
Neat?					
Any curious mannerisms?					
Facial expressions?					
Confident?					
Diffident?					
Eye contact?					
Preparation into company and job					
Read company recruitment literature?					
Company report?					
Read about type of work in Careers Centre handouts?					
Preparation on self					
Your course?					
Experience?					
Ambitions?					
Reasons for applying, etc?					
Motivation for job?					
Self-expression					
Clarity, speed and audibility of speech?					
Explanation of ideas?					

I could show you more of these forms, but it is enough to know that the interviewer is looking for certain attributes and that all candidates will be judged in the same way. Obviously, 'chemistry' or 'gut reaction' can never be ruled out, nor can you totally eradicate personal prejudice, but those things are out of your control. Let's deal with what you can control or at least what you can prepare for!

What do you want from the interview?

But what about you, the candidate? Don't you have needs too? If you are going to prepare effectively, you should understand what you want out of the interview. Yes, OK, obviously a job or a place on the course. But what do you want to achieve in the short time you have with a selector?

Here is a possible checklist:

- To create an *impression* – a positive one that will stay in the selector's mind.
- To *market your suitability* for the job by presenting relevant information about yourself and your experience.
- To *collect information* in order to make a sound decision.

None of the above can be achieved by a passive attitude. *Active participation* is the key to a mutually satisfactory selection interview.

The format of the interview

We tend to think of an interview as one-to-one, and this is probably the most common form it takes. Selection is a very costly business for organisations, so there has to be a good reason for having more than one person involved. But it does happen.

Anyone who has applied to the Civil Service will tell you about the *panel* experience – six to ten people arranged at a long table facing the solitary candidate's chair! Similar arrangements happen in teaching, social services, academic posts, etc, but the panel is normally smaller – maybe two to four members.

A panel interview will not make any difference to your preparation, but it will mean extra flexibility in your responses to questions. All the panel members have a reason for being included and they probably each have a 'pet' subject. You won't know this beforehand so you will probably find that the interview doesn't flow in the same way as a one-to-one. It's not easy building a rapport with five people at the same time! We will discuss your response to a panel interview in Chapter 7 on pages 58–63.

Bear in mind that panel interviews become more common as you progress through your career, so even if you haven't met one yet, it's lurking round the corner!

Equal opportunities



Activity 5.4

Write a definition of equal opportunities.

Difficult? This is something you need to think about. Equal opportunities is now the *corner stone of all good recruitment practice*. This obviously means that you should not be asked offensive or discriminatory questions. If you feel that a particular question is discriminatory or that the whole tone of the interview is suspect, then you do have the right to comment.

Remain calm and rational and ask about the relevance of a question or enquire about the company's equal opportunities policy. The more people who do this, the less common it will become. Remember also what I said about good recruitment practice – many organisations will not appreciate the importance of equal opportunities and this will show in the way they conduct their selection.

It is common now in the public sector to be given an equal opportunities interview, sometimes as the only one or sometimes as a supplementary one. This serves the dual purpose of checking out your own attitude and beliefs about equal opportunities, and also satisfies the organisation's selection requirements. Practice does vary, but you may be given a series of questions in a set format, in a neutral tone and with no verbal or non-verbal feedback from the interviewer. This ensures that no candidate has preferential treatment. The intention is good; the practice is extremely unnerving if you don't know what's happening. We all look for reaction from our interviewer – this is rather like being interviewed by remote control in a box!

Summary

Understanding the purpose of the interview is crucial. By knowing what the employer wants and what you want from the proceedings you can start to plan your strategy.

Which is what we're going to do next.

6 Practical preparation

You put a lot of work into your written application, didn't you? Well, now is the time to revise it all. Find your applications file (and if you haven't got one, make one *now*) and take out the photocopy of your application form and the graduate brochure etc.

Let's run through the procedure again.

- a Read the brochure noting details of company organisation, job functions and particular requirements.
- b If there wasn't a brochure, where did you research the company?
- c Read the job description and make sure you understand the tasks involved in the job.
- d Draw up a person specification from the details given, especially relating to skills, qualities and personality.
- e Check whether the Careers Advisory Service has a video on the company. By the way, you did attend the presentation, didn't you?
- f Read your application form through and jot down what specific skills and experience you mentioned and what examples you used.

Now you are ready to start predicting the questions.

Predicting the questions

Every interview you experience will be different, but your selectors will share common concerns. As a graduating student, you can predict certain areas of questioning and, having predicted them, you can thoroughly prepare for your answers.



Activity 6.1

Make a list of topics you would expect to come up in an interview for a graduate job.

Can you, even at this early stage, begin to put these topics into categories? For example, do you have several topics relating to your education or your work experience? Before I help you to expand this list, see if you can create categories and then fit your suggested topics into them.



Activity 6.1 – comments

You may have found that your categories mirror the normal sections of a CV or application form. This is very understandable as the interview normally

follows a successful written application and will therefore, continue and expand the same areas. This also reinforces what I said earlier about revision of your written application. So you can see that for part of the interview you are on safe ground.

Have a look at a sample of 'expected' questions.

- a Why did you choose to take a qualification in ...?
- b What benefits have you derived from your education?
- c What aspects of your degree/diploma/etc are most relevant to this job/course?
- d What do you hope to be doing in five years' time?
- e What are your strengths and weaknesses?
- f Tell me about your most relevant work experience.
- g What do you enjoy doing in your spare time?
- h How did you find out about our company/course?
- i Why do you think you are suited to a career in ...?
- j Why have you applied to us?
- k What skills do you think you will need for this job?
- l How would your best friend describe you?
- m How does this course fit into your future career plans?

Now, let's move from the general to the more specific. When you attend an interview, you will normally have submitted something in writing beforehand. You can assume that your interviewer has read this. So, as well as the general questions which relate to every student, there will be particular points from your application to be covered.

Activity 6.2

For this next exercise I have provided you with a job description and a completed application form (see pages 54–57). Look at the form with an employer's eye. First, are there any gaps or inconsistencies you would want to clarify? Note them down now.

Secondly, why would you want to interview this candidate? What is offered over and above the expected? If you have worked through Part A, on written applications, you will know that there is an emphasis on giving evidence both of experience and skills. What parts of this application form would you want to examine at interview? Write them down.

Lastly, take this a step further. Pick one of the above and think up a couple of questions which would encourage a candidate to give you more information.

Now you know how hard it is to be on the other side of the desk! Looking at your application form with an employer's eye is an excellent way of predicting likely questions.

Another source of possible questions lies in the brochure or job description. You will have used all this information in your application already, and you will now be revising this for interview. Again, assume that you are the employer. Look at the job description provided and think whether this suggests 'extra' questions. I'll give you an example:

'... our aim is to give you middle management responsibility as early as possible.'

Using the behavioural interview model, you would now be looking for evidence, from the past or present, of an ability to take on responsibility. So in the case of this applicant, you might want to check out how much of the work experience was 'undirected' and whether there was scope for initiative. You might even want to challenge the interviewee to produce evidence, since there is no mention in the form of positions of responsibility.

Activity 6.3

Look at the job description and pick out the most important requirements of the job (you will have done a similar exercise already if you have completed Chapters 2 and 3). If you were interviewing for this job, what would be on your checklist?

Now, for each of the items on the list, look for evidence in the application form and tick if you find any. When you've finished, there will probably be items unticked, or perhaps queried, if the evidence is slim. These will form the core issues to be addressed in the interview. My own analysis follows.

Key requirements

- intellectual ability
- relevant work experience
- character – lively personality, an 'individual'
- common sense
- flexibility
- eye for detail
- leadership ability
- communication
- physical/mental stamina
- judgement

- takes responsibility
- rises to challenges
- ambition
- problem-solving

So, if I were interviewing Sheila Brown, I would now have an idea of how far she matches my requirements and of where any weaknesses may lie. I would also have earmarked some topics for further discussion. Now I'm ready to map out my questions. Are you ready to answer them?

Trick questions

Is there such a thing as a trick question in an interview? Can you define what it means to you?



Activity 6.4

Give me an example of a trick question you've experienced. Or if that's not possible, can you think of what you'd describe as one?



Activity 6.4 – comments

Now why is that a trick question? Here are some of the examples people give:

'He asked me something really technical about my subject which I couldn't answer.'

'She said that an English degree was pretty useless and what relevance could it possibly have?'

'I happened to mention that I belonged to the Student Union, and the interviewer was very aggressive about my political activities.'

'She said "Suppose that you are a store manager. It's 8 o'clock on a Friday morning and your main delivery lorry has overturned on the M1, leaving your shelves rather bare in two sections. What would you do?" How could I answer that – I'm not doing the job yet!'

'"What would you say was your main weakness" – do they really want to know?'

'He kept on and on about my A-level repeats and whether I would cope with professional study.'

'She said "I'm surprised that you are interested in accountancy with a Social Science degree – I thought you'd go for public sector work."

'"Why should I appoint you," she said, "when I have hundreds of applications from people with relevant experience?"'

'"Tell me how you feel about the removal of the binary divide" – I didn't know what on earth it was.'

'"Since you've applied to the NHS, you must have strong views about the present re-structuring." Since I didn't know what his views were, I was afraid of giving a wrong answer.'

'So, how did you feel the interview went?'

For *trick* questions read *tricky* questions. Most interviewers do not try to catch you out – despite the horror stories you hear. But they do try to challenge you. They need to check out how you respond under pressure and whether you can put together a calm rational answer to provocative questions. Leaping across the desk and grabbing the interviewer by the throat will not impress upon him your great negotiating skills!

Should you be asked questions which you do not understand, then say so and ask for clarification. Don't waffle on and hope nobody notices.

Tricky questions still draw on the preparation you have done on the company and on your own suitability for the job. Be calm, be flexible and don't rise to what you see as an implied insult. Even the political questions are in there for a purpose – to check your understanding of current topical issues and to see whether you can argue your case rationally. There is no *wrong* answer – except, obviously, one which is blatantly discriminatory in some way.

'Tell me about yourself'

When you go into an interview, you expect to be asked questions. I've spent a lot of time in this chapter talking about preparation for questions and how this can make you feel much more confident.

So, you walk into the room, feeling calm and confident, but anticipating some challenging questions. What does your interviewer do? Sits back in the chair, looks you full in the face, smiles and says *'Well, Ms ..., tell me about yourself.'* The sheer panic which follows chases every rational thought out of your head as you struggle to string a few coherent phrases together.

7 Performing well

Verbal behaviour

You will have noticed that so far we've talked mainly about preparing for the interview. I hope that you agree with me that this is the foundation of good interview performance. If you've done your homework you can go into the room feeling far more confident. And confidence is the key to performing well. But if interview success depends simply on preparation, then why do we all feel nervous and why do we sometimes mess it up?

Partly, of course, it's lack of practice. Think of some other activity which scared you the first time you did it, eg giving a presentation, asking someone out, getting your hands on a computer – all these things get easier the more you do them. Unfortunately, or fortunately more likely, we don't go for interviews on a regular basis. It happens now and then, so there's no chance of much practice. On occasions when you are attending interviews regularly, (eg the milkround), then your performance does improve dramatically over an intensive three- or four-week period.

But you can *learn* from experience and improve your performance. Even if you've not had many interviews so far, you will already have an idea of your strengths and weaknesses in this context.

Activity 7.1

Work through the following list of skills and rate yourself on a scale of 1 to 5 (from 'not at all competent' to 'very competent')

Initiating conversations	1	2	3	4	5
Carrying on conversations	1	2	3	4	5
Speaking clearly and audibly	1	2	3	4	5
Expressing ideas fluently	1	2	3	4	5
Talking about yourself	1	2	3	4	5
Discussing your strengths/achievements	1	2	3	4	5
Demonstrating interest/enthusiasm	1	2	3	4	5
Discussing your weaknesses in a positive manner	1	2	3	4	5
Providing succinct but comprehensive answers	1	2	3	4	5
Seeking clarification	1	2	3	4	5

B: BEING INTER

Asking for a few seconds to gather your thoughts for a difficult question	1	2	3	4	
Saying 'I don't know the answer'	1	2	3	4	
Dealing with apparently inappropriate questions	1	2	3	4	
Disagreeing with the interviewer	1	2	3	4	
Asking questions about the job/employer	1	2	3	4	5
Asking questions about your likely opportunities	1	2	3	4	5
Demonstrating a sense of humour	1	2	3	4	5
Demonstrating self-confidence	1	2	3	4	5

The examples in Activity 7.1 demonstrate verbal communication skills. Some people are naturally very good at communicating – in social situations, in seminars, in work – but cannot get it together in an interview.

For them, the experience mirrors the tyrant-victim relationship. From being a bright, articulate, confident, active person they become completely passive; responding and reacting, but taking no responsibility for what happens in those important 30 minutes. It's rather like *Mastermind* – spotlight on you, mouth goes dry, mind goes blank and someone batters you with questions!

It's not really like that, is it? Now that you understand the purpose of the interview, you can see how unhelpful it is to the interviewer if you adopt the passive victim role. They have to work twice as hard to get anything out of you and, if it's so difficult, they probably won't bother.

I used the phrase 'taking control' at the end of Chapter 6. That's a very extreme measure – though you may be tempted to do this with an incompetent or inexperienced interviewer who's almost crying out for help. 'Taking responsibility' is probably a better phrase. You've done all the preparation. You believe you are a good candidate (if not the best). So it's up to you to make the most of the opportunity. The techniques of performing well at interview are very similar to those learnt through assertion training. If you wish to read more about this, I have included a few relevant books in Chapter 9.

Activity 7.2

Compare the following dialogues:

a I-er: *I see you've been involved in the Student Union. Still, I suppose*

that's quite common isn't it, since you've all got to be members?

I-ee: Yes, I suppose it is. But not everyone is actively involved.

I-er: Do you have any examples of positions of responsibility outside college life?

I-ee: Well, I've not really had the chance to do things off campus.

- b** I-er: I see you've been involved in the Student Union. Still, I suppose that's quite common isn't it, since you've all got to be members?

I-ee: Actually, the reason I put that down was because it has involved quite a lot of committee work, which I think is useful experience for someone hoping to go into personnel.

I-er: Right, tell me about that.

Write some notes about the evidence of 'taking responsibility' in these two examples.

Activity 7.3

Think how you might respond to the following comments:

- a** Your work experience is not really relevant, is it?
- b** Has your degree contained anything vocational at all?
- c** It must be nice to be able to spend a year travelling around Europe.
- d** Mature entrants often have some difficulty fitting in to the office – the staff are nearly all under 30.
- e** You didn't do too well in your A-levels, did you? I'm not sure that you'd cope with the qualification study.

Activity 7.3 – comments

You could say that these are in the *tricky question* league, but they come at you almost as *throwaway* lines, effectively blocking any development. You need to challenge the *unspoken assumptions* or you will miss good marketing opportunities. Use the good old assertion technique: 'I understand why you might think that, but actually ...'

However you reply, don't admit a negative. For example, with question **b** you would seriously weaken your case by starting your reply 'No it hasn't.' No

matter what you go on to say, you can't take away that first word. Rather say 'I would consider many aspects of my course to be vocational. I've had the chance to develop good communication skills, to use information technology, research and process data and to work as a member of a team. These seem to be very relevant skills for your company training programme.'

Non-verbal behaviour

To be successful at an interview, you need to reassure the interviewer that you are the best candidate for the job. This is as much to do with the way you act as with what you say.

I firmly believe that thorough preparation brings confidence – so that's your first goal.

Activity 7.4

There are also some very easy practical steps to creating the right impression in the interview:

- a** Dress appropriately. What does this mean to you?
- b** Check out the geography. What do you need to know before you start out for the interview?
- c** Arrive in good time. Why?
- d** What are you going to do as you enter the room?
- e** Eye contact is extremely important. Why?
- f** You are allowed to smile. What effect does this have? Can you overdo it?
- g** What are you going to take into the interview? Why?
- h** What are you going to do with your hands? Is this a problem? (It isn't for most people.)
- i** How will you sit? Do you need to practise? (Coffee bar lounging can lead you into bad habits.)
- j** How can you show the interviewer that you are interested?
- k** What will you do at the end of the interview? (ie before you leave the room.)

Activity 7.4 – comments

Are you feeling nervous already? This checklist is a way of making you aware of what's important. It isn't whether you wear blue socks or a plain white shirt (contrary to popular belief). These things are only important in so far as they make you feel comfortable and allow you to appear confident and relaxed.

Day 2	6.00 pm	Free time
	7.00 pm	Dinner with recent graduates and managers
	9.00 am	Technical interview with two engineers
	10.30 am	Personnel interview
	11.15 am	Management interview
	12.00	Lunch
	1.00 pm	Psychometric testing: verbal reasoning, abstract reasoning
	2.30 pm	Site tour
	4.15 pm	Depart

Pretty heavy stuff, one way or the other! Glad you're not a chemical engineer, are you? Well, hang on a minute. If you are applying for any management function, whether it be personnel, marketing, finance or suchlike, you are likely to have to go through similar programmes, only more so!

Here is a typical assessment centre programme for marketing candidates:

Day 1	6.30 pm	Arrive at hotel
	7.15 pm	Briefing session
	8.00 pm	Information meal with two young managers (not assessed)
Day 2	8.30 am	Arrive at Head Office
	8.45 am	Aptitude tests
	9.20 am	Mutual introductions
	9.50 am	Group discussions on a topic of the group's choice
	10.15 am	Coffee and preparation for Group Task
	10.45 am	Group Task: business situation
	11.25 am	Coffee and preparation for Interactive Case Study
	12.35 pm	Lunch
	1.45 pm	Opportunity to read company information
	2.15 pm	Talk on graduate training programme
	2.30 pm	Individual interviews
		1 Two selectors
		2 Interview with psychologist and discussion of test results
		3 Training Manager
	4.30 pm	Debriefing session
	5.00 pm	Finish

You can draw breath now. Yes, it is very intensive and very varied and if you get through the process successfully you will know that you deserve the job! But always remember what I said about first interviews: it is a two-way process. The second interview is normally held on company home ground and involves lots of different people. Use it as a way of deciding whether you like what you see.

Activity 10.5

Jot down some of the things you might want to find out while you are there.

Let's turn this into an *aide-memoire* which you can photocopy and take with you on your visit. Remember you can add to this when you're there. For example, if the presentation mentions the choice between block and day-release, you might want to use your time in the bar to check out what type of training the recent recruits chose and why. The headings below are useful for jotting things under as they occur or in your free time at the end of the day.

What I want to know	How	When	What I found out

11 Preparing for a second interview

Now that you've had a chance to look at what might happen at a second interview, you will want to think about your preparation. With the first interview it was fairly straightforward – you can look back at Part B: Being interviewed. You revised everything that went into your application form and you attempted to predict areas of questioning. So what should you do this time around? Is it just a repetition of the first interview? Clearly, it is not. There will be panel or one-to-one interviews as part of the process, but there are all kinds of other activities, some of which would seem impossible to prepare in advance.

Activity 11.1

Look again at the interview programmes in Chapter 10, pages 69–70. Place the activities into categories of *Can prepare* and *Can't prepare*.

Am I right in saying that your *Can't prepare* column is longer than your *Can prepare*?

OK, so your lists may be different from mine, but it does look as if much of the programme is unseen. There are reasons for this, which I will look at in a moment, and, more importantly, there are ways of maximising your potential!

But first let's look at the *Can prepare* items and run a checklist on those.

Can prepare

In this section we'll consider how you can use your time most effectively in the run-up to your second interview. The time you spend at an assessment centre will be packed with activities, interviews and socialising, so it will be difficult to find space for quiet contemplation and preparation – except when you're in bed and maybe this time is best spent sleeping!

Therefore, if you want to present yourself as a well-informed and well-prepared candidate, you've got to do your homework beforehand.

Presentations obviously need a great deal of time and attention, especially if you are relatively unused to giving them. But equally, introducing yourself in a concise and interesting way will benefit from a dry run. You will also be expected to show a greater insight, at second stage, into the job itself and the company/organisation, so you must do extra research and firm up on some of the generalisations which may have been acceptable at first interview. Remember, you're now in competition with the best candidates. Do yourself a favour and prepare well – as with exams, it will pay off in the end.

Personal introduction

There are several ways this can be organised. Sometimes you are given one minute to talk about yourself and sometimes it is turned into an ice-breaker exercise where you talk to a partner and then you introduce your partner to the group. However it is organised, you need to think about what you will include.

Activity 11.2

Jot down what you would say about yourself. You might also want to try timing yourself. Many people don't realise how long a minute can be! Use a stopwatch and see how it feels. Always bear in mind the person spec. for the job you want – can you use this short time to project important information or qualities?

Remember, these may be the first words your assessors hear from you. Make it clear, concise and interesting. And don't mumble!

Company information/job knowledge

Obviously, as part of your general preparation, you will re-read the company brochure and any other information you managed to find. Further details will be given to you at the time of your second interview, perhaps in written form, perhaps also via talks, videos and tours. You will be expected to take in this information (so don't fall asleep), and it may possibly form part of the interview questioning. It is also important for you to be absorbing the company ethos and forming your own impressions. How do you feel about the style of presentations – can you see yourself working with these people? Do you think the company has given any thought to equal opportunities – are there any women managers involved in the assessment centre or representatives from ethnic minorities? Are you picking up any discrepancies between what you're hearing and what the brochure says? Are they talking down to you or treating you as an equal?

There is no way you can anticipate these details, but by doing your homework on the company beforehand you will be able to understand the new information more readily and ask intelligent questions about it.

Try to expand the base of your company knowledge before you attend. The brochure may just be enough to get you through the first stage, but now that you're so close to success, you need to go the extra mile. Read through everything in the Careers Service file, including Annual Reports – these may seem very dry but they can give you useful facts about expansion, turnover, product development etc. It may also be worth visiting your university or public library to see if they offer a press cuttings search such as McCarthy, or if they hold Extel cards. I've given you a list of sources in Chapter 13. Your interviewers will be impressed with any extra details you have discovered through your own efforts.

You will also be given a much greater insight into your chosen job area through contact with graduates and through the various activities. This may form the focus of your interviews – it may even be a time to discuss a change of mind, eg marketing > sales/finance > IT. Don't expect to get away with a woolly definition – it may just have got you through first interview, but it won't be good enough for the line managers and section heads. Ask questions, get yourself informed – these people are doing the job you want to do, use them.

Three things are required to catch the selectors' attention: well-reasoned and thoughtful directions in your CV history; enthusiasm for the job; close awareness of what the company requires from its employees as set out in the brochure.

Interviews

You have, no doubt, read Part B: Being interviewed. The preparation suggested in that part will be exactly the same for these one-to-one or panel interviews at the assessment centre. Expect more focus.

In addition to your application form or CV, this time the selectors will have notes from your first interview. In Part B I gave an example of a typical assessment form (page 42). These forms, with the interviewer's notes, are passed back to the Graduate Recruitment Office who use them as the basis for deciding who to invite to second interview.

By now, the selectors are forming a picture of your strengths and possible weaknesses. They will meet beforehand to discuss all the candidates and to share the information from first interviews. From this discussion they may draw up a shopping list for each candidate, eg:

'John is obviously very articulate and highly self-confident, but is he really committed to information technology? We know he's also applying for accountancy and finance work – where do his priorities lie?'

Or

'Mandy was very well informed about the job and the company and has some relevant work experience, but she seemed rather nervous at first interview – will she be able to cope with the pressure of our working environment?'

You need to think back to your first interview, and if you used the checklist I suggested in Part B, Activity 7.5, page 62, you will have some idea of the good points of the interview and also areas of weakness or gaps in your knowledge, which should be filled before your assessment centre interview. If John and Mandy were to think

of their performance at the first stage they may be able to use their knowledge to improve things this time around, eg:

(John) 'They asked me where else I was applying and seemed a little surprised that I was interested in accountancy. I need to show a lot of enthusiasm for IT.'

(Mandy) 'I know I was nervous, but I think it got better as the interview went on. I really must make an effort to join in and state my opinions assertively.'

Well done, John and Mandy. Now how about you?

You will meet a variety of interviewers – personnel managers (usually different from the milkround), technical managers, occupational psychologists, section heads etc. Each will have his/her own particular interests, and if you have several interviews, expect some duplication of questioning. You may be encouraged to talk in more depth about relevant academic work or relevant experience. You will certainly be challenged to demonstrate your knowledge of the job and the organisation and, above all, you will be expected to sell yourself.

I've talked a great deal throughout this book about self-marketing or selling yourself. You have got to show yourself in the best light at an interview and particularly at an assessment centre, where your interpersonal skills are being judged throughout the two or three days. Just don't go over the top. If you watch the AGCAS video *Two whole days* you will see one character who makes an art of arrogance and self-satisfaction. Guess who didn't get the job! True self-confidence and assertiveness come from a respect for oneself and for others. Once you overstep the mark into a dominating, cocky or superior attitude with your fellow candidates, or with the selectors, your behaviour may be thought dishonest and offensive. Be true to yourself – show your good points, but don't hit people over the head with them!



Activity 11.3

Interviews at assessment centres can also be used to feed back test results, personality questionnaires, profiles and observers' comments. Why do they do this?

Now write down three good reasons why the employer would share this information with you.

Did you think of three? Were they sensible? I'm sure they were. You know by now the kinds of qualities demanded of candidates by graduate recruiters and several of these can be checked out through this sharing process. For example:

- Communication skills: a chance to give clear, rational responses.
- Team-working skills: your ability to work with managers towards an assessment of your skills and development needs without being defensive.
- Self-confidence: this is your chance to argue your case, and if weaknesses are highlighted, to redress the balance.
- Self-awareness: were you aware of occasions when you didn't contribute as well as you could? Can you evaluate your overall performance and talk about the skills you showed in the various exercises, without resorting to hollow boasts or excuses (I wasn't at my best)?

Remember always that recruiters are looking for reassurance. Appointing staff is a risky business. The more confident you appear about your ability to do the job and the more open you are in discussions about your potential, the more likely they are to view you favourably.

It is useful to think broadly and answer with well-reasoned, common-sense answers.

Presentations

For my purposes here, I will comment briefly on doing a presentation in the context of the assessment centre.

Activity 11.4

Why do recruiters want to hear you give a talk? Tick which apply:

- a To see how clearly you speak ☐
- b To reject anyone from the North-West ☐
- c To check out whether you can switch on an OHP ☐
- d To see how logical you are in your planning ☐
- e To find out how much you know about a given subject ☐

Hands up anyone who said, 'What's an OHP?'

Presentation skills are very important to anyone contemplating a management or research job. Most recruiters will need to check out your skills either through a formal talk or through a group exercise presentation.

Answers **a** and **d** obviously reflect the concerns of the recruiters, as does **c** to a certain extent – although not all students have a chance to use audio-visual aids on their course and employers appreciate this. Answer **e** is a possibility if you are set a work-related topic or if you are presenting your research project, but in many cases the

content of your talk is less important than how you present it. Apologies to all citizens of the North-West for answer **b**. Regional accents are not a problem. Anyway, who defines an accent as regional?

Activity 11.5

So let's assume that you have been asked to give a five-minute talk on one aspect of your extra-curricular activities. What subject will you choose? Bear in mind the time limit – do you know enough about this subject to fill five minutes? Or the reverse – will you struggle to squash your vast knowledge into such a short time?

Write down the subject you have chosen for this exercise.

What is the main theme of your talk? For example, if you choose to speak about windsurfing, your main idea could be:

- the Windsurfing Society at university
- windsurfing equipment
- the history of windsurfing
- a typical day's windsurfing
- your own involvement.

And so on.

One main theme is all you've time for, so write that down. Now think of three aspects of your main theme:

eg Subject:	Windsurfing
Main idea:	My personal involvement
Three aspects:	1 how I became involved
	2 where I do it
	3 how much it costs.

Activity 11.6

Write down the three aspects you would cover in your talk.

Are you happy with those? If at this stage you are struggling to get an angle on your subject, then you still have time to try another one. Certainly if you are planning this presentation several weeks in advance, you may want to test out an alternative.

Write down a second idea.

I said earlier that recruiters are mostly interested in the way you plan and deliver your presentation. Hopefully the content will capture their interest, but offering them fascinating and erudite detail on the mating habits of the tree frog will not, in itself, win you brownie points.

You have, possibly, been on the receiving end of lectures from experienced, knowledgeable people, which have either sent you to sleep or left your head reeling. Aim to get your message across clearly and concisely – give your talk a structure.

- introduce yourself and your subject;
- outline the main content of the talk;
- give the talk, moving clearly from section to section (links);
- summarise what you've said and give a conclusion;
- ask for questions.



Activity 11.7

Over to you now. Make some notes on your talk under the following headings:

- Introduction
- Outline
- The main talk in sections: a, b, c
- Summary and conclusion.

How did you do that exercise? Did you make notes or did you try to write it out longhand? This question leads on to a consideration of **how** you give your talk.

Here are a few summarised points about how to give a talk.

- Perform – don't read – your presentation.
- Use notes not a script.
- **Don't:** mumble, gabble, shout or be sarcastic.
- **Do:** keep audience eye-contact, explain, intrigue, keep it personal.

If you do decide or are encouraged to use audio-visual aids, think about their best use. There is very little point holding up a picture in a large room – wouldn't it be better to photocopy it on to an acetate or not use it at all? Badly used and badly presented audio-visual aids are worse than nothing.



Activity 11.8

Now you're ready for a rehearsal – with the stopwatch or kitchen timer. Run through your talk several times, preferably with a friendly audience. Remember you'll probably speed up when you do it for real – most people speak more

quickly when they're nervous. And try to anticipate likely questions. Don't over-rehearse, though, otherwise it will sound like something you know off by heart.

Summary

So there is a certain amount of preparation you can do beforehand. Doing this well will allow you to feel much more confident when you arrive at the assessment centre. However, you will remember that most of the activities noted in Activity 11.1 fell into the *Can't prepare* category.

Can't prepare

When you attend your first assessment centre, it may feel like walking into the unknown. It is difficult to imagine what it will be like and you will naturally feel apprehensive.

As you will discover from working through this section, recruiters use the unfamiliarity of the situation as a way of seeing the real you and of presenting you with new challenges. This may explain the mystique which seems to surround assessment centre practices. Of course, if you attend several of these affairs, you will become less apprehensive, but each occasion will be different and will contain new and unexpected activities, so the adrenalin will start to flow just the same. Don't allow yourself to become blasé!



Activity 11.9

Let's look at the *Can't prepare* tasks now. First of all, why do you think recruiters want to put you through so many unseen exercises? Look at the reasons below and tick which ones you think likely.

- | | |
|--|--------------------------|
| a To see how you respond to pressure | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| b To check out the personal qualities you claimed to have on the application form and in the first interview | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| c To experience living with you for two days | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| d To make sure you don't slurp your soup | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| e To see how well you work in a team | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| f To check out your stamina | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| g To see how good you are at adapting to new situations | <input type="checkbox"/> |

You may have hesitated over ticking **c** or **d** but you are on show and rightly or wrongly, you will be judged in terms of the company image. So your social behaviour is important, but more of that later.

A Activity 11.10

Are there other reasons for using unseen exercises? Write them down if you have thought of any not included in that list.

Recruiters can learn a great deal about you from watching you perform tasks in a group. It is the closest they can get to judging how you will do the job. Most organisations use occupational psychologists to design their group exercises, so that they can observe certain skills/qualities accurately. A typical list might include:

- drive
- competitiveness
- decisiveness
- self-confidence
- task orientation
- social skills
- communication skills
- debating skills
- logic
- quick thinking
- imagination
- speed in assimilating data.

I could add more, but it's enough to show you why these exercises are used and also to stress that you cannot presume to know what each recruiter is seeking. If you try to play up to an imagined agenda, you may go horribly wrong. If you dominate your group in the assumption that leadership skills are essential, then you may score nil on the team working/facilitating scale – and this may be more important to that particular recruiter. Hard cheese!

Let's look at these activities in greater detail.

Aptitude tests

I put a question mark after this item in my *Can't prepare* column for Activity 11.1. The reason being that you can only do a certain amount of preparation for aptitude tests by familiarising yourself with the format. For obvious reasons of validity, psychometric tests are not released to the general public – you are unlikely to see the actual test beforehand. Nor should you, since these are measures of ability and therefore should not be rehearsed. However, you can get hold of examples. I have

mentioned some reference books in Chapter 13, but you can't beat actually doing some tests. Check out whether your Careers Advisory Service runs practice sessions.

A Activity 11.11

Set out below are some examples from the most common types of tests: verbal reasoning, numerical reasoning and diagrammatic reasoning. Have a go at these (the answers are in the appendix on page 102).

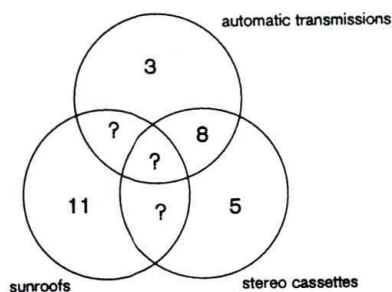
Example A: Verbal reasoning (reproduced by permission of Saville and Holdsworth)

Read the passage and consider the statements which follow it. Then mark the answer boxes according to the key. You must fill in only one box for each answer.

In a large town where the drink-driving laws are rigidly enforced, it was found that only 30 per cent of drivers breath-tested were completely alcohol-free during a certain period. Among those who were married, however, 50 per cent were completely alcohol-free during the same period.

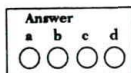
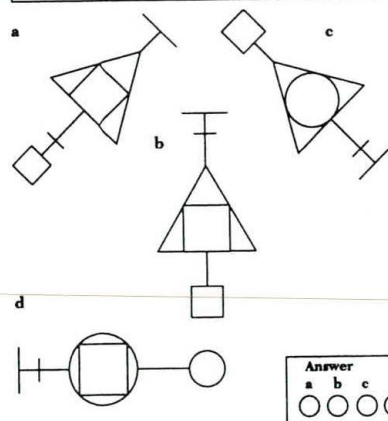
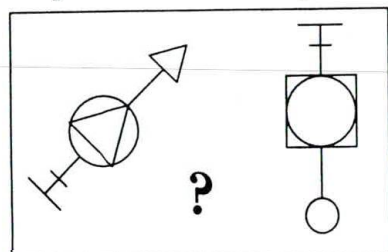
- a Strict enforcements of the drink-driving laws did not prevent 70 per cent of drivers drinking some time during this period.
- b If drivers had to be married, their drink-driving record would improve.
- c Less than 30 per cent of those drivers who were unmarried were completely alcohol-free during this period.

	A	B	C
A Clearly true			
B Clearly untrue			
C Cannot say/insufficient evidence			
a	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
b	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
c	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Example B: Quantitative reasoning (reproduced by permission of BT)

Numbers of cars with refinements, manufactured by a small company in a short period, are distributed as follows:

- How many cars have automatic transmission but no other refinements?
- How many cars have a stereo cassette but no sunroof?
- Overall, 17 cars have two out of any of the three refinements. If 42 cars are manufactured altogether, how many have all three refinements?

Example C: Non-verbal diagrammatic reasoning**Example D** (reproduced by permission of ASE Occupational Division of NFER-NELSON)

- Which one of the five words on the right bears a similar relation to each of the words on the left?

	1	2	3	4	5
Just Blonde	Light	Only	Unjust	Fair	Brunette
- Which one of the five words on the right bears a similar relation to each of the words on the left?

	1	2	3	4	5
Loud Hard	Noisy	Brittle	Soft	Difficult	Inaudible
- Write down the number of the word which would come in the middle, if the words were arranged in order according to their meaning.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Paragraph	Letter	Book	Sentence	Page	Chapter	Word
- Multiply the second whole number by the third decimal.
1, .9, 2, 4, .8, .7, 8, .5
- Hear is to see as listen is to ...

1	2	3	4	5
touch	audit	see	feel	look
- Backwards is to reversed as upside-down is to ...

1	2	3	4	5
forwards	inside-out	rightside-up	converse	inverted
- Give the next number of the series:
1/2 2/3 3/4 5/4 5/6 7/6
- The third number of this series is missing – what is it?
6 12 ... 48 96

Don't worry if you found some of these questions hard – no one is expected to get every one right. The numerical tests tend to be the most feared – by all students. Even maths/engineering students sometimes struggle with the arithmetic through lack of recent practice. These tests may also use graphs and statistical tables – so if you are not familiar with such devices it may be worth looking at a couple of the suggested books – just so that you don't fall to pieces as you come face to face with a spreadsheet.

All such tests are timed, so you will feel under pressure. Just listen carefully to the instructions, stay calm and work as quickly and as accurately as you can. Finally,

remember that tests are only part of the whole assessment procedure. For a very few jobs the results alone will determine your progress. For most positions, however, your scores will be discussed alongside other information, eg your performance in the group exercises, in order to give an all-round view of your potential.

Personality questionnaires

There is no preparation you need to do for personality questionnaires. I have mentioned one book of examples in Chapter 13, and occasionally your Careers Advisory Service may offer the Occupational Personality Questionnaire (OPQ), but such tests are costly and time consuming. Obviously there are no right or wrong answers – you answer truthfully.

So what is their purpose? Again, as with aptitude tests, these are used by occupational psychologists to identify certain traits or characteristics which are important to a given job. The profile from your marked questionnaire may be discussed with you in one of the interviews and your reactions sought. If you feel that the profile does not represent your personality then say so – such measures as these are not 100 per cent accurate.

Activity 11.12

Here are two examples of personality questions. Have a go.

Example 1 (*reproduced by permission of ASE Occupational Division of NFER-NELSON*)

Which answer comes closer to telling how you usually feel or act?

Are you usually:

- a a good mixer, or
- b rather quiet and reserved?

In deciding something important, do you:

- a find you can trust your feelings about what is best to do, or
- b think you should do the logical thing, no matter how you feel about it?

If you were asked on a Saturday morning what you were going to do that day, would you:

- a be able to tell pretty well, or
- b list twice too many things, or
- c have to wait and see?

Example 2 (*reproduced by permission of Saville and Holdsworth*)

Mark the statement most (M) like you and the one least (L) like you out of each trio.

- a I don't feel that time is wasted on planning.
- b I feel uneasy in the company of unconventional people.
- c If I'm annoyed with someone I don't show it.

- a I find rowdy social evenings fun.
- b I always set my sights high.
- c I think it's important to preserve our traditions.

Now you think you've cracked this, don't you? You're saying it's obvious which statement they want you to tick. Is it? Take this example:

When you are given an assignment to be handed in on a date in three weeks' time, do you:

- a go straight to the library to find the books;
- b put it on one side until nearer the deadline;
- c set yourself a date for starting it then carry on with other work;
- d do it at the last possible moment before the deadline?

Activity 11.13

Come on then, use the crystal ball and predict the right answer. (Didn't I just say that there are no wrong and right answers?) What is your choice? Why is that the obvious choice?

I can give you an indication of personality for each of those answers:

- a This person is well motivated and hard working.
- b This person is independent and can make decisions.
- c This person is good at prioritising.
- d This person works well under pressure and can cope with tight deadlines.

But my colleague might read very different things into these answers:

- a This person lacks confidence and needs to read every single book on the subject.
- b This person has no time management skills.
- c This person cannot juggle two balls at the same time.
- d This person is irresponsible and sloppy.

What's the best advice? Just *do* the things as they are natural to you, don't try and turn yourself into the psych¹-logist.

Group exercises

Discussions

It is very common to include at least one group discussion as part of the assessment centre programme. This can be either *led* or *leaderless*. In most cases you will be given a topic to discuss, but occasionally the group has to choose one from a given number.



Activity 11.14

All such discussions are observed by members of the assessment team. Write down what you think your observers will be looking for.

Now look at this typical observer checklist.

Evaluate the candidate you are observing according to the following criteria. Please tick for each contribution to the discussion.

Name	Number of contributions
Initiating	
Seeking information/opinion	
Giving information/opinion	
Clarifying/elaborating/summarising	
Encouraging others	
Dominating	
Ignoring contributions	
Notes	

So it's not just how often you speak but what you say to help discussion along. In a *led* discussion one candidate will take the chair and the group will be expected to reach consensus by the end of the time limit.



Activity 11.15

Put yourself in the position of the Chair. How would you see your role? Write down up to five things which the observers might be watching for.

You obviously included leadership skills and probably summarising. Did you also think of encouraging everyone to participate, keeping the discussion on track, keeping an eye on the clock and possibly controlling a dominant team member?

Well done! You realise that being the leader doesn't mean taking over the group and doing it all yourself. If there is one golden rule to remember about any group exercise, discussions in particular, it is to take an active part and try to contribute fairly early. There's nothing worse than sitting in a discussion unable to break in because the others have thrown themselves into the topic and left you behind. Get stuck in – give the observers something to observe.

'They are assessing you all the time, so you have to start off with a positive attitude, especially in the group discussion when you have to project yourself and get your ideas across.'

Group tasks

These are often the most enjoyable and challenging part of the programme. They are more structured than the discussion and often involve reading and absorbing a great deal of information. Sometimes a leader is chosen and sometimes you play a role, but again the observers are watching you perform as a member of a team and have a checklist to complete.

'We had to make a "decorative brickstand"! It had to support a brick and look good. What more can I say!'

I'm going to give you an example of a case study – this one is a variation of the 'who is the most valuable person to keep alive' exercise. I've chosen this case study because the first part is an individual exercise, so you can sit down and work through it. At an assessment centre, you would then take your individual ranking into the group and the ultimate aim is for group consensus.



Activity 11.16

Cave rescue – briefing

Your group is asked to take the role of a research management committee who are funding projects into human behaviour in confined spaces. You have been called in to an emergency meeting as one of the experiments has gone badly wrong.

Six volunteers have been taken into a cave system in a remote part of the country, connected only by radio link to the rescue hut by the cave entrance. It was intended that the volunteers would spend four days underground, but they have been trapped by falling rocks and rising water.

The only rescue team available tells you that rescue will be extremely difficult and only one person can be brought out each hour with the equipment at their disposal. It is likely that the rapidly rising water will drown some of the volunteers before complete rescue can be effected.

The volunteers are aware of the dangers of their plight. They have contacted the research hut using the radio link and said that they are unwilling to take a decision on the sequence of their rescue. By the terms of the research project, the responsibility for making the decision rests with your committee.

Life-saving equipment will arrive in fifty minutes at the cave entrance and you will need to advise the team of the order for rescue by completing the ranking sheet. The only information you have available is drawn from the project files and is reproduced on the volunteer personal details sheet. You may use any criteria you think fit to help you make the decision.

Volunteer 1: Helen

Helen is 34 years old and a housewife. She has four children aged between seven months and eight years. Her hobbies are ice-skating and cooking. She lives in a pleasant house in Gloucester and was born in England. Helen is known to have developed a covert romantic and sexual relationship with another volunteer (Owen).

Volunteer 2: Tozo

Tozo is 19 years old and a sociology student at Keele University. She is the daughter of wealthy Japanese parents who live in Tokyo. Her father is an industrialist who is also a national authority on traditional Japanese mime theatre. Tozo is unmarried but has several high-born suitors as she is outstandingly attractive. She has recently been the subject of a TV documentary on Japanese womanhood and flower arranging.

Volunteer 3: Jobe

Jobe is 41 years old and was born in Central Africa. He is a minister of religion whose life work has been devoted to the social and political evolution of African peoples. Jobe is a member of the Communist Party and paid several visits to the USSR. He is married with eleven children whose ages range from 6 to 19 years. His hobby is playing in a jazz band.

Volunteer 4: Owen

Owen is an unmarried man of 27 years. As a short-commission officer he spent part of his service in Northern Ireland where, as an undercover agent, he broke up an IRA cell and received a special commendation in despatches. Since returning to civilian life he has been unsettled and drinking has become a persistent problem. At present he is Youth Adventure Leader, devoting much energy to helping young people and leading caving groups. His recreation is preparing and driving stock cars. He lives in Brecon, South Wales.

Volunteer 5: Paul

Paul is a 42-year-old and has been divorced for six years. His ex-wife is now happily remarried. He was born in Scotland, but now lives in Richmond,

Surrey. Paul works as a medical research scientist at the Hammersmith Hospital and he is recognised as a world authority on the treatment of rabies. He has recently developed a low-cost treatment which could be self-administered. Much of the research data is still in his working notebooks. Unfortunately, Paul has experienced some emotional difficulties in recent years and has twice been convicted of indecent exposure. The last occasion was 11 months ago. His hobbies are classical music, opera and sailing.

Volunteer 6: Edward

Edward is 59 years old and has lived and worked in Barnsley for most of his life. He is general manager of a factory producing rubber belts for machines. The factory employs 71 people. He is prominent in local society, a Freemason and a Conservative councillor. He is married with two children who have their own families and have moved away from Barnsley. Edward has recently returned from Poland where he was personally responsible for promoting a contract to supply large numbers of industrial belts over a five-year period. This contract, if signed, would mean work for another 25 people. Edward's hobbies include collecting antique guns and he intends to write a book about Civil War Armaments on his retirement. He is also a strong cricket supporter.

Did you think any of them worth saving? If you can get a few friends to do this exercise as well, you can then move into the second part, which is the group task. If you managed to do that, how did it feel to have to break up your carefully considered ranking order for the sake of group consensus? Not very easy is it?



Activity 11.17

What do you think the observers would learn about you from this exercise? Write down up to five things.

Now look at this assessment form.

Assessment form

Please try to make an assessment of the 'candidate' you are observing using the following criteria:

Acceptability

Personal style not likely to be abrasive to colleagues or clients.

Persuasiveness

Ability to make a persuasive, clear presentation of ideas or facts, convince others to

own expressed point of view, gain agreement or acceptance of plans, activities or products.

Problem analysis/critical thinking

Effectiveness in identifying problems, seeking pertinent data, recognising important information, drawing sound inference from fact and reasoning logically.

Judgement

Ability to evaluate data and courses of action and to reach logical decisions.

Decisiveness

Readiness to make decisions, render judgement and take action.

Initiative

Actively influencing events rather than passively accepting; sees opportunities and acts on them. Originates action.

Planning and organisation

Ability to establish course of action for self and/or others to accomplish a goal.

Please use the following grades in assessing your 'candidate':

- A = Well above required standard.
- B = Achieved an acceptable standard.
- C = Showed some skills but failed to reach standard.
- D = Well below standard.
- E = No evidence or conflicting evidence.

One other possible surprise for you in this exercise is that you (or another group member) will be asked to present your decision and give reasons. So you can't nod off or leave it to the others, because the finger may point at you!



Activity 11.18

Here is another example, this time of a more active group task. Your brief:

You are a member of the Graduate Recruitment Team for Chocolat, a leading confectionery manufacturer. It is nearing the time for the launch of the graduate recruitment campaign and you are looking for a fresh, dynamic approach. Your task is two-fold:

- a Design a recruitment poster for university Careers Services, which carries the main message of the campaign notes.
- b Compile a two-minute plug to be broadcast on campus radio.

Here are the campaign notes:

Chocolat, one of the leading manufacturers of confectionery in the UK (Choxaway, Chocettes, Ultrachox and Chickenchox), are looking to recruit 30 graduates on to their Commercial Management Training Scheme. Any degree discipline is acceptable, but applicants must have some commercial work experience. We want drive, determination, creativity and a go-getting personality. Fluency in a foreign language would be a bonus since we anticipate expanding rapidly into the European market with our new range of chocolate credit cards, Lollichox. We want only the best students.

I bet you're really tempted by this one, aren't you? Well, find a blank sheet of paper. Get some friends over (4-6 people is a reasonable number) and give yourself 30 minutes to complete one or other of the tasks.

How did that go? The great thing about this exercise is that you can be as outrageous as you want, so long as you cooperate well with your fellows and finish the task. Remember you may be asked to give a presentation to the assessors, so keep your objectives firmly in mind.

Good fun, this assessment centre stuff, isn't it? Listen to some other student comments about group tasks.

'It is important to be continually involved, to push your own ideas, but not to dominate, and to be receptive to the views of others.'

'Probably the most frenetic hour of my life. Very complex "game" in which you had to manage four trainees (who act as nasty as possible) as they move the counters on a giant draught board! Everyone is shouting, the phone is ringing, the intercom is bleeping! Good luck!'

'Wilderness exercise. Fun! Six of us had to complete answers to questions about surviving in the wild and then compare answers and agree a group consensus. Some great discussions about the relative merits of putting batteries under your armpits! It's all about consensus, so be prepared to concede if you're not making any headway after trying to persuade the others that you're right!'

Individual exercises

Although I've said that the emphasis at the assessment centre is on group activities, there will probably be one or two exercises which you do on your own.

A very common one is an in-tray exercise where you are given the contents of your in-tray (memos, letters and phone messages) and asked to prioritise, giving reasons. You will also be given extensive details about the company - key roles, organisation hierarchy, employee attitude surveys, personal files etc, to help you in your decisions.

At the end of the given time you must present your priorities to an assessor (usually one-to-one).

A Activity 11.19

Think about this activity. Which of the following qualities/skills can be assessed? Tick whichever apply.

- | | |
|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| a Time keeping | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| b Planning | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| c Logical thinking | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| d Team work | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| e Absorbing information | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| f Working under pressure | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| g Forward planning | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| h Judgement | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| i Speed reading | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| j Self-confidence | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| k Decision-making | <input type="checkbox"/> |

I'm sure you ticked them all except **d**. Even this can be checked out during your feedback because you may be asked how you would handle certain situations with colleagues, which may arise from your decisions. You can see that it's the closest they can get to seeing you actually do the job.

A Activity 11.20

Here is another individual exercise, which you can do now.

Visitation

Scenario

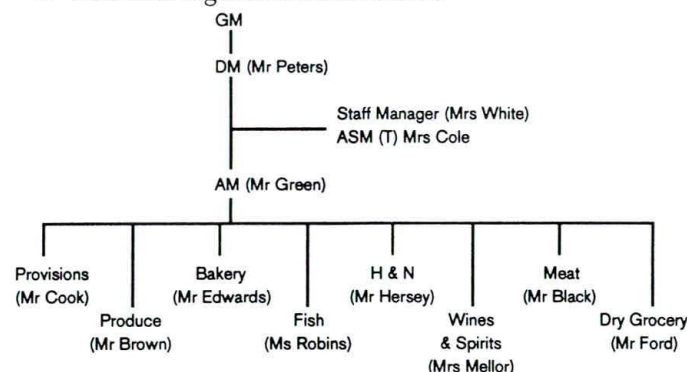
You are the General Manager of a Betterfoods Superstore. On Friday afternoon at 4.30 pm you receive a telephone call from your regional executive. 'The Chairman is visiting this region on Monday. He wants to visit your store as he hasn't been there since you've been in charge. The Chairman, the RMD and I will be arriving at about 10.00 am. It will be the normal Chairman's visit. You haven't done one before, so here are a few points – we'll want a complete store tour, front and back, and he'll want to meet all key staff and as many others as possible. Arrange coffee for us. We'll be leaving at about 12.30 pm. Do ensure the store is clean and fully stocked after Saturday.'

Action

- 1 Decide upon your aim.
- 2 Make a complete written plan.
- 3 Prepare a briefing to selected members of your staff.

Background information

- 1 Your store organisation is as follows:



- 2 Your store has a sales area of 33,000 ft² and a back area of 15,000 ft.
- 3 Your turnover last week was £310,000. For the equivalent period last year it was £276,000.
- 4 You have 350 staff, of which 190 are part time.
- 5 Your staff turnover figure is 53 per cent.

Social events

All through your one or two days with a company they will spoil you rotten: good hotel, nice food, free bar, friendly and relaxed atmosphere! What have you done to deserve this?

They will also bring in young graduate trainees for you to talk to, so that you can get an insider's view.

'I'd say this was one of the most important "tests". Use the opportunities over a "few" drinks to chat to the selectors and the other undergraduates. This is where you make the biggest impression, when everyone is relaxed, but studying you very closely!'

Recruiting this way costs a company dearly, so they must think it's worthwhile. The fact that most large organisations still do it, despite the recession and the buyers' market, must mean that the style of the assessment centre is right. Treat you well, make you relax and then work you really hard the next day. Everyone will respond to

that. But you do have some responsibilities. You are the guest for two days in someone's house. What are the no-nos?



Activity 11.21

Write down up to five *don'ts*. Here are two to start you off.

- 1 Don't be rude about the food/service.
- 2 Don't smoke at meals or in groups without asking permission of the others.

I can tell you were well brought up! It's all common sense. Behave yourself and remember that even when they say you're not being assessed, such as at dinner, in the bar and so on, you are still making an impression. And these may be people you will have to work with at some stage. Oh, hello! Yes, I remember you. You were the one who said anyone would be mad to want to work in marketing! (Oh dear!)

'Although the dinner was very relaxed, we were informed that every manager present would be asked for his/her opinion of the candidates.'

You may be wondering what to wear during these gruelling two days. Obviously you'll be working hard and you'll be involved in all kinds of activities, so you'll need to feel comfortable – *but* you are on show. Some companies will give you guidelines in their letter, eg Dress will be smart casual, but ties should be worn for the evening meal. Others will leave it to your discretion.

This is an interview, so dress accordingly. If you are travelling by train, you may want to wear something casual and then change as soon as you arrive. Take a change of shirt, tie or blouse, just in case of spillages, leaking pens or sweaty weather. It is worthwhile having something different to wear for the evening meal, especially for the women who may choose to wear a suit or skirt and blouse during the daytime. The evening meal will not be formal enough for a cocktail dress! You may, occasionally, be required to go on a tour of the office, factory or site – make sure your shoes don't cripple you!

Students are not expected to have an extensive wardrobe of formal clothes, but this is an important occasion so beg, borrow or even buy the right kind of clothes. As an investment, it will certainly pay off eventually.

Non-participative activities

That is not a very accurate title as you will want to be thoroughly involved in everything that happens, but these are things like company presentations, tours, videos and so on. You may feel inclined, in a busy schedule, to sit back and relax too

much on these occasions. Sorry, no snoozing in the back row! Stay alert – you may be asked for your comments later on. You may even want to talk during the interview about what you've seen and heard. It's a two-way process, as I keep saying. If you don't like what you see, then will you really want the job?

A good chance to get some candid answers from the people herding you around!

Summary

I hope that you now see how useful these unseen activities are to a recruiter. They can't put you in the job and observe you for six months before giving you a contract (shame!), so they have to simulate the kind of situations you might encounter or use exercises which allow you to demonstrate certain skills and qualities.

The majority of students who attend assessment centres really enjoy them – honest! The experience is demanding and is intended to stretch you and challenge you – not scare you out of your wits. It's your wits they want to see! So go along well prepared and throw yourself into the proceedings. Be seen as enthusiastic, lively, enquiring and ready to participate in everything (except, perhaps, the 'I can drink more than you and still be standing at 2.00am' game!). But remember – make a positive impression and learn as much as you can about the company and the job.

If you do all this you can relax on the train back home, and feel satisfied that you gave it your best shot.

12 What next?

Hopefully a job offer. Yippee! And usually very quickly. You will receive your offer by letter or even by telephone and you will be asked to respond.

Freeze the picture!

There you are, with the job offer in your hand. Will you accept? By this stage you should have a very good feel for the company and for the actual job you will be doing. You may be totally over the moon because you know that this is the job for you. So there's no problem – you write your letter of acceptance, confirming your start date and then wait.

It's quite likely that you won't get a formal contract until certain conditions are met: medical examination and satisfactory degree results (some employers will specify a class of degree) and so on, but if you accept in writing then you have committed yourself to the company and you should not be considering other jobs. It is very bad practice to renege on an acceptance without very good reason and it can get you into trouble (a word to a professional body could make life difficult if you apply to other member companies). So don't accept a job with the deliberate intention of rejecting it if something better turns up.

But what if you still have doubts? It's a good job – it may be the only offer you've had – it may be the only offer you'll get! Go on, take it! So what's being whispered in your other ear? You weren't really keen on having to move three times in the two-year training programme, were you? And you didn't like their response to the suggestion that you might be interested in doing an MBA, did you? Let's use a well-known mnemonic to check out this job offer.

- S – surroundings (where will you work?)
- P – prospects
- E – environment (do you like the image of this industry/service?)
- E – effects (lifestyle implications)
- D – description of work
- C – conditions
- O – organisation
- P – people

To be sure that you've got enough information to make the right decision you should have checked out each of these initials. If you haven't, how do you find out more?



Activity 12.1

Under each of the eight categories above, make a note of what you can do to find out more information.

You will have used each stage of the selection process to check out these things, so you are probably now looking at very specific concerns.

Here are a few suggestions:

- Ask to visit your office/section/site before making a decision. This way you can see exactly where you'll be working and with whom.
- Ring the Graduate Recruitment Office and ask them specific questions. If they can't answer, they will find out for you or refer you to another department.
- Talk to other people doing this job or similar work. How do they feel about this company?
- Re-read everything you can find about the company. Will you be proud to work for them?

'But if I'm waiting for the results of other interviews, what do I do?'

Most employers realise that good candidates may have several irons in the fire and they will respect this. Explain that you are committed to other interviews or awaiting results and negotiate a deadline for letting them know your decision. But then try to stick to this deadline – the employer will need to offer your job to someone else. Don't hog it if you don't want it!

'Now, I've got two job offers, which one shall I accept?'

Lucky you! Or possibly not-so-lucky you, as this can put you in a very difficult position. You may have been happy with either offer if they'd come separately, but when they come together ...? Decisions! Decisions!

Obviously you'll need to look carefully again at the jobs, the terms and conditions, training, future prospects and so on. If you're really stuck, it will help to talk to a careers adviser who will be objective and may put things into perspective for you.

Try a **SWOT** analysis. No, it's not a joke, it's a marketing technique! Divide a sheet of paper into quarters (see below) and for each job, write something in the boxes and then compare your findings.

Here's an example:

Strengths Good starting salary In London Day release for professional qualifications	Weaknesses Start date August – no holiday Very long hours – expected to work Saturday if necessary
Opportunities Good chance of foreign placements Company is expanding into USA	Threats If I want to move company, how acceptable is my training? There is nobody in the office over 35 – where do they go?



Activity 12.2

Use blank SWOT forms when you need to make a decision.

There is a chance, of course, that you will not be successful on this occasion. As I said in Part B: Being interviewed, it is important to review each interview as soon as possible afterwards, so that you can note down any unexpected questions or gaps in your knowledge. This is equally true for second interviews.

Which activities did you enjoy? Which were a chore? Did you get involved in all the exercises or were there occasions when it all passed you by? How did you feel about the tests? It's important to do this analysis, since you can seek feedback from the company if you are unsuccessful and you will want to compare their comments with your own feelings.



Activity 12.3

Get your assessment programme and list all the activities down one side of the page. Now think about what happened and rate yourself on a scale of 1–5 for each activity. Where your rating is low, make some notes about what you did and what you could do better.

If you're not successful, try ringing the Graduate Recruitment Office as soon as you receive your letter. If they're not too busy, they may talk to you individually about your performance. However, they often are extremely busy during the selection season and they may ask you to put your request in writing. Ask for specific reasons for your rejection and for feedback on test results as well as general comments on your performance at the assessment centre.



Activity 12.4

It may be useful now to write down a plan of action for future occasions. I've given a short example here, but you will need to make your own when the need arises.

Feedback (self or company)	Action
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Careers Service test sessions? Find some reference books on aptitude tests. Find some basic school arithmetic test books.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Careers Service workshop? Watch AGCAS video <i>Two whole days.</i>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> More information about job. Fix up work experience. Talk to people doing the job.

Remember that your performance will improve with practice, so any apparent weaknesses at your first assessment centre may very well have disappeared by the time you reach your third!

Summary

If you are invited to the assessment centre, you are already successful. You have reached the last 5 per cent, and companies are definitely interested in you. Look forward to these days as an enjoyable challenge.

Even if it doesn't work out first time, you are well on the way to your first graduate job and, with some careful thought and extra preparation, next time could bring the longed-for letter.

Dear Mark,

I am delighted to be able to offer you

Well done! Now wasn't it all worthwhile?

'Advice – just try to relax and be yourself. Be friendly. Everyone else feels nervous as well, so just make the effort and you'll feel a lot better. I know I did. I must have done OK – I got the job.'

13 Bibliography

- Barrett, J. and Williams, G. (1990) *Test your own aptitude*, London, Kogan Page.
- Bryon, M. (1994) *Graduate recruitment tests*, London, Kogan Page.
- Bryon, M. and Modha, S. (1992) *How to master selection tests*, London, Kogan Page.
- Eastwood, J. (1993) *Presentation skills*, Leicester, De Montfort University.
- Eysenck, H. and Wilson, G. (1991) *Know your own personality*, Harmondsworth, Penguin.
- Eysenck, H. (1990) *Know your own IQ*, Harmondsworth, Penguin.

Company information

The following sources may be available in your university library or in the business section of a large public library:

- Extel Cards* (Extel Financial Ltd)
- McCarthy Cards, UK* (McCarthy Information Ltd)
- The Hambro Company Guide* (Hemmington Scott Publishing)
- Kelly's Business Directory* (Reed Information Services)
- Key British Enterprises* (Dun & Bradstreet)
- Kompass UK* (Reed Information Services)
- Who Owns Whom* (Dun & Bradstreet)

Careers Advisory Service resources

Your Careers Advisory Service holds a great deal of information about self-assessment and job hunting, much of which is produced by AGCAS (The Association of Graduate Careers Advisory Services). The following material is particularly relevant:

Applications and interviews. A very useful book containing hints on preparation for first- and second-stage interviews.

Two whole days. The second stage – assessment centre. (20 minute video.)

Check with your Careers Advisory Service about the availability of second interview workshops and aptitude testing sessions.

Appendix: Aptitude test answers

Example A: Verbal reasoning

- a A – this is clearly true as the passage states that only 30 per cent of drivers breath-tested were completely alcohol-free, consequently 70 per cent had taken alcohol.
- b A – again clearly true. The passage states that the drink-driving record of married drivers is better (50 per cent alcohol-free) than that of the general population sample (30 per cent alcohol-free).
- c C – cannot say/insufficient evidence. The passage does not state what proportion of the sample were unmarried, therefore you cannot substantiate this statement.

One important message for this type of verbal reasoning test is that you must base your answers *solely* on the information provided. Don't bring your own knowledge or assumptions into your answers. You are being tested on how well you can interpret and reason with data, not on what you know about the subject.


Example B: Quantitative reasoning

- a 3. This is a given number.
- b 13. This is the sum of the cars with only stereo cassettes (5) and those with stereo and automatic transmission (8). Don't forget to include these 8 as the question does not ask for those with only a stereo cassette.
- c 6. The total number of cars is 42. The given numbers add up to 27, therefore the three question marks add up to 15. 17 cars have two refinements, therefore the two question marks where two circles overlap equals 9, because we are given the other equals 8. Therefore the middle question mark where all three circles overlap equals 6 (15 – 9).

You can solve this without knowing the individual values of the other two question marks.

Example C: Non-verbal/diagrammatic reasoning

The missing figure is **b**. Reasoning is as follows:

- Both the given figures have one shape within another shape (triangle in circle, circle in square), therefore the remaining combination is square and triangle.
- Both the figures have a smaller version of the enclosed shape at one end.
- Both the figures have the following pattern  at the other end.

b is the only figure which combines these features.

Example D

- a 4 – just and blonde equate to fair
- b 5 – loud and hard are the opposite of soft
- c 1 – letter, word, sentence, *paragraph*, page, chapter, book
- d 1.4 – $2 \times .7 = 1.4$
- e 5 – hear is to see as listen is to look
- f 5 – backwards is to reversed as upside-down is to inverted
- g 7/8 – pattern recognition – 1/2 (2/3) 3/4 (5/4) 5/6 (7/6) 7/8
The bracketed numbers are irrelevant.
- h 24 – $6 (x2) 12 (x2) 24 (x2) 48 (x2) 96$

Also available from Kogan Page

- Great Answers to Tough Interview Questions: How to Get the Job You Want* (3rd edition),
Martin John Yate
- How to Pass Graduate Recruitment Tests*, Mike Bryon
- How to Pass Numeracy Tests*, Harry Tolley and Ken Thomas
- How to Pass Selection Tests*, Mike Bryon and Sanjay Modha
- How to Pass Technical Selection Tests*, Mike Bryon and Sanjay Modha
- How to Pass the Civil Service Qualifying Tests*, Mike Bryon
- How to Pass Verbal Reasoning Tests*, Harry Tolley and Ken Thomas
- How You Can Get That Job! Application Forms and Letters Made Easy*, Rebecca Corfield
- How to Win as a Part-Time Student*, Tom Bournier and Phil Race
- Job Hunting Made Easy* (3rd edition), John Bramham and David Cox
- Making it in Sales: A Career Guide for Women*, Mary J Foster with Timothy R V Foster
- Manage Your Own Career*, Ben Bell
- Preparing Your Own CV*, Rebecca Corfield
- Readymade Job Search Letters*, Lynn Williams
- Test Your Own Aptitude* (2nd edition), Jim Barrett and Geoff Williams
- Working Abroad: The Daily Telegraph Guide to Working and Living Overseas* (18th edition),
Godfrey Golzen
- Working for Yourself: The Daily Telegraph Guide to Self-Employment* (16th edition),
Godfrey Golzen

*“The killer CV and the
professional assassin
have a lot in
common.”*

Nami Karlheath

part three

...

**your marketing
brochure - the
killer CV**

*“What – and
who – is a
CV for?”*

15

why most brochures don't get read – and how to make sure that your CV does

Have you ever been involved in creating a brochure? If you have, you will be only too aware of how much effort, how much care and how much agonising goes into it.

Now put yourself on the other side of the fence. Think of all the brochures that have landed on your desk over the years. How many of them can you honestly claim to have read word for word? How many did you even skim right the way through, from the front cover to the back? And how many were given little more than a glance before ending up in the bin?

So, what goes wrong? Why does all that effort so often get completely wasted? Here are some of the more common criticisms levelled against marketing brochures:

- too long;
- too much solid text;
- too many different typefaces;
- bad layout;
- poor quality;
- too glossy;
- too much hype;
- boring;
- just like everyone else's – nothing to make it stand out;
- gimmicky;
- all about what they wanted to say, not what I wanted to know;

- it did not explain what the benefits to me of the product or service were.

In case you have not already guessed, most of these criticisms apply just as much to CVs as they do to any other kind of marketing brochure. Some of the faults listed above are to do with the details of how to present a brochure/CV, and Chapter 16 is going to be devoted to explaining the mechanics of producing one which is easy to read and which creates a strong impact on the recipient. Before we get on to that kind of detail, though, we need to take a few moments to consider some very basic, very fundamental points.

●●● A means to an end

To begin with, what – and who – is a CV for?

Get one thing straight, right from the start. Your CV is never going to get you a job. Only you can do that, and in order to do it you have to get in front of the person who has the power to make the appointment. The role which your CV plays in that process varies considerably, depending on which approach you are using and who is going to be reading it.

When you are responding to an advertised vacancy, your CV – together with your covering letter – will be what determines whether you get an initial meeting, usually with a recruiter rather than the ultimate decision maker. The way most recruiters use CVs is as a method of ruling people out rather than in, so you have to pay as much attention to avoiding the snakes as you do to climbing the ladders.

When an appointment is being headhunted, you will normally have spoken either to a researcher or to the executive search consultant who is handling the assignment before you provide a CV – which you may then either send in prior to an interview or take with you to your first meeting. Either way, you will have learned a fair amount about the job on the telephone before you submit your CV. Bear in mind, too, that headhunters rarely pass your CV on to the client. Instead, they prepare their own report on you, which you are unlikely ever to get a look at.

You may, of course, send your CV to headhunters on spec. In that case it will be used either by a search consultant or by

someone in the research department as a basis for deciding whether or not to put you on their database.

When you are networking, you may take your CV along to meetings with a view either to asking for advice on it or in order to give copies to your network contacts, which they may in turn pass on to other people who could have a job for you.

When you are making speculative applications, you are initially likely to send a letter, rather than a CV, perhaps taking your CV along to any meetings you obtain. It will then be used in much the same way that slides or handouts are at a presentation – as something to refer to in order to give structure to the session and as a reminder, afterwards, of the key points.

What this all boils down to is that your CV may be used in a variety of different ways and for several different purposes. Which, in turn, begs the question: can a single CV satisfy them all?

●●● Horses for courses

In the dim and distant past, before word processing became widely available, there would have been no point in even asking that question. No one seriously thought of retyping their CV each time they applied for a job. Now, with the opportunity there for you to customise your CV to every single application you make, the point at issue is whether or not the time and effort involved can be justified. If it makes all the difference to you getting the job you want, then it has to be worthwhile. On the other hand, you do have a lot of competing demands on your time. Could you find a better use for that time than endlessly tarring up your CV?

Because everyone's circumstances are different, there is no one answer that is right every time, but there are some simple criteria which can be used to help you make the decision. They just happen to be the same criteria marketing people are recommended to use before they start to write a brochure.

Each time you need to submit a CV, ask yourself the following questions:

- What am I selling?
- To whom am I selling it?

Why do they need what I have to offer?

- Why should they go for me rather than my competitors?

If you are genuinely convinced that a standard CV is going to do the job, fine - but do be honest with yourself and make sure that you are not just taking the easy option because you cannot be bothered with the editing process. Always remember that, if you are to win the kind of position you really want in today's job jungle, nothing but your very best effort will do.

●●● Vested interests

The standard CV does, of course have its supporters. However, the worldly wise reader will be only too aware that, in judging how far to be influenced by the views of others, one must always bear in mind where they are coming from and what is in it for them.

Look in the appointments pages of the major national newspapers and you may well see a whole section devoted to 'CV services', with a dozen or so different firms offering to prepare and print your CV for you at apparently very reasonable rates. While these operators may, to be fair, turn out CVs which have a superior appearance to many that pass across the average recruiter's desk, they are inevitably going to be standardised - in more ways than one.

To begin with, when you have a supply of CVs printed off by one of these companies, you inevitably forfeit the ability to customise it, even when there is something you would rather add - or omit - to improve your chances in respect of a particular job vacancy. Secondly, CVs produced in this way often have a mass-produced, and sometimes excessively slick, appearance which can easily give the impression you are conducting a bulk mailing campaign. Finally, recruiters like to get a feel for the individual behind the piece of paper and consequently tend to be turned off by CVs which have obviously been professionally written by a third party.

Exactly the same reaction is created by the CV which comes from an outplacement organisation. Many a recruiter has been heard to groan, 'Oh dear, another three from XYZ & Co.!' It is not that outplacement firms encourage their candidates to produce bad CVs - in general, they are better than average - it is just that

every CV from any given firm looks exactly the same.

If you have never sat and waded through several hundred CVs in one day, you have no idea just how boring it can be. While recruiters are not going to be impressed by silly gimmicks like printing your CV on magenta coloured paper or plastering it with graphics that would be better suited to the wallpaper in a toddler's bedroom, they do nevertheless prefer to see some evidence of it having been written by an individual human being.

●●● The personal profile

A lot of outplacement consultants, together with the authors of many articles and books on the subject of job hunting, would have you believe that the way to add this individual impact to your CV is to include a paragraph the intention of which is to summarise, in no more than a few lines, your key selling points. Most commonly referred to as a personal profile, this normally appears either right at the beginning of your CV or immediately after your brief personal details. It is the written equivalent of what one American writer of career books calls the '15-second sales pitch' you are supposed to deliver at the beginning of a networking or speculative telephone call.

Once again, the recipient, the average recruiter, displays considerably less enthusiasm than the outplacement counsellors. The general reaction of selection consultants and HR professionals was summed up by Alan Dickinson, managing director of Michael Page Finance. 'Personal profiles are a waste of space, which could be used more valuably to highlight experience and achievements. Candidates should stick to the facts on their CVs. If your experience cannot sell you, personal views certainly will not. Leave the interviewer to make the subjective judgements'.

Another recruiter, confronted by a profile to which he took particular exception, expressed his objections rather more picturesquely. Casting the offending CV on to the floor of his office, he exclaimed, 'If I get one more dynamic, results-orientated executive today, I shall throw up!'

To be fair, it is not so much the concept which is at fault, but the way it is used. The most common errors which people make in preparing their personal profiles are:

- copying American examples which are too 'over the top' for the British market;
- employing tired, over-used vocabulary, taken from job advertisements or from examples of personal profiles in job search manuals, rather than making the effort to find fresh and individual words of their own;
- being too subjective and insufficiently objective – too many adjectives and not enough facts;
- producing a profile which, far from making them stand out, makes them sound just like any number of other candidates – there is a remarkable tendency for the majority of profiles to highlight exactly the same personal qualities.

In addition to avoiding these errors, you also need to consider whether the same personal profile is appropriate on every occasion. In order to follow the excellent advice of a leading outplacement consultant and 'write your CV as a solution to someone else's problem', you may well need to adapt your profile to each individual target. Although at first sight this may seem unduly onerous, it could pay a double dividend. As well as enhancing the impression your CV makes on the recipient, it will also concentrate your mind on precisely why you are the right person for the job in question.

Naturally, the same added advantage applies to customising your whole CV for each application, rather than just your personal profile – it forces you to focus on those aspects of your experience, skills and achievements which are going to make you the number one candidate for that particular job. You can even go a step further by trying to predict the questions that are likely to be asked about your suitability and then adapting your CV so that it provides the answers to them.

Some job search gurus recommend that, rather than customising the whole thing every time, you use what is often called a performance CV. This includes not only a personal profile, in the form of a paragraph describing your personal qualities and experience, but also a run of bullet points under the subheading 'Achievements', both of which are placed close to the beginning of your CV, before your career history. The idea is that you select different achievements each time, but leave the rest of the CV the same.

While the idea behind this has a certain degree of merit, there are some dangers too. Revamping the opening without changing

the main body of the CV may end up sending conflicting messages to the reader. Furthermore, recruiters – who like to be able to home straight in on what you have done and where you have done it – tend to be all too easily irritated if they are delayed from getting into your career history by what they may see as irrelevant clutter. If you lose their interest, you lose the interview.

●●● Which format?

Speaking of which, how does the average recruiter like you to lay out your CV?

The format preferred by the vast majority of selection consultants, personnel managers and line managers/decision makers is as follows.

- Start with *brief* personal details – name, address, telephone number, date of birth.
- If you opt to include a personal profile, keep it succinct and factual – no adjectives, no hype.
- Then give *relevant* qualifications and educational details, i.e. your university degree but not the subjects you passed 20 or 30 years ago at O level.
- Next, and you should by now be only about a third of the way down the first page, go into a reverse chronological career summary.
- Recruiters prefer you to list achievements under the companies they relate to. Otherwise, if you summarise them at the start of your CV, the recruiter's suspicious mind will probably conclude that you are dragging up something you did years ago when you were only just out of university and will consequently discount it.

In addition to being the one most recipients prefer, this format has the advantage of focusing attention at an early stage on your most recent experience which, in the vast majority of cases, will also be the most relevant.

●●● Alternative formats

There are, however, alternative formats, and you should be

aware of their pros and cons so that you can decide whether your particular circumstances make them worthy of consideration.

A straight chronological CV, starting with your first job and ending with your current or most recent one, makes it easy for the reader to follow your career progression, if that is particularly impressive. This advantage, on the other hand, tends to be outweighed in most cases by the 'most relevant experience first' argument. Furthermore, do bear in mind that the vast majority of people will initially give your CV only a very cursory glance. Unless you grab their attention straight away, they are unlikely to read on and may therefore completely miss your key selling points.

For some candidates a chronological format of either the straight or reverse kind has inherent disadvantages in that it highlights such matters as gaps between jobs, frequent changes of employer and switches in career direction. Furthermore, if your last post is not the most relevant one to the application in question, the material which is going to sell you really strongly may be buried somewhere in the middle and could consequently be overlooked.

In an attempt to overcome these disadvantages, candidates sometimes use what is often called a functional CV. Experience and achievements are classified under functional headings like 'management', 'business development', 'training' and so on, rather than being listed under each job. Career history is then summarised, towards the end of the CV, giving only company name, position held and dates. People with really patchy careers may even fudge this section, for example by referring to '12 years at senior management level in the retail sector'.

Most recipients dislike this format and there are two reasons for this. The first is because it is unfamiliar and, unable to find the information they are looking for, they get irritated and probably lose interest – which means the end of the line for you. The second reason stems from the fact that recruiters, being cynical types for the most part, will all too quickly suss you out and realise that you are deliberately trying to hide something.

Catch-22?

So, what on earth do you do if you have this kind of problem? Are you going to be a renegade, and risk annoying recruiters and decision makers? Or are you going to give the customers the format they want, in spite of the fact that it may not show you off in the best light?

Furthermore, even if you do not have anything to hide and the customers' preferred option – the reverse chronological CV – presents you with no problems, is using a standard format not going to make you look just like everyone else? How on earth do you make yourself stand out?

The answers are actually remarkably simple. To begin with, avoid focusing on the CV in isolation. It is just one part, albeit an important one, of the whole process of finding a new job. For example, if your CV is going to draw attention to something like a choppy career record, there may be a far better solution than trying to fudge around it by using a CV format which makes people irritated and suspicious.

Start by going back to your targeting. There are some jobs where the fact that you have moved around a lot may actually be seen as an advantage. Take management consultancy firms – they need people who have hands-on exposure to a variety of different situations. Candidates who have spent their entire working life in a single organisation are rarely of interest to them.

Then give some thought to the methods you are using. In the case of advertised vacancies the volume of response often results in CVs being used negatively, as a means of screening people out. If your patchy career history is the reason you are not even getting to the first interview, consider concentrating more on networking and speculative applications, where the CV does not have to be submitted until you have already got yourself a meeting – at which stage it is not being used to rule you in or out but as a basis for discussion.

Talking of which, let us go back to two more of the basic rules about marketing brochures. Firstly, wise marketing professionals always question, right at the start, whether a brochure actually is the best way to achieve their objective. Sometimes it is, while on other occasions it is not. It is exactly the same with CVs. Sometimes you do need to submit one. In other circum-

stances you may have a greater chance of achieving your purpose by using a letter or a telephone call. For example, while a functional CV is not popular with recruiters, they will be far less likely to react adversely if you summarise your experience in a similar fashion in a letter. Whereas they expect CVs to be in a certain format, against which they can tick off whether or not you conform to what they are looking for, there are no such expectations with letters.

Secondly, marketing people always think carefully about how a brochure is going to get to its target audience. Will it be part of a bulk mailshot, handed over personally at a client visit, sent with a personalised covering letter following a phone call etc.? Again the same applies to CVs.

When responding to an advertisement you use a covering letter. Since this letter will normally be looked at before your CV, it may well be the best place to emphasise your key achievements and to make use of some of the material which might otherwise go into your personal profile. Many recruiters find such material much more acceptable in a letter, although you must still take care to stick to facts and avoid excessive hype.

When you are being headhunted, you either mail the CV, again with a covering letter, after you have had a chat on the phone or else you actually deliver it personally. Speculative applications to headhunters always involve a covering letter as well as a CV and may be preceded by a phone call.

In networking, you hand the CV over personally and if contacts pass copies on they again either do so personally or use a covering letter. Finally, when making speculative applications direct to potential employers, you may initially use a letter which, in effect, summarises selected parts of your CV, the parts you select naturally being the ones which sell you and the ones you leave out being those which might turn the buyer off.

What this all adds up to is that your marketing brochure really consists in many cases not just of a CV, but of a CV which is complemented and enhanced by the letter which accompanies it. There are even instances in which a letter on its own becomes your marketing brochure. That is why we are going to spend the whole of Chapter 17 looking at letters and how to make them work for you in a variety of different situations.

●●● Keeping the customer satisfied

First, however, you will see how you can give the customers the kind of CV they like to receive, yet still create an impact that will put you one step ahead of the competition. Contrary to what some people may suggest, this involves neither the use of over-blown hype, nor being devious or concealing information. Instead it is based on employing the inside knowledge which you now have of how CVs are perceived by their recipients, and then on applying yourself to the preparation of your own CV in a professional manner, using the tool kit contained in the next chapter to bring out your individual personality and USPs.

Whichever way you produce your CV, you will always find someone who would like it done differently – it is impossible to please all of the people all of the time. A more realistic aim is to try to please as many people as possible as much of the time as possible and you can do that by observing the following guidelines.

- Always be aware of whom your CV is going to, how it will be delivered to them and how they are going to use it.
- Write your CV as a solution to the other person's problem – not as your personal ego trip.
- Use the format most people want to see: reverse chronological.
- Only insert a personal profile before your career history if it is going to have a stronger impact on the recipient than your most recent experience and achievements. If you do use one, keep it brief, factual and very precisely targeted.
- Prepare a core CV for general use, but study it carefully before each submission and always edit it to whatever extent is necessary in order to present yourself in the best possible light for the specific purpose in question.
- While a covering letter can be used to avoid or limit the extent to which you customise your CV, beware of the risk of inconsistencies between the two documents.
- Never allow a 'second best' CV to go out. It will probably be the end of that particular opportunity as far as you are concerned. Consider the time you spend on getting it dead right not as a chore but as an investment.

*“Good presentation
will never make up
for weak content,
but it is easy
to ruin strong
content by poor
presentation.”*

16

the killer CV – what it is and how to produce it

The killer CV and the professional assassin have a lot in common. Just as real life contract killers have none of the glitz, glamour and gadgetry of The Jackal, so the killer CV has no truck with being flashy or gimmicky. There are no short cuts, no magic wands. The qualities that make a killer are:

- a clear goal;
- complete single mindedness in pursuing it;
- total efficiency – no waste of either time or energy;
- awareness of risks, and a thorough understanding of how to avoid them;
- outright determination to eliminate the opposition;
- complete mastery of all the tools of the trade;
- total professionalism.

When applying these qualities to the preparation of a CV there are two aspects to consider – content and presentation. Good presentation will never make up for weak content, but it is all too easy to ruin strong content by poor presentation. That is why the first two stages in preparing your CV are all about what you are going to include – and what you are going to leave out.

● ● ● Getting started

The preparation of your CV involves several stages:

- gathering together the information;
- selecting those facts which will enable you to achieve your purpose;

- choosing a layout which is easy to assimilate and conveys a professional impression of you;
- finding words which get your message across in a vivid and individual manner;
- reviewing your draft;
- editing it;
- checking it.

The reviewing and editing stages must be repeated – over and over if necessary – until you are completely satisfied that your CV is going to do you justice.

The first stage, the assembling of the necessary facts, should involve comparatively little effort. You ought to have all of the information you need in the asset register you compiled right back at the beginning of your job search.

Stage two, on the other hand, is not nearly as straightforward. It is here that so many people start to go astray and, instead of producing a killer CV, end up by shooting themselves in the foot.

The first, and most common, error is to concentrate on the wrong person. Your CV may be *about* you but it is – or, rather, should be – written *for* the recipient. Busy recruiters and decision makers do not want to have to wade through your entire life history. Still less do they want to be told irrelevant details about your family and leisure interests. What they do want to know is how you are going to add value to their organisation.

So, before you start to wade through your asset register, put yourself into the shoes of the kind of person to whom you are going to be sending your CV. Take a sheet of paper and write down at the top of it what that person will want to see in order to be persuaded to take the action you are after – calling you in for a meeting, for example. Then, keeping that sheet of paper in front of you all the time, start selecting the relevant facts.

You should find that your problem lies in being spoilt for choice. Be ruthless. Include only those skills, strengths, achievements and so on that really do make you stand out. This will not only ensure that you produce the best possible CV, but will also be valuable preparation for an ultimate meeting, helping you to concentrate your mind on your key assets and the ways in which they will benefit your prospective employer.

If, by any chance, you find that your problem is too little choice,

rather than too much, there are two possible explanations. Either you are targeting the wrong kind of opportunity or you did not do your initial self-appraisal thoroughly enough.

●●● CV suicide

If you are to be ruthless in selecting only those assets which are going to ensure that your CV achieves its objective, then you must be even more ruthless in dealing with other matters which probably do not need to be mentioned at all, and in avoiding some of the more common risks and pitfalls. Here are some examples.

- Leisure interests should appear on your CV only if they positively strengthen your application – for example, active involvement in professional and trade associations, or pursuits which demonstrate qualities like fitness and tenacity. Any that are not directly relevant add nothing, except clutter. Oddball interests are a distinct liability – do not risk being labelled a weirdo.
- Political and religious affiliations are even more risky. Keep them to yourself, at least until you find out what your prospective employer's views are.
- Voluntary/community work falls into the same category as leisure interests, i.e. to be omitted unless directly relevant. While some potential employers may admire your public spiritedness, others may fear that you will always be running off to do good works instead of staying late in the office when you are needed.
- It is not necessary to provide references at this stage, except in the case of public sector applications.
- Addresses and telephone numbers of employers are also superfluous.
- Beware of jargon, and of abbreviations which – though universally recognised in your current environment – may be meaningless to the person reading your CV.
- If possible, avoid the risk of either over- or under-pricing yourself by omitting details of your remuneration. Should it be specifically asked for, deal with it in your covering letter, as described earlier, in Chapter 8.
- Reasons for leaving jobs are a potential minefield. Let them wait for the interview.

- Career goals and ambitions are another dicey area. Unless you are sure they match both the specific job and the future prospects in the organisation in question, leave them out.
- Once you have made a statement in your CV, you have invited the reader to ask you to justify it at interview, so do not include anything you cannot prove, if challenged to do so.
- Explain gaps between jobs, otherwise people may jump to an unfavourable conclusion.
- In particular, avoid lies. Be sparing with the truth, if you must, by omitting things completely, but do not risk getting caught in the act of trying to deceive – it will be the end of your chances of the job in question. Professional recruiters check, as a matter of routine, whether candidates actually have the qualifications they claim, while all sorts of other matters – such as dates of employment, and details of salary and benefits – are verified in the course of taking up references.

●●● How to present yourself

You should present your CV the same way you would present yourself for an interview: smart, positive, professional – conveying an image of efficiency but not going over the top by being flashy or too smooth. The following specific points need to be kept in mind.

- **Length** – A couple of pages should be enough, three at the outside. If you need to list out technical information (this may apply, for example, to IT people, academics or scientists), do so in an appendix attached to the back of your CV. Do not enclose photocopies of reference letters, detailed job descriptions or certificates relating to professional qualifications.
- **Spacing** – Do not, however, sacrifice legibility on the altar of brevity. Three well-spaced pages, using bullets, indents, clear margins and so on, will produce a more favourable impression on a tired-eyed recruiter than two cramped ones. This is why a one-page CV, for all its apparent advantages, is not generally to be recommended for a mid to senior level executive.
- **Priority** – Assuming, then, that you are going to have to rely on gaining sufficient interest from your reader to ensure that they do turn the page, remember to put 'first things first'.

After providing only the absolutely necessary personal details (name, address, telephone number, professional qualifications, relevant educational details and any foreign languages spoken), go straight into your most relevant experience and achievements.

- **Typography** – Stick to a single typeface. Mixing them creates a messy effect. Choose a clean, businesslike typeface like Times New Roman and use a size that will not cause eye strain – 12 point is ideal. Achieve variety by the use of capitalisation, boldening and – discerningly – variations in typeface. Italic is best avoided, so is underlining.

●●● Be verbally lean

Presentation is not just about layout. It is also about the words you use – or, rather, not just the words you do use, but also the ones you do not. The first rule is that every single word you employ in your CV must earn its keep, otherwise it has no business being there.

Start at the beginning. What are you going to put at the top? 'Curriculum vitae'? Does anyone really need telling that? So why put it there? Why not just head the sheet with your name?

Economise on space, as well as words. You want your reader to get to the important stuff as quickly as possible. Your address need take up only one line. Do not forget the post code – its omission is likely to be considered either careless or unbusinesslike. Another single line will be enough for home and, if applicable, office telephone numbers. Recipients of CVs do like to have your business number and will very rarely fail to be discreet in its use, but there is clearly no point in including it if you cannot talk freely from your office.

Avoid, by the way, taking economy with words to the extreme of omitting contact information completely on the grounds that your address and telephone number are on your covering letter. The two documents can, and often do, become separated.

'Age'? No, use 'Date of Birth' instead. There is no more certain way of making a CV look tired than by forgetting to update it when you have a birthday.

Marital status and numbers of children are optional. Include

them only if they help. Many employers prefer the impression of stability which is given by someone who is married with two-point-four children. On the other hand, if a job involves a lot of travel away from home, it could be an advantage to state that you are single.

Then, after dealing with qualifications, education and languages, you come to your most recent job – or, if you are really convinced it is going to do you more good than harm, your personal profile. Either way, you need to be aware of a couple more words which should be avoided at all costs: 'I' and 'me'. Once you start using them, you have to go on doing so, and there is no easier way of making yourself sound nauseatingly egocentric. Remember who the CV is for? It is supposed to be a reader-centred document, not a you-centred one.

The way to avoid those two pronouns, by the way, is not to put the whole thing in the third person. Recruiters loathe the kind of CV which has apparently been written by someone other than the subject, e.g. 'Smith spent 10 years with XYZ Co.'. The correct method is to eliminate not only 'I' and 'me', but also a lot of other unnecessary little words like 'a', 'an' and 'the' by scrapping full grammatical English and using note form. Compare the following examples for snappiness and impact:

- *I installed a fully computerised accounting system which resulted in a reduction in the amount of time it took to produce the monthly reporting package from thirteen days to seven days.*
- Installed fully computerised accounting system, reducing time taken to produce monthly reporting package from 13 days to 7.

Writing in note form also ensures that you avoid two more pet hates of people who read a lot of CVs – long sentences and heavy wedges of solid text.

The clearest way to set out your career history is to put dates to the left (months are not necessary, just years are sufficient), and indent the text. State your job title and, unless the company is a household name, indicate its size and what it does. Rather than detailing duties, which are often largely self-evident from the job title, list achievements. Give some thought to why the company was better off for your contribution and get this across in a succinct but striking manner.

Unless an earlier job is particularly relevant to your current application, go into more detail on your current or most recent position and progressively less as you work backwards. If you had several short periods of employment right at the beginning of what is now a lengthy career, you can summarise them rather than listing them individually.

●●● Finding fresh words

If eliminating words that do not earn their keep is one half of the job, then making those words you do use earn not only their keep, but also a handsome bonus, is the other half. The English language is an exceptionally rich one, with many alternative terms for any one noun or verb, adjective or adverb. Do not be lazy. Avoid serving up the same tired old words that everyone else is using. Take the trouble to find the words that precisely describe what you want to convey, words which express the individualism that makes you unique, rather than just another faceless candidate, desperate for a job.

Study the suggestions in the word lists which follow, but do not stop there. Your word processing package probably incorporates a thesaurus. If not, you can buy one in book form. Each time you want to describe something, consider all the alternatives. Select the one that sits comfortably on your shoulders, like a well-fitting jacket. Avoid using outlandish terms just to be different – you can achieve a striking impact simply by careful thought and accurate choice.

To take one or two examples of how to make your personal qualities shine through, here are a couple which impressed recruiters who were interviewed in the course of compiling this book.

- A recruitment consultant who was trying to fill a vacancy for an auditor to work for a large European financial institution – not exactly the sort of job that has the majority of people jumping up and down with excitement – was struck by a CV which said, 'Particularly enjoyed audits of international organisations in finance sector'. The applicant had not only drawn attention to relevant experience, but had also personalised that statement.
- Another candidate, working in a business where security was

vital, said, 'Regarded by my boss as the safest pair of hands in the whole company'. This applicant had correctly identified the fact that reliability was what the reader of the CV would place at the top of the person specification for the job in question, not executive Rambo qualities like being dynamic and results orientated.

Get the idea? All right, now have a go yourself. Here are the word lists (they are all action words, not adjectives), together with a sample CV layout on pages 170-71.

Achievement	Initiative	Leadership	Problem solving
accelerated	created	controlled	analysed
accomplished	designed	developed	corrected
achieved	devised	directed	cut
attained	established	drove	eliminated
carried out	extended	guided	ended
completed	formulated	headed	evaluated
conducted	generated	inspired	examined
delivered	improvised	led	identified
demonstrated	initiated	managed	investigated
doubled	instituted	organised	refined
effected	introduced	revitalised	reduced
enhanced	launched	undertook	reorganised
enlarged	originated		repositioned
exceeded	pioneered		reshaped
expanded	redesigned		resolved
expedited	set up		restructured
finished	started		revamped
implemented			reviewed
improved			revised
increased			simplified
negotiated			solved
obtained			streamlined
perfected			strengthened
performed			tackled
produced			traced
secured			trimmed
succeeded			turned round
surpassed			uncovered
tripled			unified
won			utilised

At first glance the sample CV overleaf may not look dramatically different from many others you have seen, and this is quite intentional. Gimmicks and unfamiliar formats do more harm than good. What is different from so many CVs that recruiters receive, and reject, is that this CV makes it so easy for its readers to pick out the kinds of things they want to see – Hilary Brown's international exposure, computer systems experience and so on – as well as making the excellent career progression stand out. Careful selection and the elimination of all irrelevancies, combined with clear layout, means that this CV sells itself – or, rather, its writer. Does yours do the same?

●●● Reviews and wraps

In any professional organisation, a draft report always gets reviewed carefully before dispatch, whether it is being presented to a committee or board, or being sent off to clients. This review process usually involves someone other than the writer taking a look at the draft. A fresh pair of eyes often spots things the writer, who has been too closely immersed in it for too long, may no longer have the objectivity to notice.

So, when you have had a first go at reviewing and editing, and have tried to anticipate – and answer – the questions you think the reader might want answered, ask someone else to have a look at your draft. Find someone qualified to pass a reasonably expert judgement. While colleagues or friends may be able to help, you could kill two birds with one stone and actually use your CV to do a bit of networking, especially if you are sounding out a new area you wish to move into.

Get more than one view if possible. Each person will have his or her own quirks, and you will never please everyone 100 per cent, but listen for the consensus. Try asking the question, 'If you were ploughing through two or three hundred CVs, would mine stand out?'

And when, finally, you really do have the best effort you can possibly produce – and have run your word processor's spell-check over it – take care not to let yourself down with your printing and stationery. The aim here should be for a crisp, professional appearance without going over the top. An excessively glossy presentation will turn recruiters off just as quickly as a

HILARY BROWN

Address: 23 Laburnum Gardens, Suburbia on Thames, Middlesex MX9 9XM

Telephone: Home: 01999 000999 Office: 01999 989898

Date of Birth: 17/9/54

Qualifications: FCA

Education: Bristol University: BA (1st class), History

Languages: Fluent French

Career History:

1989 to date **Global Computer Corporation**
(Turnover £4billion worldwide, £600million Europe)

1991 to date **Financial Controller, Europe**

Report to VP, Europe, plus functionally to VP, Finance in Chicago.
Control 6 staff in London plus further 12 on continent.

Achievements:

- * Introduced centralised treasury system covering all seven European subsidiaries, reducing interest paid on overdrafts by 24%.
- * Reduced average debtor days throughout Europe by 18%.
- * Implemented completely new computerised accounting systems, cutting time taken to produce monthly reporting package from 11 days to 7.

1989 - 1991 **Finance Manager, Global France**

- * Set up accounting systems in newly established French subsidiary, joining as only the fourth person recruited at greenfield site.
- * As member of small management team, helped develop the company to sales of £35million and second highest profitability in Europe.

1983 - 1989

International Fragrances Corporation
(Cosmetics distributor. Turnover £900million)

1987 - 1989

Management Accountant

Based at worldwide headquarters in London. Responsible for budget preparation and management reporting, setting timetables, ensuring figures received on time from 23 subsidiaries, checking accuracy, consolidating and producing commentary for parent company board.

1985 - 1987

Systems Accountant

Co-ordination between group MIS department and users on all new accounting systems, from initial specification through to successful implementation.

1983 - 1985

Operational Auditor

Genuine operational auditing, rather than internal checking function. Visited 14 different subsidiaries in Europe, the Far East and Australasia.

1976 - 1983

Coopers & Andersen

Articled to this major international firm of Chartered Accountants. Rose to Audit Manager, achieving all promotions at earliest possible opportunities. Audit clients were mainly international groups, both US and UK owned, in the manufacturing and service sectors.

Other Interests

Member of Institute's Anglo-French liaison group

Run half marathons

tatty, amateurish one, probably because it smacks of a factory produced bulk mailshot.

You do not, therefore, have to spend a fortune on a laser printer. Bubble jet or daisy wheel will do just as well – but not the dot matrix that came with your seven-year-old child's toy computer, and certainly not that old typewriter with its uneven print and the odd letter that keeps trying to jump up above all the others.

Having taken the trouble to achieve high quality printing, avoid - if at all possible – faxing your CV. The print always lacks crispness, and the paper creates a distinctly tacky impression.

The same need for a balanced approach applies to stationery as it does to print quality. Fancy folders are not appreciated, at least not in the UK, but do print out on a decent quality white paper, even when you are running your CV through a photocopier. White? Yes. Although cream, buff or pale blue are generally acceptable, a main board director of a highly regarded merchant bank was recently seen to cast a CV abruptly aside with the comment, 'Blue paper! No way am I going to employ someone who sends in a CV on blue paper!'

You may not be able to predict all the whims of the people you are targeting, but there is no point in taking avoidable risks. Keep the presentation professional and then let the carefully chosen content do the rest.

●●● International aspects

The first point that needs to be made is that you need to translate your CV into the language in question or, in some cases, languages – plural. In Belgium it is customary to have a CV available in French, Flemish and, if you are dealing with subsidiaries of UK or US corporations, English too.

Custom and practice varies enormously from one country to another. In America you never mention age or date of birth (age discrimination is illegal), and you omit details of marital status, children, religion and nationality. You also print your resumé on an American paper size, not on A4. In Germany you give greater prominence to qualifications. In France it used to be the norm to attach a photograph, but is now becoming less so.

What it all adds up to is the fact that you just have to have local

knowledge, gained either through previous personal experience of working in the country in question or through obtaining advice and guidance from people who do have that knowledge.

“What you need to do is whet the reader’s appetite, not cause indigestion.”

belles lettres – the other half of your marketing brochure

Letters are far more flexible than CVs. People have fewer preconceived notions about them, and those expectations they do have relate mainly to presentation rather than content. On the other hand, flexibility brings its own dangers. In many ways, it is easier to write a good CV than a good letter. You have a standard format and a set of rules to follow.

This chapter will show you how you can have the best of both worlds, exploiting the flexibility of the letter yet working with some broad templates and guidelines to ensure that your correspondence puts you one step ahead of the average job-hunter. Before looking at what should go into letters which are designed to achieve a whole range of quite different objectives, we will take a look at a set of basic criteria which apply to all letters, regardless of their specific purpose.

- Put yourself in the reader’s shoes. Before you even start typing your letter, get clearly in mind what the benefit to the recipient is going to be.
- Be equally clear about what your own purpose is. In the context of job hunting, it is usually, but not always, to get a meeting.
- Remember that your reader is almost certainly a busy person, with no time to waste. Ensure that your first sentence captures the reader’s attention. If it does not, then the rest of the letter is likely to be at best skimmed, if read at all.
- Ask your readers questions. This makes them feel that they simply have to read on.

- Do not lapse into excessively formal language. Try to write very largely as you would speak if you were actually sitting in the recipient's office.
- Be short and sweet. Keep the letter to one side of typed A4 if at all possible. Avoid long sentences and paragraphs. Use short, punchy words rather than polysyllabic pomposities.
- Use bullet points and tabulation to make key items stand out, rather than risking them being missed because they are buried in a solid slab of text.
- End your letter with a clear and positive request for action.
- Observe the same presentational rules as for CVs – good quality white A4 paper, businesslike typeface, clear margins and spacing. Go easy, however, on emboldening and variations in type size.
- Finally, do not forget to sign the thing. One recruitment consultant estimated that at least 5 per cent of the job-hunters who write to him forget to add their signature – a sure sign either of carelessness or of bulk mailings.

Now, keeping these points in mind, here are some specifics.

●●● Not just an ad on

Some of the greatest lost opportunities occur when people are responding to advertisements. Perhaps because so many ads end with something like, 'send your CV to . . .' many applicants say little more in their covering letter than that they are interested in the job in question and that they are enclosing, as requested, their curriculum vitae.

Put yourself in the shoes of the recruiter reading a pile of two or three hundred applications, and looking for the handful of key criteria which are going to rule each candidate either in or out. Would you not be pleased if, instead of having to wade through the whole CV each time, you found that the job had been done for you? Example A at the end of this chapter illustrates the principle.

If the advertisement highlights five criteria and you only possess four, just list out those four and ignore the other one. Since most recruiters divide letters into three piles on the first screening – probables, possibles and rejects – you should at least end up in the possibles, if not the probables.

If you match only one or two of the criteria, you obviously cannot use this format – but then, if you are that far off the specification, you should really not be wasting your time applying at all.

Assuming, however, that you are a reasonably close match, here is the way to ensure that you go straight into the 'probables' pile.

- Avoid being too familiar. Although many recruiters put their full name on their ads, they tend to react unfavourably to a letter which starts 'Dear Bill' or 'Dear Sue'.
- Use a clear heading which quotes the title of the advertisement, the publication in which it appeared and any reference number, e.g.:

Production Director, *Sunday Times*, 21 May 1995, Ref. GP/179.

- Catch the reader's attention in the first sentence by demonstrating that you have a genuine reason for being attracted to this specific position. Do not just say, 'I wish to apply for . . .' Say something like, 'I was particularly interested in your advertisement because I enjoy the challenge involved in extensively restructuring manufacturing facilities while continuing to operate to tight deadlines'.
- Then go straight into the main body of the letter, in which you show how you match the requirements of the post. Do be sure to use a tabulated format rather than solid text. It is so much easier for the reader to take in.
- End with a brief but positive sentence like 'I look forward to hearing from you and to having the opportunity to discuss this position with you'. While this can be preceded by a statement that your CV is, as requested, enclosed, this is somewhat superfluous. Recruiters have seen enough CVs in their time to be in little doubt as to what the document attached to your letter actually is.

●●● A letter without a CV

Sometimes an advertisement simply says, 'Write to . . .' In these circumstances your best bet might still be to use the kind of letter discussed above and to send it off together with your CV. On the other hand, in the following situations a letter on its own is likely to have a greater chance of success.

- The advertisement may have said little, or have been vague about, the required criteria and it may therefore be difficult to produce a 'You require – I have' response.
- Your most recent experience may not, in this particular case, be the most relevant, and you may prefer to avoid your CV sending the wrong message.
- If your career history is a bit patchy or has gaps, you may not wish to draw attention to this, which both a chronological and a functional CV do in their different ways.
- Just occasionally there may be a case where you fall somewhat short of the advertised requirements, but it is clear from what is said in the ad that you do have other qualities which mean that you could make an exceptional contribution. If – and only if – this really is the case, then it will take a well thought out letter to demonstrate your suitability.

While this kind of letter is to some extent a letter and CV combined, the last thing you should try to do is to get the whole of your CV into the letter. Quite apart from the fact that that would make it far too long, the whole essence of the exercise is to be selective.

In order to ensure that you select the right things, keep firmly in mind the purpose of the letter. Assuming that this is to get yourself a meeting, then what you need to do is whet the reader's appetite, not cause indigestion. The format should be as follows:

- Clear heading.
- Attention-grabbing opening sentence explaining why you are interested in the advertised position.
- Succinct summary of your strongest USPs. Highlight your most relevant achievements and give a brief rundown of those aspects of your career which are going to get you an interview. For example, if you have 25 years' work experience of which 10 are in the advertiser's industry (publishing), all you need say is, 'My last 10 years have been spent in the publishing industry'.
- Better still, use at least some bullet points and tabulation – especially for the key, factual items.
- End with a positive statement saying what you want, i.e. a meeting.

This kind of letter not only emphasises the points which sell you most strongly, it also enables you to avoid drawing attention to any points which may be considered as negative, such as the

fact that you may be above or below the advertised age parameters. A CV on the other hand inevitably draws attention to such matters.

●●● Writing on spec

A speculative letter to a potential employer may have a number of similarities to the kinds of letters we have just been looking at, but it needs even more thought before you launch into it. When you respond to an advertisement, you know that there is a position to be filled and you usually have a reasonably clear set of criteria (the person specification part of the ad) to use as a structure for your letter.

In the case of a speculative application you may be writing because you have noticed a news item which suggests that the company is likely to have recruitment needs, or you could simply be applying to a company to which you believe you could make a contribution, in the hope that they just might either have a current vacancy or be sufficiently interested in your background and achievements to create one for you. Furthermore, you will certainly not have a person specification to which to relate your selling points. You will have to identify, by intelligent research, the potential problem to which you could be the answer, and then decide which of your assets to highlight in your letter.

Your research will also have to include identifying the person to whom the letter should be addressed. This should be the most relevant decision maker – usually the chief executive in a smaller company, or a functional head, such as the finance, production or sales director, in a large one.

As we explained in Chapter 12, if you are to achieve your objective of obtaining a meeting it is better not to ask, in so many words, for a job, but rather to use phrases like 'seeking a new challenge', which imply that you would welcome a job offer but also leave the way open for a more general discussion.

This leads to the question of whether you are more likely to achieve your defined purpose by sending a letter on its own or whether to accompany it with your CV. There is no hard and fast rule – you have to make a separate judgement on each occasion. Where only limited aspects of your career are relevant, use a letter on its own. Where there are a number of areas which could

appeal to a prospective employer, include the CV as well.

Whichever choice you make, the format of the letter will be broadly the same:

- a brief, attention-grabbing introduction explaining why you are writing to that particular company and what benefits you can offer to it;
- a statement of your USPs – either one or two paragraphs, or a series of bullet points;
- a clear request for what you want, i.e. a meeting;
- a closing sentence mentioning that you will be telephoning within a few days to arrange a convenient date and time.

●●● Headhunters and agencies

The main difference when you are writing on spec to headhunters and agencies is what you say in the opening paragraph. Whether you like it or not, recruitment consultants always want to categorise you. Partly because of the way their minds work, and partly because of the way their computerised databases are constructed, they like to be able to define you in terms of:

- your core discipline, e.g. finance, HR, IT, production, sales;
- the business sector(s) in which your experience lies;
- the kind of job you are looking for;
- your salary expectations;
- the locations you will consider.

Define these at the outset and you will get off on the right foot. Fail to do so, and you risk irritating your reader, who will inevitably be a busy person with only a very limited amount of time to spend on each application.

Another thing which at best irritates recruitment consultants and at worst completely scuppers your credibility as an applicant is being too vague about what you want to do. It is instant death to say, 'I am open to anything' even if, in your heart of hearts, you are. Headhunters expect you to be focused and even agencies, who want to be able to market you widely, expect you to be clear about those options you will consider and those you will not. This goes back to what we said at the beginning of the book: it is all a question of targeting.

●●● Examples and excesses

The rest of this chapter is taken up with examples of the different kinds of letters that have been discussed. However, before you start rubbing your hands in glee and assuming that you can get out of all the hard work, a word or two of warning.

First, never copy anyone else's letters parrot fashion. If your letters are going to work for you, then it is essential that your personality shines through them. Make sure that they reflect your individual attitudes and feelings. Use your own words and phrases.

Secondly, it is worth repeating that you should never copy American examples. They tend to be so over the top as to make the average British recipient cringe. Avoid anything that sounds insincere or over familiar. It ought to be possible to achieve an effect which is both positive and professional.

Finally, here are a few words about the examples.

- **Example A – Advertised vacancy, covering letter to accompany CV** – comes from a candidate who meets all main requirements specified in the advertisement and who therefore has only to be sure not to be missed in the screening process. This is achieved by clearly tabulating how the key criteria are met.
- **Example B – Advertised vacancy, application letter without CV** – comes from a candidate who in fact lacked one of the key advertised requirements, a professional qualification, but did possess some exceptionally relevant experience. Whereas a CV would have highlighted the lack of qualification, the narrative format of the letter emphasises the candidate's pluses without drawing attention to this shortcoming.
- **Example C – Letter to headhunter, with CV** – is a straightforward letter to an executive search firm, highlighting an impressive career record and relying on this, plus careful targeting of a headhunter operating in the areas in which the candidate has been working, to attract interest.
- **Example D – Letter to headhunter, alternative approach** – was suggested by a leading outplacement consultant and plays on two factors: the natural curiosity of headhunters; and their eagerness not to miss out on any opportunity to pounce on new business.

Example E – Speculative letter to potential employer, referring to a news item – comes from a candidate who has spotted the fact that a company is entering a phase of regional expansion and who, having excellent experience in the business in question, is getting one step ahead before jobs are advertised or put out to headhunters.

● **Example F – Speculative letter to potential employer, vacancy likely to exist** – is aimed at a firm of management consultants. Such firms tend to recruit on a frequent basis and are therefore a good bet for a speculative approach.

● **Example G – Speculative letter to potential employer, creating a vacancy** – is from a jobhunter who has identified a benefit which other firms of a similar nature to the one being targeted have already seen and exploited. Bringing this to the attention of the firm may well result in the creation of a new position for which the writer of the letter could be the one and only candidate.

Example A – Advertised vacancy, covering letter to accompany CV

1 The Pines
etc
etc

31 May 1995

Mr L Challis
Managing Director
Templar Hotel Group
etc
etc

Dear Mr Challis

IT Manager, Sunday Times: 28 May 1995, Your Ref. CD/749

Your advertisement caught my attention because it offers a new challenge in an environment which I find extremely stimulating and enjoyable. What is more, as you will see from the following summary, my background is particularly relevant to your requirements:

Hotel Experience	Last 8 years in this sector, with major UK and US groups
IBM AS400	Implemented AS400 in both current and penultimate jobs
International Exposure	Have worked in 7 different European countries plus USA
Languages	Fluent business French, working knowledge of German

I would welcome the opportunity to discuss this appointment with you and look forward to hearing from you.

Yours sincerely

Example B – Advertised vacancy, application letter without CV

2 Chestnut Lane
etc
etc

31 May 1995

Mr J Bunyan
Managing Director
Progress Construction Co. Ltd.
etc
etc

Dear Mr Bunyan

Financial Controller, Daily Telegraph: 25 May 1995, Ref: DT/431

Your advertisement was of particular interest to me, since I have a proven success record in implementing improved management information systems in the construction industry.

During my five years with O'Reilly and Mulholland, we made several acquisitions of companies which had systems ranging from the outmoded to the virtually non-existent. In each case I upgraded management reporting in such a way as to achieve compatibility with group accounting policies whilst retaining the flexibility to provide executives in each company with information in a format which reflected the individual characteristics of their particular businesses.

Having spent this period with a mechanical and electrical sub-contractor, I have gained an excellent understanding of the relationship with main contractors and feel that, by becoming a poacher turned gamekeeper, I could make a strong contribution to your own organisation.

My earlier career included articles with a firm of accountants which had a number of construction company audits. Then, prior to joining O'Reilly and Mulholland, I gained valuable computer implementation experience in an American engineering group where I was exposed to exceptionally tight reporting deadlines. Now age 35, I am looking for a Financial Controllership in a group offering opportunities for long term career development.

I would be pleased to discuss this position with you.

Yours sincerely

Example C – Letter to headhunter, with CV

2 Cedar Grove
etc
etc

31 May 1995

Mr H Hunter
Eurosearch International
etc
etc

Dear Mr Hunter

As Business Development Director of Cormorant Holdings I have, over the last four years, been instrumental in increasing sales sixfold, and in broadening the base of the group's activities to protect it against cyclical influences in any one market. However, with the group now entering a consolidation phase, I cannot see the same level of challenge being available to me in the immediate future, and I am therefore considering alternative career options.

As you will see from the enclosed CV, my experience has been primarily in the distribution and service sectors, and I see myself as being most marketable in those areas. Being aware that you have a number of major service industry clients, I wondered whether you might be handling any suitable opportunities for me.

I am willing to relocate anywhere in the UK or continental Europe and am currently earning £85,000 plus the usual executive benefits.

I would be pleased to meet you at any time to discuss this matter further.

Yours sincerely

Example D – Letter to headhunter, alternative approach

3 Willow Walk
etc
etc

31 July 1995

Mr H Hunter
Eurosearch International
etc
etc

Dear Mr Hunter

You may well already be aware, through your usual grapevines, of the recent events at the Hawkswell Group which culminated in my decision to tender my resignation after eight very successful years, the last three of which I spent as Sales and Marketing Director.

However, in the event that the full ramifications of the boardroom reshuffle, and its effects on the various divisions, have not yet reached your ears I wondered whether you would be interested in meeting so that we can catch up on things.

Naturally, I would also appreciate your advice on the direction in which my own career should now be heading.

I will call your secretary within the next few days to see if we can find a mutually convenient date and time to get together.

Yours sincerely

Example E – Speculative letter to potential employer, referring to a news item

4 The Oaks
etc
etc

31 May 1995

Mr B King
Chief Executive
Fast Food Inc
etc
etc

Dear Mr King

My interest was aroused by the recent article in the Financial Times indicating that, now you have outlets throughout Greater London, you are planning to extend your network into the regions.

As you will see from my enclosed CV, I have fourteen years' experience in the fast food business in the UK, having worked my way up to Area Manager with one of the most successful burger chains.

Whilst I could go further with my present employers, their growth has levelled out. In any case, what I enjoy most is building up new operations from scratch – hence the attraction of your expansion plans.

Whilst I can easily travel to most parts of England from my current base in the Midlands, I would be happy to relocate, if required, for the right career opening.

I would welcome the opportunity to meet you to discuss this matter further and will call you early next week to see if we can arrange an appointment.

Yours sincerely

Example F – Speculative letter to potential employer, vacancy likely to exist

6 Beech Close
etc
etc

31 May 1995

Mr O Richards
Chairman
Interconsult
etc
etc

Dear Mr Richards

In the course of my fifteen years as a Human Resources professional, I have worked in both manufacturing and service industries and have gained wide exposure to all aspects of the HR function. Since I particularly enjoy new challenges and the problem solving aspects of my work, I am seriously considering developing my career in the field of management consultancy.

As one of the leading firms of consultants in the UK, I wonder whether you might have a requirement, either immediately or in the foreseeable future, for someone with my background.

I enclose my CV and would welcome the opportunity to talk to you, or to the appropriate manager within your firm, both about my interest in management consultancy generally and about any possible openings within Interconsult.

I will call you next week with a view to arranging an appointment.

Yours sincerely

Example G – Speculative letter to employer, creating a vacancy

7 The Limes
etc
etc

31 May 1995

Mr F Cholmondeley
Senior Partner
Beauchamp & Farquharson
etc
etc

Dear Mr Cholmondeley

I have noticed that many leading law firms are recruiting professional managers to run their 'back office' functions, thus leaving partners free to generate increased fee income. Although, as far as I am aware, your own firm has not yet taken this step, I wonder if you may be considering doing so.

Should this be the case I would, as the enclosed CV demonstrates, be well equipped to take over responsibility for your finance function. Four years ago I was appointed to what was then a newly created appointment as Financial Controller of a firm of chartered accountants with thirty-five partners. Having now upgraded their computerised work in progress and billing systems, streamlined management reporting, and introduced cash flow forecasting, I feel ready for a new challenge.

I would welcome the opportunity to discuss this matter with you and will call within the next few days to see if you would be interested in arranging a meeting.

Yours sincerely

“Do not skip this section if you already have a near perfect CV.”

building a smarter CV

The CV example on pages 170 and 171 speaks for itself. University degree, professional qualifications and languages spoken all stand out. It takes only a glance at the work history to identify impressive achievements, relevant experience of working overseas and of implementing computer systems, and consistent career progression. The content was there to begin with. The presentation has ensured that its impact is not lost.

It is not everyone, though, who has such an impressive career. What do you do if your pedigree is somewhat less pure?

If the content is not there, presentation can help only to a very limited extent. Rather more can be achieved by:

- concentrating on your most marketable qualities;
- targeting your search carefully;
- using the telephone and letters, rather than a CV where this highlights, even if only by the omission of what people normally expect to see, your shortcomings.

An even more positive contribution, however, can be made by consciously building a better CV. You may not be able to change the past, but there is an enormous amount that you can do to influence the future. Furthermore, while some of the actions you may need to take will involve too long a timescale to help in the immediate job search, there are others which can have an impact in the relatively short term.

Do not, by the way, skip this section if you already have a near perfect CV. Right now you may well be all set up to make your next career move, but what about the one after that? Career progression is largely about looking ahead and choosing the right stepping stones. What looks like the obvious step at this point in time may not be the best one in terms of finding the most effective route to your longer term goal.

●●● Past, present and future

The first thing you need to do in order to build a more marketable CV is to make sure you are looking in the right direction. There is nothing to be gained by worrying either about mistakes you have made in your career to date or about things you should have done but have failed to get around to. Even professional recruiters do not expect you to be perfect. They will overlook the odd minus, so long as it is outweighed by enough pluses.

Take a piece of paper, then, and – bearing in mind the kind of job you are looking for – write down everything you could do to give yourself a better chance of getting it. You will probably find it useful to divide the paper into two columns or halves, one for the short term (things you can do within the next few months) and the other for the longer term (things which will take years rather than months and will therefore help you to get the next job but one, rather than assisting with the immediate job search).

Take professional qualifications, for example. If you have continually been putting off taking the last set of exams, a determined effort to get them out of the way could be a relatively short-term aim. For those who have never even made a start on their studies, on the other hand, the objective of becoming professionally qualified has to go into the longer term category.

A similar situation exists with languages. If you were once fluent but have become rusty through lack of practice, a quick refresher may well be sufficient. Learning from scratch, unless you can afford the time and cost of a highly concentrated language lab course, will inevitably take some time.

Many skill updates, on the other hand, fit comfortably into the short-term category. It need not take very long to become familiar with a new spreadsheet package or to get yourself up to date on any recent legislation which is particularly relevant to the area in which you operate.

If you are in work, you may be able to get your employer to send you on appropriate courses, or at least to help with the cost. If you are unemployed you may have to think twice about investing significant sums of money but there are usually ways round this, like subsidised adult education classes or home study

packages. When you are out of work, learning something new has the added advantages of providing intellectual stimulation which may otherwise be lacking, of making you feel that you are achieving something and, where it involves going to classes or courses, of giving you the chance to meet some new people.

●●● The experience factor

Perhaps the most important single factor, though, is your actual work experience. Think about all the years you have been at work. How much of the time were you actually doing things which added to the marketability of your CV?

Some people are lucky. They can point to a long history of new challenges. Many on the other hand will, when they sit and think about it, realise that there were periods, often long ones, when they were just doing the same thing over and over again. Think about your own last five years. Were they five years of added CV value, or just one year's tasks repeated five times over?

Now come even closer to the present day. Consider your last 12 months of work experience. If you had written your CV once at the beginning of that period, then again at the end of it, how much more marketable would you have become? Would that second CV, in fact, have looked noticeably different at all?

If concentrating your mind on these questions has made you realise that you have been getting into a rut, now is the time to do something about it. Do not waste time crying over spilt milk, just start adding to your marketability right away. You can do this regardless of whether you are currently in work or unemployed.

●●● Taking the initiative

The proactive approach starts with a 'gap analysis' – a look at where you want to get to, the experience you need in order to get there, what experience you have already and, by comparing one with the other, where you fall short. If the gap is relatively small, you may be able to fill it by undertaking some short-term, project type work. Where it is larger, you may need to consider tailoring your immediate job search to finding a position which

will provide a stepping stone to achieving your ultimate goal in a few years' time.

If you are in employment you can often volunteer to undertake a particular project, or join a committee or working party, which will give you the experience you seek. It may also be possible to organise a secondment for a few months, or even a year or two, either within your organisation or outside it. Management consultancy firms, for example, sometimes make secondments of senior staff, or even partners, to major clients such as banks or government departments. The consultancy practice benefits from the contacts and inside knowledge gained, while the individual in question obtains valuable experience, expands their network, and earns a good few brownie points into the bargain.

Ideally, of course, there should always be a mutual benefit, a win-win situation. In practice this is not difficult to achieve. If you are expanding your capabilities by breaking new ground, you are not only likely to be providing an immediate benefit to your employers, but will also be of greater value to them in the future. The people who are at greatest risk of being made redundant when times get tough are those who have ceased to add value to themselves, the organisation or its customers.

If you are out of work, you can use interim or temporary work, whether full-time or part-time, as a means of increasing your marketability. While in these situations clients inevitably want to hire people who, by dint of their existing knowledge and experience, can hit the ground running, it is rare for an assignment not to add something to your value to a future employer.

●●● Some further angles

Looking into the longer term, those who really want to broaden their experience should give serious consideration to a spell in management consultancy. A major practice once ran a recruitment advertisement which said, 'If you want to pack ten years' experience into the next five, have you thought about a spell in management consultancy?'

The broadest experience is normally to be had in the generalist practices which have not yet grown so large that consultants have become pigeon holed into narrow specialist divisions. When attending interviews for consultancy jobs be sure to check not

only on the range of work which you will be expected to undertake but also on the duration of assignments. If you get stuck on a single assignment for two or three years, your learning curve will start to look more like a horizontal line.

Those whose work, whether permanent or temporary, does not provide the opportunities they seek to plug the gaps they have identified in their experience should consider looking outside the field of paid jobs. Professional societies, trade associations, voluntary organisations, sports clubs and other leisure groups can all offer openings for the proactive individual to acquire new skills and experience.

Finally, while your first thought should be to plug identified gaps, do keep an eye open for any chance that arises to gain additional experience which, though not on your immediate target list, could be useful.

Take the case of Tim, who worked for a large accountancy practice. As part of his ongoing development, he was asked to help out from time to time with the firm's training programme, working alongside professional tutors who were brought in from outside. The immediate benefit to Tim was an improvement in his presentation skills and in his general confidence with groups of people. However, when Tim's division lost its biggest client and he was one of a number of people made redundant, he used one of the trainers he had worked with as a network contact. The outcome exceeded his wildest expectations. The training firm asked him if he would like to consider switching careers and coming to work for them. That was four years ago. Tim is now one of their most successful tutors.

The moral of Tim's story is that it never does any harm to acquire new skills and experience – or new contacts.

●●● New frontiers

In the mind of many an ambitious executive, the most attractive of all new horizons may well be an international career and, to judge by the writings of some business journalists, you would think that opportunities for such careers grew on trees. In reality, unfortunately, this concept currently has about as much substance as that other great love of the business media, the paperless office.

In spite of the remorseless expansion of multinational corporations and the somewhat more hesitant progress of the EU (European Union) towards European integration, most organisations still prefer to fill senior positions with a national of the country in which the job in question is based. The reasons for this include the following.

- Cultural differences, which make it difficult for – say – a German to be a successful manager in an Italian company, or vice versa.
- Knowledge of local markets.
- Fear that the appointee, or their family, will not settle. Due to factors ranging from climate and culture to children's education and spouse's career, failure rates – especially for those lacking previous overseas experience – are high.
- Even if short-term problems do not arise, there tend to be concerns over length of tenure in the medium term, since overseas nationals are seen as being likely to want either to return home in due course, or to move on somewhere else.
- Costs of relocation.
- Language – to fill a managerial role, complete business fluency is required, and that is almost impossible to achieve without actually working in a country.
- Difficulties in obtaining work permits – although EU nationals can move freely within member states, moves elsewhere present far greater difficulties. The US, for example, has very tough legislation, while it is about as easy to get into Switzerland to work as it is to discover the identity of the holder of a numbered bank account.

Being realistic

In order to overcome such a long list of handicaps, there have to be some very positive benefits to justify employing an overseas national. The situations in which the advantages do outweigh the disadvantages fall mainly into the following categories:

- people with rare technical skills;
- high performing chief executives;
- developing countries importing expertise which they cannot find at home;
- multinational corporations making internal transfers of existing staff.

Assuming that you are neither one of the world's leading biotechnologists nor a second Sir Colin Marshall, we can concentrate on the last two options.

Back in the 1960s and 1970s, even into the early 1980s, plenty of opportunities existed for UK citizens, and other nationals of the more developed countries, to take a two- or three-year contract in places like Africa and the Middle East, and come back with a greatly improved bank balance. Localisation, together with the prolonged worldwide recession, has largely seen an end to that. The relatively few opportunities which do exist these days are in different locations, places like South America, China and Eastern Europe which – unlike Britain's former colonies – are not English speaking. What is more, they are not paying the inflated salaries which used to be on offer in the oil-rich Gulf states.

In any case, emerging nations are interested in expatriates from developed nations only in the short to medium term, until they have their infrastructure in place and have used the expats to train up their own nationals to take over. This kind of experience will not necessarily do wonders for your future marketability back home.

Your best bet is therefore to obtain a job in the UK with a British, US or European group and then work yourself a transfer overseas. Some multinationals have a positive policy of developing teams of mixed nationalities, usually based at their worldwide, or in the case of US companies, European headquarters. This is particularly likely to happen in marketing. International companies may have a central marketing team made up of representatives of each of the major countries in which they operate so that products and strategies take account of consumer preferences in the various local markets.

While English may well be widely spoken at the continental HQ of, say, a US corporation, your chances of getting a posting will nevertheless be significantly enhanced by some existing linguistic accomplishments. You can then use a spell in Europe to acquire true business fluency. An MBA will also help you on your way, especially if it comes from an internationally renowned business school like INSEAD in Fontainebleau, France.

Once you have had one spell in a foreign location, and have proved that you can *get* both at work and in domestic terms

to a different culture, you will then find it easier to make subsequent international moves. It is breaking the ice for the first time that is the greatest problem.

*“Can you do the job,
will you fit into the
organisation and do
you want to do the
job?”*

part four
...
closing the sale

*“Each time
you attend an
interview, you are
in a make or break
situation.”*

interviews – the myths and the reality

You are not going to get that new job without having an interview. Even when an opportunity arises directly out of networking or a speculative application, rather than through an advertisement, headhunter or agency, there will be an interview. It may be less formal, but do not be fooled by that. No one is going to invest tens of thousands of pounds a year in you without checking you out. Nor, if you are sensible, will you accept a new position before you have found out as much as you possibly can about the company, the job, your boss, the way your performance will be measured and so on.

Before a senior position is offered and accepted there will, in practice, normally be not one, but two or three interviews, sometimes even more. The length of an interview can vary from 30 minutes or less to several hours, although 1 to 1½ hours is about average. There is just as great a variation, too, in the interviewers you will face, both in their approach and in their quality. What is more, while some organisations rely on interviews alone, others use tests, assessment centres, presentations, report writing and a variety of other aids to the selection process.

The bottom line, however, is that each time you attend an interview, you are in a make or break situation. The future of your career, to an extent your whole life, depends on the outcome of the brief amount of time you spend in that inevitably artificial situation. Perhaps it is this that has given rise to the many myths which surround the interview – myths which need to be exploded if you want to get ahead of the competition and increase your interview success rate.

●●● The big fight

The first, and most dangerous, myth is that the interview is a contest between you and the interviewer, the object being to score points off your opponent. While an interview may be challenging – indeed it is in your interests, if your strengths are to be brought out, that it should be – there is a world of difference between a stimulating discussion and a punch up.

The outcome of a properly conducted interview should be the same as that of a successful negotiation: win-win. The negotiations which get locked into a situation in which one party is perceived as beating the other are the ones that have failed. All too often, in fact, their ultimate outcome is not even win-lose but lose-lose, with neither party really gaining anything. A professional interviewer will aim not for confrontation but rapport, and you should be prepared to reciprocate. The two of you can then use the limited amount of time at your disposal productively, rather than wasting it by playing silly games.

●●● The Gestapo

Another myth, favoured by the less combative, rather more defensive, kind of candidate, is that the term 'interview' is really just a euphemism for 'interrogation'. They ask the questions, you answer them.

Anyone who suffers from this misconception should substitute 'meeting', not 'interrogation' for the word 'interview'. To treat the interview as a one-way process is a fundamental error. If the process is to work effectively, then it must operate on a two-way basis.

In a sense, of course, it is easy to see how this myth arises. You are summoned to their offices. The interviewer seems to be in control of everything from the layout of the chairs to the length and structure of the session. You seem to be at a disadvantage right from the start.

If this is how you feel about interviews, try adopting a different approach. Imagine that you have been invited to someone else's home as a guest. Since it is their home, you naturally observe the basic courtesies. You arrive when you said you would, let them show you in, wait to be asked to take a seat and so on.

They show you the same courtesies, offering tea or coffee, making sure you are comfortable and outlining the programme they have arranged for you. Then you both get on with enjoying each other's company.

Enjoying? What – an interview? Yes. Why not? If, when you say goodbye, both you and the interviewer can genuinely say, 'I enjoyed meeting you', then you probably succeeded in establishing the kind of rapport which is the bedrock of a good interview.

●●● The stress interview

So, is there really no such thing as a stress interview? Given that senior executives need to be able to cope with stress, do interviewers not try to simulate it in an attempt to see how well you cope?

The short answer is that the stress interview is talked about far more than it is actually used. Professional recruiters know that the way people deal with simulated stress in an interview is a poor predictor of the way they will actually respond to stressful situations in real life. The pros also know that they have far more to gain by making you feel relaxed and opening you up, than by putting you on edge and making you defensive. If they do challenge and probe in the course of a discussion, this will normally be done in a firm but fair way.

You are more likely to experience stress when you meet an untrained interviewer. Although the majority will be affable, probably displaying more warmth than the brisk and efficient professional recruiter, it has to be said that a proportion of people who get to the top do behave in a manner which is overtly aggressive, even boorish and downright belligerent. Regardless of whether this is simply put on in order to test your mettle, or whether it is how they always treat people, the golden rule in responding to such behaviour is to remain calm, courteous and businesslike. Never allow yourself to be dragged down to their level.

You should also keep your cool if you encounter a problem like finding, on taking the seat which is offered to you, that the sun is shining right in your eyes. Rather than getting paranoid and assuming that it is an elaborate stress ploy (it probably is not),

simply move the chair, explaining politely why you are doing so, or ask the interviewer to pull the blind across the window.

●●● Turning the tables

Having examined the myths about interviewers, let us turn for a moment to the equally prevalent misapprehensions which exist about the behaviour of interviewees.

It is often said that the person who gets any given job is not necessarily the most suitable candidate, but the one who performs best at interview. To be fair, there is an element of truth in this. However well qualified you are for a job, you can ruin your chances if you blow the meeting with the potential employer or the recruitment consultant.

This does not mean, on the other hand, that you can wheedle your way into a job for which you are totally unsuitable just by becoming a slick, practised performer on the interview stage. It is very much the same as the situation which exists with CVs: poor presentation can ruin good content, but a polished presentation will never make up for a lack of underlying substance. What is more, just as recruiters are put off by over-glossy CVs, so they are suspicious of interviewees who come across as too smooth or glib.

●●● But don't be passive

This does not, however, mean that you can just sit back and wait for the interviewer to draw out all your strengths. Even professional recruiters, working to a carefully prepared plan, may miss key areas. The risks with line managers, who may well have had no training at all in interviewing skills, are very much greater.

All too often the decision makers, the people who have the final say in which candidate to hire, are notoriously bad interviewers. They frequently fail to prepare for the meeting, in many cases not even reading your CV thoroughly, let alone thinking about how they are going to structure the interview in order to elicit the required information. They do too much of the talking themselves and ask closed or leading questions when they should be using open ones.

If you are to overcome the problems posed by the clumsy amateur, you need to be extremely well prepared, having a clear idea of exactly what you need to get across and making sure that none of your key selling points are missed. Never fall for the myth that the interviewer can be relied on to do the job for you.

●●● The truth, the whole truth

Another myth, perpetuated by writers of articles about the recruitment business, is that candidates can, and often do, lie their way to interview success. There are, no doubt, some who try it. Very few succeed.

Professional interviewers spend every day of their lives sorting fact from fantasy, true substance from hype. To get one over on them, you have to be an extremely good liar. Very few people indeed are that good.

One of the problems is that once you start lying it is difficult to stop. The first lie leads to a second, the second to a third and so on – until, sooner or later, you trip yourself up. That leads to the next problem. Get caught out once, even on something relatively insignificant, and nothing else you say will be believed. It is just not worth the risk.

Being economical with the truth, on the other hand, is a different matter – at least, to an extent. If there are topics you would prefer not to have to discuss, then clearly you do not raise them.

If a difficult subject does come up, the situation is more complex. In general, it is best to say no more than you have to and to change the subject as soon as you can. On the other hand, you have to avoid making any discomfort you feel obvious to the interviewer. Like dogs, interviewers smell fear and, once they get their teeth into something, they will not let go.

●●● Being smart

Another school of thought says that there is a far smarter approach than telling lies. All you have to do is to anticipate the awkward questions you are likely to be asked, prepare clever answers to them and then trot these out at interview in response

to the appropriate cues. This theory has become part of recruitment folklore, which is where it belongs, because its relevance to reality is, at best, decidedly limited.

In spite of this, the concept does get perpetuated by journalists. There has even been a whole book published on the subject, entitled *Great Answers to Tough Interview Questions* (Martin John Yate, Kogan Page), which lists over 100 questions ranging from the fairly sensible to 'What would you say if I told you your presentation this afternoon was lousy?'

There are several reasons why mugging up pat answers to what one writer describes as 'the tough, sneaky, mean and low-down questions the interviewers love to throw at you' does not work in practice.

- Pat answers sound just that, and this will do you absolutely no good at all.
- Most interviewers do not ask catch questions.
- If a question seems tough, it is most likely to be because your interview preparation has paid insufficient attention to the company, the job and your own relevant background.
- Thorough interview preparation would be a far better use of your time than trying to memorise over 100 questions, let alone the smart answers to them.
- You will, in any case, never predict everything you might be asked. If you rely on having all the answers, rather than on a sound knowledge of your own CV, you are likely to get thrown by the first question you have not anticipated.

While you will never be able to foresee every question you may be asked, you should put yourself in the interviewer's shoes and try to predict the key areas they are likely to concentrate on. Some of these will be determined by the requirements of the job in question, others by your own CV. Any reasonably competent interviewer is obviously going to want to discuss your career progression, your reasons for leaving jobs, your aspirations for the future and the extent to which you fit the specification for the post you are being interviewed for. The ability to discuss matters like these confidently is what you need to concentrate on, rather than clever replies to smart questions.

●●● A confidence trick?

Mention of the word 'confidently' raises a further issue. The last thing many people feel when they attend an interview is confident. So what do you do? Put on an act? Pretend to be something, or someone, that you are not?

The idea that you should do that is just one more myth. The candidate who walks in with a cocky, 'I'm God's gift' kind of manner is going to get off on completely the wrong foot. Interviewers expect candidates to be a little nervous initially, and consequently allow for this by taking deliberate steps to break the ice and relax them. In fact, if you do not feel slightly-keyed up before an interview, you probably will not give of your best. As a famous stage personality once said, after years and years of appearing before the public, 'The night I don't have butterflies in my stomach before I go out there is the night I ought to give the business up'.

●●● Too keen?

A related issue to that of confidence is the matter of how much enthusiasm you display. There is an argument which says that it is wrong to appear over-eager at an interview because this weakens your negotiating power if you are eventually offered the job.

The only grain of truth in this is that you should not actually appear desperate. People who have been out of work for some time, especially those who have heavy financial commitments or who believe themselves to be victims of ageism, can fall into this trap. Even if you actually are beginning to feel desperate, you will certainly do yourself nothing but harm by letting it show.

This does not mean, however, that it is smart to go to the other extreme and project an attitude which suggests that you really do not care a toss, and that, if they want you to join their organisation, they had better make all the running. This is another example of playing silly games, which will not help you one bit.

In any case, do remember the three basic items on any interviewer's agenda: can you do the job, will you fit into the organisation and do you want to do the job? It is not uncommon for

interviewers to ask, towards the end of the meeting, why you are interested in the position in question. Unless you have been displaying a reasonable amount of enthusiasm, you may find it difficult to give a convincing response.

●●● Winning ways

If you want to succeed at interviews, there are three basic principles to follow.

- First of all, forget all the tricks and games.
- Secondly, be yourself. By all means show your best side, rather than going out of your way to draw attention to your warts, but do not try to be something you are not.
- Finally, remember that the only way to be certain that you will present a positive and confident image when it comes to the crunch is to invest the time and effort beforehand in making sure that you are really thoroughly prepared.

“The most vital stage of preparation is research.”

the chapter you can't afford to skip – preparing for the interview

Before you start beaver away at researching the company or matching your CV to what you know about the job, sit back and ask yourself the following questions.

- What is your objective – what do you want out of the interview?
- Whom are you going to be interviewed by?
- What do they want out of the interview?

The answer to the first one may seem obvious: you want to be offered a job. However, you also need to find out enough about the company, the person who will be your boss, the responsibilities involved in the job and the performance measures by which you will be judged to be able to decide whether you will accept the offer if you get it.

Some career advisers say this does not matter. Concentrate on getting the offer. You can always turn it down – or arrange a further meeting to obtain the additional information you need to make your decision. In practice there is more to it than that. If you do not show enough interest at interview, you are unlikely to get the offer to begin with. Many interviewers 'mark' candidates, even if only subconsciously, on the number and relevance of the questions they ask. They also respond, again often without necessarily being conscious of it, to the amount of enthusiasm the candidate displays.

What interviewers are actually looking for are the answers to three questions.

- Are you capable of doing the job? In other words, do you have the technical ability, the experience and so on?
- Will you fit, both in terms of organisational culture, and in terms of getting on with your boss, peers and staff?
- Will you be motivated by the job? Does it make sense in terms of career progression and does it match with what you say you enjoy doing?

Unless you score highly on all three counts, you are unlikely to get the offer.

●●● But who are they?

We have, however, skipped one of the original questions. Who is the interviewer? It could be:

- your potential boss, who may be the owner of a business, its chief executive, a director heading up a function or a senior line manager;
- the person to whom your potential boss reports, who is vetting the appointment;
- another line manager, who is giving a second opinion;
- the organisation's banker, auditor or lawyer, or a non-executive director, being used either for a second opinion or for their 'approval' of an appointment on which things like provision of finance may depend;
- a personnel or HR manager;
- a headhunter;
- an executive selection consultant, who is handling an advertised recruitment campaign on the company's behalf;
- an agency recruiter.

Depending on whom you are seeing you will find, and therefore need to be prepared for, significant differences in style, expertise and the emphasis which is put on different areas of the interview agenda.

Line managers often lack training in interview techniques and tend to be less skilled at eliciting information from candidates. Often egocentric, especially if they own or run the business, they frequently do more of the talking than they should and may be

more aggressive in their questioning. They will, however, usually be the best people from whom to obtain the information you need about the company and the job. They may well ask questions with a greater technical bias and will certainly be particularly concerned with personal chemistry.

Professional advisers – bankers, auditors and lawyers – tend, both by their training and their relationship with the company, to be cautious, concerned primarily with avoiding a mistake being made rather than with the more personal or positive aspects of the selection process.

HR managers are normally skilled and structured interviewers, who often give little away about their own feelings. They are the people who will provide you with the best run-down on company policies and benefits, areas about which line managers are often vague and out of date.

Headhunters tend to be more affable than other outside recruiters. Used to having to seduce people away from existing secure jobs into the arms of the search firm's client, they often start an interview with a relaxed chat about your present situation and your aspirations, then, having established what you are looking for, embark on a soft sell of their client and the job they are trying to fill.

Selection consultants have the task of reducing the vast response to an advertisement down to a short-list of probably about four to submit to their client. Although they need to ensure that you are sufficiently interested in the job to attend an interview with the company, if short-listed, they will be concerned mainly with whether you match the specification, and whether you are likely to fit in with the personalities and culture. If in doubt, they tend to err on the side of caution rather than taking chances.

Agencies, being paid only if they succeed in making a placement, may in some cases be more willing to bend a specification. You may also find that, if they have not met you before, they may kill two birds with one stone, combining an interview for a specific job with a more general chat about the kinds of opportunity you would consider.

●●● Where it's at

The assumption thus far has been that there is already a well-defined job, with a specification against which you can be measured. That, however, is not always the case.

If you have been networking or making speculative applications, you may have identified an organisation which is interested in what you have to offer but which does not have a vacancy as such. The object of the interview may be to discuss and enlarge on the needs and benefits you identified in your approach to the company. You may then find yourself, either at that meeting or a subsequent one, participating in the preparation of your own job specification.

A variation on this theme is when you identify one of those windows of opportunity, a vacancy which has been approved but not yet advertised or put out to consultants. Depending on the stage things have reached, there may be a well-defined specification or they may still be knocking ideas around, in which case the initial interview may still have an element of writing the spec about it.

Even when there is an apparently clear specification, things are not always set in stone. A company may already have tried one recruitment campaign and failed to find the right person, in which case they may be considering amendments to either the job responsibilities or the candidate requirements. Or they may be trying to fill a vacancy where, by its very nature, it is unlikely that they will find someone who can do all aspects of the job equally well. They may know that they will have to compromise somewhere, but be adopting a suck it and see approach, waiting until they meet some suitable candidates before deciding exactly where that compromise will be.

●●● Doing your homework

Only by being aware of what stage things are at (preliminary screening interview, short-list etc.), whom you are meeting, and what both you and they want out of the interview, can you focus your preparation to maximum effect.

The first and most vital stage of that preparation is research. Never skimp this stage. Comprehensive research gives you at least four major advantages:

- it enables you to ask pertinent questions;
- it puts you one step ahead of the competition by demonstrating to the interviewer that you have done your homework;
- it gives you much greater confidence;
- it helps you to be more certain that you are making the right choice of your next job and employer.

So, what do you already know about the company and job? What do you need to know? What ought you to check out prior to interview and what should be left for that moment in the interview when you are given the opportunity to ask questions? And how can you find out what you need to know in advance?

Begin by gathering the information you have already: the advertisement, what the headhunter told you over the telephone, the information your network contact gave you, the research you did before making a speculative approach. Compare it with what you need to know.

Here is a checklist of things to find out about the organisation.

- How long has it been in existence?
- How has it changed and developed from its inception to the present day?
- What is its current situation?
- What are its future plans?
- Who owns it?
- If owner managed, what about succession or likelihood of a sell-off?
- What is its legal status - quoted PLC, private company, partnership etc.?
- If unquoted, any plans for a flotation?
- How many locations, and where?
- Range of products/services.
- Markets - split by level (e.g. quality or cut-price) and geography (percentage exported, and where).
- Market share and details of main competitors.
- Financial details: sales turnover, profitability, return on capital employed, order book.
- Number of staff employed.
- Funding: analysis of borrowings (from whom, on what terms) and gearing.
- Where will future funding come from, especially for any expansion plans?

- Assets, e.g. are buildings owned, leased or rented?
- Liquidity and solvency.
- Organisation structure.
- If part of a larger group, similar details to above for rest of group, plus information on how autonomous or otherwise the part you are being interviewed for is in terms of decision making, funds etc.
- Details of operations, e.g. depending on the type of job you are going for, you may need information on production processes, distribution networks and methods, customers, suppliers, sales/marketing policies, credit terms.
- Major risk factors, for example vulnerability to foreign exchange rate fluctuations, changes in government policies, the weather, fashion swings.
- Key people in the organisation.
- Any recent news items about either the organisation itself or the business sector in which it operates.

As far as the job is concerned, you need to know the following.

- Job title.
- Reason for vacancy.
- Urgency of filling it.
- How many incumbents over, say, last five years and reasons for leaving.
- Whom it reports to – position, name and personality.
- Where it fits into the structure.
- Where it is based geographically, and how much travel.
- Main purpose of job.
- How performance will be measured.
- Detailed responsibilities.
- Budgets controlled.
- Limits of authority.
- Reporting methods and frequency.
- Staff supervised: how many, their quality, staff turnover etc.
- Systems and equipment in use.
- Opportunities for future career development.

●●● Filling the gaps

The length of these lists may look daunting, but in reality the task need not be too onerous. Put it into perspective.

- Some of the information you have already, from research you have already carried out, or from what you have learned from an advertisement or a headhunter.
- Quite a lot may be provided automatically by the company or the recruitment consultants they are using. It is becoming increasingly common for job applicants to be supplied with an information pack, including details on both the organisation and the job.
- Where this is not the case, or where you need more, you can get a lot just by asking. Company reports and accounts are freely available. So too are sales brochures and catalogues. In some ways it is better when organisations do not send this kind of information out to everyone, because those who display the initiative to ask for it get ahead of the competition.
- You can get a further step ahead by ringing up the person you will be meeting, or their secretary, and asking a few pertinent questions – which will provide you with the ammunition to get yourself better prepared for the interview itself.
- Some of the questions you have, like those about the company's plans for future development, or questions about your boss, peers and staff, are actually better left to be asked at the actual interview. When you are given the opportunity to put your own questions, you want to make sure that you have some good ones, so that you score maximum brownie points. For instance, always ask at least one question that shows that you have read the company's annual report and accounts.
- At executive level, another key area for scoring, or losing, points is business awareness. If the interviewer makes a reference to recent press coverage of the company or the industry in which it operates and you do not have a clue what this was about, your credibility will immediately plummet. Keeping abreast of business news should in any case be part of your regular routine on networking and speculative applications.
- You can also double up on your time utilisation by combining research with networking. Although some of your research will be of the 'desk' variety, either at home or in the library, calls to people who might know the company in question are a vital part of the process. The facts come from reference books like *KBE*, *Kompass*, *Who Owns Whom?* and *Who's Who?* The gossip and opinions come from people who know the industry, from the company's customers and suppliers.

from its competitors, from headhunters and recruitment consultants.

- You may even know, or be able to network a contact with, someone who works for the organisation itself. Do, however, be discreet, and do not be tempted by the more outrageous suggestions made by some job hunting articles, like hanging around the pubs near the company's premises in the hope of striking up conversations with its employees!

●●● The glass slipper

Once you have gathered as much information as possible, you can set about ensuring that your foot is the one that will fit snugly into the glass slipper. Keep constantly in mind the three things that the interviewer will be looking for.

- Can you do the job?
- Will you fit into the organisation?
- Will you want to do the job?

Remember, too, the 'added value' test. What problems and needs does the company have? What benefits can you bring to the party?

Go back to your asset register. Select from each section – qualifications and training, interests, experience, skills, strengths, achievements – those assets which are going to make you someone the organisation cannot afford *not* to hire. Tattoo these points onto your mind so that, when you are at the actual interview, you can mentally tick them off as the opportunities arise to get them across. If there are any which you do not get the chance to mention in response to the interviewer's questions, make sure you take the initiative. You normally get an invitation to raise any further points or questions towards the end of an interview. On the rare occasions when you do not, create one rather than risking underselling yourself.

It is also useful to encapsulate your USPs in a carefully prepared, succinct presentation since it is not uncommon for an interviewer to ask something like, 'What do you think you could contribute to our organisation?' or 'Tell me why we should hire you for this job'.

●●● Watching your back

Scoring goals, though, is only half the battle. You also have to avoid conceding them. Put yourself into the interviewer's shoes. Take a careful look at your own CV. What would you home in on? Get someone else, a friend or network contact, to provide a second opinion. Give some thought to any Achilles' heels. How are you going to defend against them?

Areas which interviewers commonly pick upon include the following.

- **Speed of career progression.** Why did you stay so long in that job? Valid reasons could include the interesting projects which provided the icing on the gingerbread of the same core duties, loyalty (staying with the company to see it through a tough patch even though the recession meant a lack of personal progress), or the fact that, although the job title remained unchanged, the job content was in fact developing all the time.
- **Logic of career progression.** People expect to see a rational development. Be ready to demonstrate the reasons for any apparently sideways moves. For example, they may have plugged a gap in your experience which would enhance your long-term prospects.
- **Reasons for leaving jobs.** Be sure to have explanations which are both credible and positive. Do not bend the truth – this is an area which will be checked out when references are taken up, so be aware of what your former employers will say. If you did have a bust up with your boss, discuss it objectively, e.g. 'We simply had diametrically opposed views on the way the company should develop'. Be particularly on your guard if you feel yourself getting angry or displaying any other negative emotions when you discuss such matters. Skilled interviewers are adept at picking these up. Above all, never knock either a person or company you have worked for.
- **Gaps between jobs.** Be prepared both to explain why they arose and to show that you made positive use of them.
- **Gaps between what they want and what you have.** Provided that you meet the bulk of the requirements, do not worry about the odd shortfall, so long as it is not in a vital area. After all, if you could do the whole job standing on your head, where would the challenge be in it? Whatever you do, avoid getting defensive and making claims you cannot justify.

That will damage your credibility not just on the item in question, but in every other respect as well. Instead, be prepared to show how you could readily acquire the necessary skills, experience etc. to plug the gap.

- **Your strengths and weaknesses.** Although this question may be asked in exactly these general terms, you should obviously gear your reply to the specific situation under discussion. The strengths aspect gives you the opportunity to summarise that list of reasons, which you have committed to memory, why you are the ideal candidate for the position. Being asked about your weaknesses is a bit more tricky. Try to come up with one or two which are really the reverse side of strengths, like 'I sometimes get impatient with people who aren't pulling their weight' and do be sure to avoid any that might prejudice your suitability for the post in question.

Some people find it useful to practise an interview by getting a suitably qualified friend to role play the recruiter or potential employer, while others feel that this is too artificial to be of real value. Whether you actually act it out or not, there certainly can be mileage, if you have the opportunity, in getting someone else to give a second opinion on your preparation, and particularly on the areas of potential difficulty, like those listed above, which you need to be prepared to deal with. Another person will always spot one or two things you have missed, and that could make all the difference between success and failure.

●●● Looking to the future

Although interviews inevitably concentrate largely on the past – your education, career history and so on – a powerful method of setting yourself apart from the other candidates is by being prepared to talk about the future. The more astute interviewer will in any case raise questions like these.

- How would you go about this job?
- What do you see as the major challenges (or opportunities) in this role?
- What is the first thing you would do if you were appointed?

If questions such as these do get raised, you may well be the only candidate who has thought about them in advance and prepared answers to them. If the interviewer fails to ask them, you can

lead into these topics yourself. A particularly appropriate point to do this is when you are being quizzed on one of the potentially difficult areas listed above, like your career progression. Switching the discussion away from what you should have done, but failed to do, in the past, and moving on to what you intend to do in the future, has a double benefit.

Do also, by the way, be ready for a question about your own future, as well as any about how you would do the job. 'Where do you see yourself in five years' time?' is a popular one. If the interviewer is your potential boss, be wary of responding with the pat answer, 'I'd like to be sitting where you are now'. The individual who is occupying that seat may still be ten years off retirement with no obvious promotion prospects.

●●● And other gaffes

That gaffe is by no means the only one you have to watch out for. Having taken all the time and trouble to prepare yourself so carefully, take care not to wreck it all by slipping up on what may appear to be minor details. Here are some examples.

- If you do not get a letter confirming the interview details, send one yourself. A small but steady percentage of candidates insist on turning up either on the wrong day or at the wrong time.
- Likewise, make sure you have the right address, especially when an organisation has more than one office building.
- Unless you know an area well, check your route out carefully.
- Make sure you have plenty of change for parking and, if you are on a pre-payment meter, buy plenty of time. You do not want to be sitting in an interview worrying about whether you have been wheel-clamped.
- Allow for Murphy's Law. Road works, wide loads and accidents always occur when you have a vital appointment. And do not feel smug if you are using public transport: when did the trains ever run on time when it really mattered?
- Give yourself plenty of time at the other end of the interview, too. You are not going to be thanked for cutting a meeting short because you have another appointment. If in doubt, call the company and ask approximately how long the interview is likely to last.
- Avoid going into an interview on either an empty stomach or

CLOSING THE SALE

an over-full one (you do not want to feel sleepy) and avoid alcohol. For obvious comfort reasons, it is best not to have too much tea or coffee either, even if you have arrived early and need to find somewhere to kill a bit of time.

- Arrive about five minutes before the appointed time and, even if you do not need a comfort break, make use of the cloak-room – to check your appearance. First impressions are crucial.

a professional image

“Interviewers are human. They cannot help picking up signals any more than anyone else.”

You never get a second chance to make a first impression. Recruiters, it is often claimed, make up their minds about candidates within the first four or five minutes of an interview. Is that really so? And if it is, what can you do about it?

In some ways, the position is even worse. A lot of judgements are made within a matter of seconds. Think about it. What do you do when you meet someone for the first time? The moment you clap eyes on them you start pigeon holing them without even thinking about what you are doing. Pin-stripe suit? City gent. Twin set and pearls? Middle-class shire county lady. Long-haired bloke with beard? We could go on for ever.

But it is not just clothes. We also make assumptions based on build, posture, vigour and a host of other factors. And that is before people even open their mouths. When they do speak, more judgements are made, based on accents, vocabulary, fluency, confidence, voice pitch and so on.

Like you, interviewers are human. They cannot help picking up all these signals any more than anyone else can. The only difference is that professional recruiters are trained to be aware of the processes which, in most people, take place purely sub-consciously. Particularly when a candidate makes a very strong first impression, they try to be objective, even playing devil's advocate for the rest of the interview in an attempt to validate, or repudiate, that initial judgement.

At least, that is what they should do. It does not always happen in practice, especially if they are tired, or pushed for time, or having a bad day – or because they already have a good short-list and are, without necessarily being aware of it, looking for reasons to rule people out rather than in.

Once a first impression has been formed, it is all too easy to filter

all subsequent information, rationalising each item to fit the judgement which has already been made. When the initial impact is favourable, this is called the halo effect; when unfavourable, the reverse halo effect.

If highly experienced, professionally trained recruiters find this behaviour pattern difficult to counteract, imagine how much more likely it is to occur when the interviewer is an amateur, like the typical line manager who will claim with great conviction, 'I know how to judge people. That's how I got where I am today'.

●●● Mirror, mirror

What kind of an impression do you make? Dressed as you would be for an interview, stand in front of a full-length mirror. Take a good look at yourself. Try to be objective. If you find that difficult, get a second opinion. In fact, get a second opinion anyway – no one is that honest about themselves. And do not ask your partner or your children or your parents. Find someone who is both independent and who can angle their opinion from a business viewpoint. It could be a networking contact or one of the people you meet at a job club. The main thing is that it must be someone who understands what is expected in business circles and who will not be embarrassed about being completely honest with you.

If you have the opportunity to be put on video, do not be afraid to take it. Disconcerting though it may be to watch yourself on the box, you can learn an awful lot from it. This is what happened to Brian when he attended a session on interview techniques. Although he was impeccably dressed and highly articulate, Brian habitually talked into his boots rather than projecting towards his audience. As soon as he saw this on video, he realised what he was doing and, by correcting it, was able to achieve what was little less than a complete transformation in the impact he created.

●●● Bearing up

There is, of course, a lot more to posture than the angle of your neck. What is more, the importance of good posture lies not only in the effect it creates on the interviewer, but also in its influence

on the way you feel and, in particular, on your confidence.

We cannot all have the kind of height and build which creates that automatic physical presence that enables some individuals to dominate a whole room full of people. Fortunately, this is not at all necessary. It can even be a disadvantage, in that some people actually find it threatening and that is not the effect you want to have on interviewers.

When you greet the interviewer you must, however, achieve that positive first impression, which means the following.

- An upright, but not stiff, stance.
- Looking the interviewer in the eye – which will also ensure that you do, in fact, keep your chin up.
- Smiling warmly, with your eyes as well as your mouth.
- Shaking hands firmly. The wet fish handshake creates such a negative impression that many interviewers will reject a candidate on that factor alone. Do not go right to the other extreme, though. If you see the blood rushing to the other person's eyes, let go.
- Making sure that your first few words are clear and positive. A lot of candidates are too eager and either gabble or fall over themselves. If you are prone to this all too common tendency, try steadying yourself by taking a breath before you speak.

Being too keen can also be a danger if the interviewer comes to collect you from a reception area. Be sure to get out of your seat in a businesslike, but not rushed, manner. One recruiter commented on the number of candidates who, in their eagerness, dropped the magazine they were reading or slopped the cup of coffee they had been given, while another interviewer had clearly not been impressed by the candidate who leaped out of the chair like a guard dog going for an intruder's throat.

●●● What to wear

If anything, your clothes are even more important than your posture. Certainly clothing, and other aspects of appearance like hairstyles and accessories, cause far greater problems. While there is general agreement on what constitutes a businesslike bearing, what clothes to wear on any given occasion can be far more complicated.

One problem is that there are so many different prejudices. Asked what would turn them off a candidate before a single word was spoken, a diverse group of line managers came up with long lists which included (for men) beards, white socks, grey shoes and strong after-shave and (for women) no make-up, too much make-up, bare legs and trousers. The safest bet is therefore to err on the side of neutrality and conservatism, avoiding the inherent risk of making yourself instantly forgettable simply by being that bit more crisp and professional than the competition.

You should, of course, give some thought not just to your own image but also that of the organisation you are being interviewed by. Different expectations do exist in a City bank, a factory, a housing association, an advertising agency and so on. Normally, if you have been working in a given environment, you will be aware of its standards.

If, on the other hand, you need advice on the kind of appearance that would be appropriate, there are always people you can turn to. Network contacts are a useful source, especially where you are transferring your skills from one business sector to another. Alternatively, when you have had a first interview with a head-hunter, selection consultant or agency, you can always ask them for tips about how to present yourself when you meet their client. It will be as much in their interest as your own to ensure that you create the right impression.

Finally, there are the professional image consultants, who – for a fee – will do for you what they have done for politicians and other public figures. Whether ordinary mortals like job-hunters need this kind of service is a somewhat moot point. Power dressing, like the excessively glossy CV, may be seen by interviewers as over the top.

Furthermore, although a session with an image consultant will cover all aspects of your appearance, a significant chunk of the time is usually devoted to the colours that are right for you and the impression that you make as a result. Since executive males are effectively limited to dark grey or navy suits and a restricted range of shirt colours, and many women have a natural sense of the colours that suit them best, the value of this is questionable.

Unless you can get a free image session – some companies run courses for their employees, either just on image or as part of training in things like presentation skills – it is probably worth-

while only if you have reason to believe that your appearance is having a seriously detrimental effect on your job prospects. For those whose appearance is broadly acceptable but who could just do with a bit of extra polish, the following extracts from what the image consultants would probably charge a three-figure fee for telling you ought to suffice.

Unisex tips

The following ground rules are valid for both men and women.

- Quality rather than quantity applies once again. It is better to buy two good suits than four cheap ones. Quite apart from their better appearance and fit, good clothes actually provide better value in terms of cost per wearing because they last so much longer.
- Having invested in good clothes, look after them. Brush suits after wearing, keep them on the proper type of hangers and have them cleaned regularly. Get shoes re-soled and heeled before it is overdue and use shoe trees so that they keep their shape.
- In the vast majority of business environments, you should avoid being trendy. Classic styles are not only more acceptable, but also mean that you do not have to keep throwing clothes out and replacing them with the latest look.
- Do not ruin a good suit with tacky accessories such as nylon shirts and cheap acrylic blouses. In particular avoid juvenilia, like pink elephant ties, teddy bear brooches and watches that say Mickey Mouse past Donald Duck rather than ten past two.
- If your body shape is less than ideal (join the club), choose clothes that compensate for its failings, rather than accentuating them. For example, short people can achieve an illusion of greater height by wearing vertical stripes.
- Even if the interviewer does not see you arrive, someone else will. Anoraks and plastic macs are the pits. Invest in a decent coat.
- Carry only a briefcase (a handbag is an alternative for women, but do not carry both). Go to the bottom of the class if you arrive with one or more plastic carrier bags. Do your shopping after the interview.
- Never neglect personal hygiene. Dirty nails are a killer. So is lank and greasy hair.

- Even worse are odours. Use a (fragrance free) deodorant and, particularly if you smoke, a mouthwash. Women should apply perfume only very discreetly, if at all, and men are definitely advised to leave the after-shave for the weekend.

International aspects

Do not be fooled by the fact that in some continental European countries dress is apparently more casual than it is in the UK. Although men may wear jackets or blazers rather than suits, these are carefully co-ordinated. The overall effect is often smarter than the average British businessman's appearance. Style is particularly important in Italy.

In any case, at an interview you will rarely go wrong by erring on the side of formality.

Women only

While women have rather more freedom, or quandary, of choice than men, the following broad guidelines will apply in most cases.

- Whilst a suit is not obligatory, a jacket is – at least in all but the most casual of environments. Women should take advantage of the fact that, unlike men, they can choose a variety of jacket lengths. Short women should normally wear a short jacket to keep them visually in proportion, but any women who have large thighs or hips should avoid jackets which accentuate these features by ending at the widest point.
- Do not try to wear the trousers at the interview, at least not literally.
- Skirts, like jackets, need to be selected carefully, bearing in mind your figure shape and the features which you consequently wish either to emphasise or conceal. You must also ensure that the skirt co-ordinates with the jacket.
- While a shorter skirt will give a woman who lacks inches a leggier look, it is generally better to err on the conservative side with regard to length.
- With all garments, but particularly skirts and jackets, a good fit is vital – neither baggy nor too tight. The latter is the greater sin. Never let anyone apply to you P. G. Wodehouse's

tart comment: 'She looked as if she had been poured into her clothes and had forgotten to say "when"'.

- Belts give authority but must be the right width for your waist.
- Blouses sit right next to your face, so choose them with care, and make sure that pattern, colour and collar all go with your jacket.
- Knitwear is casual and reduces the amount of authority you convey.
- Classic shoes, enclosed and with leather uppers, are the most professional bet. Heels, which should never be scuffed, should strike a balance between the frumpy flattie and the 6-inch stiletto.
- Unless you are being interviewed in a heat wave, and your legs are smooth and tanned, always wear tights. They should be plain, not patterned, and do carry a spare pair – remember Murphy's Law?
- It should not be necessary to mention underwear, except that panty lines can show and dark lingerie may be visible through light clothes. Make sure that you are not the one to let yourself down.
- Make-up is considered to be an essential for the executive image, but not too much – and do take care to ensure that it never gets onto your collar.
- With jewellery, the rule, once again, is quality rather than quantity. Always wear earrings, but not dangly ones. A smart brooch can liven up a sober suit.
- Make sure that your hairstyle suits both your face shape and your professional image. You also need one that will still look good when you arrive at the interview, not just for five minutes after you have set it.
- If you wear glasses, select them with care – interviewers are going to be looking at your eyes for more of the time than all of the rest of you put together. They should complement the shape of your face, and you should avoid both old-fashioned and gimmicky designs.
- Scarves, gloves, watches, pens and so on should all be tasteful and of good quality. Do not spoil the ship for a ha'p'orth of tar.

Men only

The impression a man's clothes make can vary just as much as a woman's, even though his choices are fewer. Watch the following points.

- Suits are *de rigueur* for interviews at executive level in the UK.
- Darker shades give increased authority but black makes you look like an undertaker. Browns and greens give a rustic impression, as do tweeds.
- If you buy suits off the peg, do make sure that the jacket fits properly across the shoulders and that the sleeve length is correct – when your arms are by your sides the sleeves should end at the thumb knuckle, where hand meets arm.
- Trousers with turn-ups make legs look shorter.
- If your trousers have belt loops, wear a belt. Braces may be more flattering if your waist is not exactly trim, but avoid trying to emulate those worn by Sir John Harvey-Jones unless you can also match his personality.
- Waistcoats do not go with double-breasted suits. If you do wear a waistcoat, the done thing is to leave the bottom button unfastened.
- Buy good quality shirts in colours that complement your complexion. Shirt sleeves should be long enough to show about $\frac{1}{2}$ to $\frac{3}{4}$ inch of cuff below the jacket. A correct collar size will enable you to insert one finger between the collar and your neck.
- Ties offer the greatest opportunity for the male to make a personal statement and are consequently also the greatest potential hazard. Try to strike a balance between being deadily dull on the one hand and ruining an otherwise professional impact on the other by being patently crass. Pre-matched shirts and ties are out unless you actually want to be labelled a chain store clone. Prefer silk to polyester, and take the trouble to tie a neat knot which stays in place.
- Socks are the next most hazardous area. Wear plain ones rather than the pair the kids bought you for Father's Day, and remember that an expanse of hairy leg is unlikely to enhance the interviewer's opinion of you.
- Black is the safest colour for shoes. Suede is distinctly naff.
- Identity bracelets come into the same category as suede shoes. The only permissible items of jewellery, unless you count your watch (not plastic, please), are a signet ring or

wedding band and cufflinks – tasteful, good quality ones.

- Hair must be cut regularly and in a businesslike style. Sorry, but you cannot be an executive and look like a rock star.
- If you are thinning on top, do not make yourself look silly by combing a few lonely strands across a shining bald pate. Be equally wary of hairpieces, unless you can afford to spend a fortune on one that really does look natural.
- A significant proportion of interviewers are prejudiced against facial fuzz, especially beards.
- Glasses are a key area. The interviewer will be looking into your eyes for at least half the time. Pick a style which not only complements your face shape but also avoids being either fuddy-duddy or trendy.
- Do not let yourself down with cheap accessories. Bic pens and scuffed briefcases do not fit with the senior executive image.

●●● Looking your age

First impressions become even more important, if that is possible, as time goes on. One recruiter used to get his receptionist to guess the ages of candidates when they arrived for interview. On one occasion, she put two candidates as, respectively, 40 and 60. In reality they were both within a few months of 50. The older you get, the more attention you need to pay to your appearance.

Here are a few of the most telling factors.

- **Glasses.** Bear in mind the amount of time the interviewer will be looking you in the eye. Half-moon glasses add a good ten years to your appearance, while specs on strings consign you to the Darby and Joan club.
- **Hair.** If you do colour grey hair, make sure it is not blatantly obvious. Keep your hairstyle reasonably modern, but do not try to emulate a 20 year-old, as you will only succeed in looking ridiculous. Men should bear in mind the comments under 'Men only', above, about bald patches and hairpieces.
- **Weight.** It is natural to put on a few pounds as you get older. Some put on a few stones. Take care to choose clothes which minimise the effects on your contours.
- **Posture.** If your chin or shoulders begin to sag, people will assume that you are wilting. Keep your chin up and your back straight!

- **Vigour.** Show that, even if you can no longer match the energy levels of your youth, you are far from having run out of steam. Move briskly and positively.
- **Speech.** It is important not only to maintain a lively voice, but also to watch the words you use. Derogatory references to young people and new-fangled ideas are a dead giveaway.
- **Attitude.** You really are only as old as you feel. Think young and you will feel young, and give the impression of actually being younger. Think old at your peril.

●●● Health and fitness

All of this will, of course, be a lot easier if you keep yourself in good shape. Rightly or wrongly, interviewers do discriminate against candidates who are overweight, seem to have trouble with their breathing, are subject to coughing or just look unhealthy.

Getting in shape does not have to mean gruelling sessions in the gym or running a marathon. Particularly if you have been neglecting exercise for longer than you wish to admit, overdoing it may well be positively dangerous. Gentler pursuits like golf, swimming or walking can, if practised regularly, do wonders for your skin and body tone, and for the way you feel about yourself.

Keep your mind in trim, too. Always be learning something new. Seek out the company of stimulating people and avoid associating only with your own age group.

Nutrition is another important consideration. There is a lot of truth in the saying, 'You are what you eat'. Forget the freaky diets. Rapid weight loss is all too often followed by an equally rapid weight gain. Cut down on sugar and fat if you need to, but maintain a balanced regime including adequate supplies of protein, as well as plenty of fruit and vegetables.

Finally, do not assume that this section is just for those who are in, or approaching, their middle years. Health and fitness affect the first impressions made by candidates of all ages.

“If you want the job, you will be soaking up every first impression you can of the interviewer.”

why the best candidate doesn't always get the job - establishing rapport and controlling the interview

Try answering this question: while the interviewer is absorbing all those (hopefully positive) first impressions of you, what are you doing? If you want the job, what you will be doing is soaking up every available first impression you can of the interviewer.

Are you too nervous to notice anything about the interviewer? Well here is your chance to kill two birds with one stone. The most effective way of avoiding being preoccupied with yourself and the impression you are making, which is what is at the root of nervousness, is to concentrate completely on the other person, leaving no room for self-consciousness.

The reason for paying all your attention to the signals being given off by the interviewer is to help you to establish as much rapport as you can in the shortest possible period of time.

Professional recruiters will be trying to do exactly the same thing themselves, so you should have an easier time with them than with line managers, who probably conduct interviews less frequently than you attend them and consequently may well be more nervous than you.

In order to achieve rapport you do not have to be sycophantic. The last thing you want to do is give the impression that you are a Grade A creep. In any case, it does not matter if you and the interviewer are very different in terms of background, attitudes or personality – opposites can, and often do, attract. You do, however, have to establish an effective working relationship, and this embraces such factors as courtesy, consideration, respect and trust. If you are attending a screening interview, with a recruitment consultant or personnel manager, the amount of rapport need only be sufficient for the purposes of that brief meeting. If you are meeting your potential boss, on the other hand, it clearly needs to go a lot deeper. Personal chemistry will be a major factor in the ultimate hiring decision.

In making your initial assessment of the person you are meeting, it helps if you can learn to recognise the different types of individual you may be dealing with and respond to them appropriately.

For example, the affable type of interviewer may want to spend several minutes chatting about what sort of journey you had, whether you are familiar with the area and so on before even beginning to get down to business. A busy, hard-nosed line manager, on the other hand, may keep the preliminaries to the bare minimum, diving almost straight into the matter in hand. If you have any sense, you will clearly play along in both cases.

●●● Spotting the clues

In the above examples, the behavioural differences would have been self-evident from the first few words spoken. In practice, you can often pick up the signals before interviewers even open their mouths, especially if they are seeing you in their own office rather than an impersonal meeting room. For instance, the affable type would probably have had photographs of spouse and children on the desk, plants on the window sill and a plaque commemorating some sporting or business achievement on the wall.

Clothes, pens, briefcases, the tidiness or otherwise of the office – these, and a host of other factors, are all part of the non-verbal communication on which, consciously or otherwise, we base so many of our decisions.

You can continue to make use of the non-verbals as the meeting progresses. By watching the interviewer's body language, you should be able to tell how things are going. An alert posture with the body leaning slightly forwards, the occasional encouraging nod of the head, good eye contact and so on will indicate that the other person is attentive and interested. If the interviewer slumps back in the chair and fails to make much eye contact, this may well be a warning that you are waffling. Sudden movements such as a jerking of the head or a pronounced blinking of the eyes often indicate surprise or disbelief.

Experienced interviewers will, of course, be picking up the same signals from you, checking whether your subsequent behaviour validates their initial judgement. Although a bad first impression may be difficult to wipe out, a good first impression is not necessarily so readily sustained. You must therefore stay on your guard and continue to give off the right signals, displaying an alert, positive manner and trying to avoid sending any negative signals. While it is difficult to control your own body language for any length of time, here are a few things to try to steer clear of.

- Sitting with arms crossed, which looks defensive.
- Covering your mouth with your hand when you are speaking.
- Lounging in your chair instead of maintaining an upright, but not stiff, posture.
- Fidgeting, which makes you look either uncomfortable or nervous.
- Insufficient eye contact. It is acceptable to avert your eyes while considering the answer to a question, but look at the interviewer when delivering it – and do pay attention when you are being spoken to.
- Too much eye contact. While you should be looking at the interviewer for about two-thirds of the time, do glance away intermittently. When your eyes are meeting the interviewer's, avoid staring – instead send a positive message such as interest or enthusiasm.

●●● What's in a question?

Although first impressions are based heavily on non-verbal signals, and body language certainly continues to play an important role throughout an interview, as the meeting progresses an

increasing amount of the interviewer's judgement will be based on what you say. If you got off on the wrong foot, it may be difficult to talk your way back in, but it is very much easier to do the opposite and, having started well, then proceed to talk yourself out of the job.

The biggest danger is doing just that – talking too much. It is a far more common problem than saying too little. In case this sounds as though you will be damned if you do, and damned if you don't, a few words of explanation are probably required.

It is, quite obviously, vital that you find the opportunities to get all of your key selling points across. What is more, good interviewers will ensure that you do more of the talking than they do. On the other hand, you must, at all costs, avoid waffling. Be particularly wary of open questions. If the interviewer says, 'Give me a brief summary of your career' and, 10 minutes later, you are still talking about things that happened 20 years ago, you have blown it. Efficient executives communicate clearly and succinctly. That question you were asked may have had more to do with testing your communication skills than finding out about what was, in any case, largely self-evident from your CV.

Although open questions have their dangers, they do at least give you the chance, provided that you stick to the point, to say what you want to. Professional recruiters use open questions a lot, both as ends in themselves and as the first stage in what is known as an interview funnel.

The open question with which the funnel begins gets you talking freely. The interviewer waits for something interesting to come up, such as a major success you claim to have achieved, then latches on to it, probing more deeply by saying something like, 'That's interesting – could you just tell me in a bit more detail exactly what you did?' Further probes close you in further and further – hence the funnel analogy – until the interviewer finally pins you down and you either substantiate your claim or it is shown to be unjustified. This technique works to your advantage if you can back up your claims, but to your detriment if you cannot.

Open questions can be particularly tricky when you are on sticky ground, such as explaining why you apparently resigned from your last job without having another position to go to.

Rather than asking openly if you were fired, the interviewer may simply say, 'Why did you leave XYZ?' It is all too easy to say far more than you intend, especially if the interviewer employs reflective questions (encouraging you to go on by repeating words or phrases you have just used) or, worse still, saying nothing in reply when you stop speaking. Most people feel uncomfortable when faced with a silence, and consequently proceed to fill the empty space – frequently blabbing themselves into ever deeper water – rather than sitting it out and forcing the interviewer to pick up the baton.

While you should avoid saying too much, it is equally dangerous, on the other hand, to leave obvious doubts or suspicions to fester in the interviewer's mind. As in any sales presentation, objections do need to be identified and dealt with. If you have prepared thoroughly, you should have spotted potentially difficult areas and have decided in advance the best methods of dealing with them. This in itself should enable you to respond clearly and concisely when they come up, rather than talking yourself into trouble.

●●● The other side of the coin

Professional recruiters use questions skilfully. If you are right for the job and have prepared thoroughly for the interview, this can only be to your benefit. Untrained interviewers, on the other hand, can make it more difficult for you to demonstrate your worth because they are prone to making greater use of what are all too often the wrong kinds of questions. These include the following types.

- Leading questions, e.g. 'Wouldn't you agree that . . .'. Although the desired answer has been flagged up for you, simply sitting there and agreeing will hardly advance your campaign to show what you can offer the company, unless they are simply looking for a 'yes person' – in which case it is probably not the job you want anyway. Occasionally, canny interviewers may use leading questions to see whether you have sufficient character and conviction to disagree. Body language, especially the expression in their eyes, may be the best way of sussing this out.
- Multiple questions, i.e. asking two or more questions at the same time. This can be confusing. Unless you want to cop out

of the difficult part of a multiple question by answering the easy bit, the best way of dealing with this is to say that you will take each point in turn and then proceed to do precisely that.

- Closed questions. Sometimes a question which can be answered only by 'yes' or 'no' is appropriate. More often it is not. At the very least it limits your opportunity to sell yourself. At worst a closed answer could be positively misleading. Do what politicians do when the media try to trap them in this way. Insist on opening the question out by saying something like, 'That is actually quite a complex issue' and then exploring it fully.

In addition to using inappropriate questions, untrained interviewers also have a tendency to do far too much of the talking themselves. This can be a real problem, facing you with the dilemma of either failing to get your USPs across because you cannot get a word in edgeways or of appearing rude by butting in. Since it would give offence to interrupt and blatantly switch the discussion from what the interviewer was rattling on about to what you want to say, the best approach is to display interest while biding your time then, when you see an opportunity to link what the interviewer has said to something you wish to say, seize the initiative without appearing to break the flow of the conversation. The professional recruiter's trick of reflecting the other person's words back to them can be invaluable in this kind of situation.

●●● The mob scene

So far we have been talking in the context of the one-to-one interview – the most common kind. Sometimes, however, and especially when the job is in local government, with some official body, or with a professional partnership, you may have to face the dreaded group, or panel, interview. This is inevitably more stressful, but you can minimise the stress if you follow a few basic ground rules.

- When you are being asked a question, maintain eye contact with the person who is speaking.
- When you reply, concentrate mainly on that person, but include all the others by glancing round and establishing intermittent eye contact with them too.

- Take care not to ignore members of the panel who are seated to one side or the other of you. It is all too easy to pay most attention to those within an easy line of vision.
- Although the implication of a group interview is that the decision will be made by consensus, there may be a first among equals and it is sensible to pay this individual proportionately greater attention. If you cannot identify the *primus inter pares* from titles (e.g. chairperson, senior partner), watch body language. The rest of the group will probably tend to turn their bodies and eyes towards the key person in subconscious deference.
- If, before you have finished answering one question, someone else chips in with another, say politely that you will answer the second one in a moment, as soon as you have responded fully to the first. As a result of poor preparation or chairing, this is unfortunately an all too common hazard.
- If you feel yourself getting flustered, cool it by taking a breath, or a sip of water, before responding to a question or continuing with what you were saying.
- When you are given the opportunity to ask questions, try to draw in as many of the members of the panel as possible.
- As you continually move your eye contact round throughout the interview, try to get a feel, by their body language, of which members of the panel are on your side and which have still to be won over. Try to get their doubts out into the open, so that you can deal with them.

●●● Don't relax

After a formal interview, whether it is with one person, two or three, or a whole gang, you may be given the opportunity to have a guided tour of the organisation's premises. Although this may genuinely be primarily for your benefit, do not treat it solely as a one-way situation. You will be expected not only to display genuine interest, but also to ask relevant questions and make sensible comments. While you should avoid offering instant, and probably ill-informed, solutions to any problems that are raised, going to the other extreme and just wandering round looking relieved that the interview is over could equally well blow your chances of the job.

Another situation in which it is all too easy to drop your guard

is the social meeting. You may be invited to lunch or dinner, or asked to meet some of your future colleagues over a drink. Since it is important to be sure that you will fit into the culture of the organisation, these occasions can be mutually beneficial, but they do also have their dangers.

Although it is important to relax a little and be less formal than you would be in an interview, you still need to be cautious. This applies particularly to alcohol. The best rule is to say that you have to drive your car later on (even if you do not) and either stay off alcohol altogether or limit yourself to a single drink, taking care to sip it extremely slowly. If you are having a meal, avoid any dishes which are messy to eat, even if they are your favourites. Pay your host the compliment of enjoying the meal but do not make a pig of yourself.

Finally, do prepare for this kind of meeting just as thoroughly as you would for a normal interview. While there will be a certain amount of purely social chat, you should also be ready to advance your candidature by discussing relevant business issues.

●●● International aspects

When you are being interviewed in an overseas country, or for that matter even in the UK but by someone who is not British, you need to be aware of the cultural differences and their implications. For instance, while it is common nowadays to use first names in an interview in the UK (once the interviewer has taken the initiative), people are much less familiar in Germany, addressing each other by formal – and often complex – titles. The French will probably get onto first names eventually, but not as quickly as the British, and the 'tu' form would certainly never be substituted for 'vous' at an interview.

Another difference relates to the fact that although a touch of humour might be considered desirable in an interview in the UK, as a means of relaxing the atmosphere, it would be thought frivolous in Germany where meetings of all kinds tend to be more formal and serious. A further example to watch out for is when a Japanese executive gives you a business card. Do not just pop it into your pocket. You are expected to sit and gaze at it in reverence for a few moments. Ideally, you should have one

of your own to give in return, so that this gesture of respect can be reciprocated.

Body language has some major differences too. In terms of interpersonal space, people from the Middle East tend to stand much closer to each other than we do. While they may make a European feel uncomfortable, the distance a European maintains seems positively aloof to them. Crossing the legs is considered rude in the Middle East, while showing someone the soles of your feet is positively insulting.

Gestures may also have different meanings. There are even countries where nodding the head means 'no' and shaking it means 'yes'. What it all adds up to is that you need to mug up on such matters – there are books and even courses available – if you are to avoid misinterpreting behaviour or, worse still, giving offence.

●●● Thanks for the memory

Since last impressions are, in many ways, just as important as first impressions, do be sure to end on a positive note. Without being insincere or nauseatingly gushy, thank the interviewer for their time, and say that you enjoyed the meeting and look forward to hearing about the next stage. If you have not already been told what that is, there is no harm in asking.

There are, however, two things you should not ask about. One is whether you have got the job, or a place on the short-list if it was just a screening interview. The other mistake is to ask for expenses. If the company is going to reimburse them, they will make the offer. If it has cost you a lot of money to attend the interview and you feel strongly about it, at least wait until you have heard the outcome before raising the matter.

Finally, when the moment comes to say goodbye to the interviewer, do so with a firm handshake and a warm smile. That is the very last impression you will leave, so it needs to be a good one.

After the interview, ignore the advice sometimes given to send a letter thanking the interviewer and confirming your interest in the position. The vast majority of people in this country regard such behaviour with distaste. A telephone call is even worse.

However, where you have been to an interview arranged by a headhunter, selection consultant or agency with one of their clients, it is a good idea to ring the consultant and report back on how it went. The consultant will appreciate being kept informed both about your ongoing interest and about your reaction to the client. If you leave it a day or two before you call, you may in return be able to obtain some feedback on your performance at the interview.

After that, it is unfortunately just a matter of being patient. Although news often seems to take far longer than it ideally should, chasing the interviewer is likely to do you more harm than good. The majority of prospective employers will tell you why you have finally been ruled out, so to an extent no news is good news – even if it only means that the delay is due to the job having been offered to someone else but you being held in reserve in case the first choice declines.

Should you be rejected, there is equally little to be gained by ringing the interviewer and asking why, even if you do phrase it as a request for advice as to what you might do better in future. Such requests are embarrassing to the interviewer, who will probably not tell you the truth in any case.

● ● ● Dos and don'ts

The chances of being successful, rather than rejected, can be increased significantly by keeping in mind the key dos and don'ts. Here are some of the things that most commonly turn interviewers off.

- Arriving late, especially without the courtesy of a phone call.
- Unprofessional appearance.
- Weak or clammy handshake.
- Over-familiarity, e.g. using first names without being asked to.
- Lack of eye contact.
- Fidgeting.
- Lounging.
- V.D. (verbal diarrhoea).
- Jargon.
- Name dropping.
- Knocking previous employers.

- Being evasive.
- Failing to keep to the point.
- Playing games.
- Raising the question of remuneration at an early stage.
- Being more interested in what you can take than what you can give.
- Concern with trivialities like hours of work.
- Indecisiveness.
- Apathy.

And now for the dos.

- Prepare thoroughly.
- Keep your objective firmly in mind.
- Put yourself in the other person's shoes.
- Consciously seek to establish rapport.
- Watch – and respond to – not only what interviewers say, but also their tone of voice and body language.
- Treat the meeting as a two-way conversation between equals who respect each other's professionalism, not as a question and answer session controlled by the interviewer.
- Ensure that you cover the whole of your agenda and do not fail to communicate any of the ways in which you can add value to the organisation.

*“A minefield for
the unwary.”*

interview add ons – tests, assessment centres and other selection tools

If you have ever wondered, after attending a badly conducted interview, just how good an indicator of future performance the interview actually is, you are not alone. Various surveys have shown that the predictive success rate of the average interview is in fact not much better than pure chance.

Untrained interviewers score particularly badly, but even professional recruiters do not exactly produce ratings which inspire very much confidence. Since the tendency to make instant judgements in the first few minutes – or even seconds – of an interview probably has a lot to do with this, it emphasises just how important it is to ensure that you make a good first impression.

While many employers continue to rely solely on the interview, in spite of its obvious shortcomings, an increasing number are supplementing it both with tests and with a variety of other selection aids, ranging from assessment centres to graphology. If you are not to be thrown out of your stride by these techniques, you need to know what to expect and how to handle them.

●●● A testing time

Tests are the most commonly used form of interview add on. Their (at least p do-) scientific nature appeals strongly to

employers who have been rattled by scare stories about interview unreliability. The idea of being able to allocate people marks, and offer the job to the one with the highest score, has the attraction of taking the onus off the decision maker – although, in practice, by no means all tests permit this kind of simple comparison and very few recruiters would, in any case, recommend such a simplistic approach.

Reliable information about the validity of tests as predictors of job performance is difficult to come by, since most of the statistics are produced by the people who develop and sell the tests – not exactly an independent source. The picture is hardly made any clearer either by the obsession the testing fraternity has with using a volume and complexity of jargon that makes computerspeak seem like plain English, or by the acrimonious rows between the supporters of different kinds of test.

What is perhaps an even greater problem than whether tests actually do what they claim to do, however, is whether employers select the correct test for a given purpose. The failure to do this is often compounded by a tendency among employers to interpret the output of tests negatively, paying less attention to indications of a candidate's plus points and potential, than to the odd word in a report which sows a seed of doubt and suggests that a hiring may involve a risk which could subsequently rebound on the decision maker. No wonder that the Institute of Personnel and Development (IPD, formerly the IPM) has described psychometric testing as 'a minefield for the unwary'.

What is a test?

The term 'test' gets applied very loosely to a whole range of instruments. The main types you are likely to encounter in the selection process are pencil and paper (or computer keyboard) exercises, in which you answer a number of questions; and activity tests, in which you simulate tasks you would carry out in the course of a job. The latter, which include, for example, in-tray exercises and group discussions, will be examined when we look at assessment centres.

The former can be further subdivided into performance-based tests, under which you are scored on the basis either of the time you take to complete tasks or of the number of correct answers you achieve; and self-description questionnaires, the output

from which is a profile, describing your temperament in terms of a range of parameters such as introversion and extroversion. Performance-based tests are used to measure abilities, aptitudes, attainments and skills, while self-description questionnaires are used to assess rather more subjective areas like interests, motivation and personal qualities.

Most such tests are of either the multiple choice variety, in which you have to choose your answer to each question from several alternatives, or the forced choice variety in which you have to choose between just two options. The problem with the forced choice type is that you often find either that neither of the two options really applies, or that both do with almost equal relevance. You may occasionally come across free response tests, in which you can give answers in your own words, but these are difficult to mark and consequently not greatly favoured.

Ideally a battery of tests should be used, rather than just one, preferably with a qualified psychologist on hand to interpret them and discuss the results with you. In practice, however, a day, or even half a day, spent with a psychologist is expensive in terms both of candidate time and company money. Many organisations just throw in the odd test, selection being based in the better cases on proper trials and experience to verify its predictive value, and in the less laudable instances on its specious appeal or on the persuasiveness of a salesperson.

Presumably also for cost reasons, some companies test just the final one or two candidates, and only do this at the end of the selection process, as a kind of insurance policy against having missed some fatal flaw. It would be much more useful to apply tests at an early stage, and use the output as a basis for discussion at interview.

Test types and tactics

So much for categories and formats, but what kinds of test are you likely to encounter and how should you deal with them? The types you may come across in the selection process at managerial levels include the following.

- **Ability** – the most commonly tested ability being intelligence, often incorrectly referred to as 'IQ'. These tests usually involve solving a number of problems which are often divided

into sections such as numerical, verbal, logical and spatial. Your performance on such tests, like your ability to solve crossword puzzles, can be improved significantly with familiarity and practice. If you cannot get hold of actual test blanks, you can buy books containing tests of this type. Apart from preparing you for any tests you may encounter, they are useful for sharpening up your mind generally.

- **Interests** – these are more likely to be encountered at a career guidance session than as part of a selection process.
- **Management style** – questionnaires may be used to assess whether your style is autocratic, consultative or somewhere in between. There is not necessarily any one right style. Even within a given organisation and culture, different managers may be equally successful, even though their styles vary greatly.
- **Motivation** – not too often found in practice, due both to the complex cocktail of factors which comprise motivation, and because it is so dependent on the relationship between an individual and an organisation. The same person might be highly motivated in one environment and completely demotivated in another.
- **Personality** – a number of personality tests may be encountered in the selection process, including some which were not designed for use in recruitment at all. Unfortunately the ones which appear to candidates to be most plausible tend to be the least reliable, and vice versa, so do not be surprised if you cannot see the relevance of some of the questions you have to answer. These tests, or – more correctly – questionnaires or inventories, are usually of the self-description variety. Although their designers claim to build in 'lie-detectors', candidates may be tempted to answer with what they perceive to be the desired, rather than true, answers. For example, if a job seems to call for an extrovert and there are questions like 'Do you prefer to spend an evening (a) reading a book, or (b) going to a party', you do not have to be Machiavelli to plump for the latter.
- **Team building** – the most widely used questionnaire, Meredith Belbin's Self-Perception Inventory, classifies people into various different team roles, each of which has its value. Even if you were to familiarise yourself with these roles, and to guess which one would make you the ideal candidate for the job, the nature of the questionnaire would make it difficult to fake. It is probably, therefore, best answer honestly.

At managerial level you are unlikely to encounter either aptitude tests (used to assess people's potential for such roles as computer programming or operating machinery) or attainment tests (again used mainly at lower levels, e.g. word processing tests given to interviewees for secretarial jobs). Executives' aptitudes and attainments are more likely to be evaluated by technical questions or by the kinds of participative exercises used in assessment centres.

Activity tests

The fundamental principle behind assessment centres is job simulation. Given that it is impracticable to put a bunch of applicants through a trial period in a job in order to decide who is going to produce the best performance, it is argued that the next best thing is to create situations which, though inevitably artificial, do replicate as closely as possible the job in question, or at least key elements of it. Therefore, while a full assessment centre programme may well include interviews, and pen and paper tests, the emphasis will be on what are often referred to as activity tests – the sorts of things you may have done on management training courses. There will also probably be group discussions.

These attempts to simulate the work situation are both a strength and a weakness of assessment centres. The idea makes a lot of sense, but it is difficult to put into practice because it involves getting a bunch of job applicants, the four or five people on a short-list for example, together for at least one whole day, quite possibly two. This may be practicable when a large company is making an internal promotion, but it presents major problems when the candidates are all currently employed in demanding jobs of their own – and, of course, bringing together such applicants also raises the thorny problem of confidentiality.

This difficulty, combined with the inevitably high costs of running assessment centres, results in them not being as widely used for external selection purposes as you might expect. However, because the principle behind them is sound, individual elements of them – the activity tests and group discussions – may well be encountered as part of an executive selection process.

Group exercises

When short-list interviews for a position are being set up, candidates may be asked to leave the whole day free so that, in addition to being interviewed by one or more people, they can participate in a group exercise or discussion. The dynamics of this are, to say the least, interesting. Although the task or problem with which the group is presented may involve the need to work together as a team, the candidates for the position in question will be aware that they are being observed and will consequently feel the urge to compete with each other to make the best impression.

Such exercises vary a great deal in structure, depending on such factors as:

- whether objectives are tightly defined or are expressed only in general terms, leaving the group to define them more precisely;
- whether a leader is nominated in advance or simply left to emerge;
- how much preparation time is allowed – if any;
- the extent to which competition and co-operation are deliberately built into the briefing;
- whether or not specific roles are assigned to the various participants.

Since the variation is so great, no perfect formula can be provided for dealing with such situations – you need to be ready to think on your feet. Nevertheless, here are a few basic rules which will stand you in good stead.

- Keep your cool. Careful study of the briefing you are given will often reveal information which is deliberately designed to be missed by those who dive in feet first.
- While you need to make a contribution which will be noticed, do not try to monopolise the show. Yes, you have guessed, it is quality rather than quantity that you should aim for once again.
- In choosing how to contribute, try to relate the exercise to what you know, from interviews, from the job spec and so on, about the type of person they are looking for. Aim to demonstrate these qualities in what you say and do.

Do not openly knock the other members of the group. You are likely to score more brownie points by acknowledging the

value of someone else's contribution – then going on to make your own.

In-tray exercises

One of the most popular individual, as opposed to group, selection aids is the in-tray, or basket, exercise. You are asked to assume that you come into the office one morning to face either a series of crises in your normal job or the need, due to some emergency, to take over someone else's job. There will, needless to say, be a number of conflicting priorities – far more than you can possibly deal with single-handed in the time available. You will be assessed on both the decisions you take and the reasons you give for making them.

Once again, the first requirement is not to go into a flat spin. Beyond that, it helps to know what the exercise is trying to assess, so that you can aim to demonstrate the required qualities. These include:

- your ability to work under pressure;
- your skill in prioritising a number of conflicting requirements;
- the ability to sift the wheat from the chaff – the in-tray will usually contain a certain amount of information which can be binned straight away;
- how good you are at delegation;
- whether you can distinguish between fact and opinion;
- how sensitive you are;
- your capacity for logical reasoning, and analytical and critical thinking;
- how flexible and imaginative you are.

Reports and presentations

If the job you are applying for is one in which report writing is a key element, you may be asked to bring with you to the interview a relevant piece of written work you have produced. Alternatively, since the prospective employer has no way of checking that such a sample is entirely your own work, you may be asked to write a brief report or essay, based on information, or a subject, which will be given to you. Essay subjects can range from topics of general interest to current issues relevant to the

industry in question, and they may even be as specific as 'How would you tackle your first three months in this job?'

As yet, it is rare for candidates to be asked to submit a video but, when oral presentations are important in the position in question, you may be asked to make a presentation, either just to the interviewer or to a small group of people. Sometimes you are given the opportunity to prepare visual aids such as flip charts or slides for overhead projection. On other occasions you may be given very little time to prepare anything at all.

These occasions are inevitably nerve-racking but remember that everybody is in the same boat. Keep your head and do, in particular, take care to ensure that you have understood the briefing properly. If you are faced with a demand to make a presentation at zero notice, you can always gain a breathing space by asking to use the cloakroom before you proceed.

Eyes and ears

Other forms of activity test which are sometimes encountered include fact-finding and listening exercises. The former, which test things like analytical and reasoning ability, involve you being given a certain amount of information to start with, then having to obtain more, usually with a view to making a decision or recommendation – which may be used as an opportunity to make you give a presentation. Listening exercises use either film, tape or a live presentation to provide you with information, then test your perceptiveness of it by using questionnaires.

You may also, occasionally, be presented with case studies. For example, candidates for a finance director's position may be asked to compare the profit and loss accounts and balance sheets of two companies, and to comment on such matters as the comparative performance and strategies of the two businesses. An exercise like this – which will probably have one or two 'tricks' built into the information provided – tests the ability to:

- keep calm and analyse the information thoroughly;
- consider not only technical, but also commercial, aspects;
- make a brief oral presentation with minimal preparation.

Then there is the dreaded role play. You may be asked to participate in such scenarios as a client meeting, a negotiation or a staff appraisal, with a representative of your potential

employer playing the other role. While many people seem to be thrown by role plays, they do normally represent situations which you should have encountered many times before in your everyday work experience, so they should not present undue problems if you simply ignore the pressures of the selection process and behave as you normally would in real life.

●●● **How to respond**

Tests – using that term in the very broadest sense – seem to throw candidates far more than the interview does, however nerve-racking that may be for some people. The reason for this may well be primarily the fear of the unknown. Interviews are at least something most of us are familiar with. Tests tend to be shrouded in an element of mystery.

Occasionally candidates do refuse to take tests. In some cases they may actually be justified in doing so. The potential employer could well be using a test that is totally unsuitable for the purpose in question, or may be failing to observe accepted administration procedures. Unfortunately, though, the assumption is likely to be that, if you refuse, you must have something to hide. It is rather like ducking a question in an interview. Generally speaking, therefore, you would be advised to be prepared by acquiring in advance a knowledge of the kinds of tests you are likely to be faced with, then, when you do get presented with one, to keep a cool head and give it your best shot.

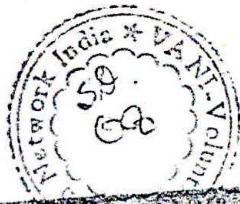
The ethics of the testing business dictate that anyone who is given a test is entitled to feedback on the results and a chance to discuss apparently erroneous assessments. Primarily for cost reasons – it is very time consuming – this is rarely volunteered. If you do decide to insist on your rights and ask for feedback, you may prefer to play safe and wait until you have heard whether you have got the job or not, in case you are seen as a nuisance, or even as a troublemaker.

●●● **Graphology**

Widely used in France, and also in Switzerland and French-speaking Belgium, graphology is still not generally accepted in

the UK as a selection tool. Its theoretical basis actually seems eminently sound. At any given school, it is argued, all the children will be taught to write in exactly the same script yet, by the time they reach adulthood, they will all be writing in a uniquely different way, as identifiable as a fingerprint. Graphology argues that the development of each person's individual script must be driven by subconscious factors relating to their different temperaments and that, by analysing the various elements of a person's handwriting, it is therefore possible to deduce relevant information about their personality, and physical and mental health.

While many people would probably agree with the first part of this argument – something, after all, must cause the change from a standard to a uniquely individual script – the second part is more contentious. Some practitioners in graphology do produce remarkably accurate analyses, identifying factors ranging from basic personality traits to disorders like heart problems, alcoholism and sexual perversions. On the other hand, there is a strong subjective element. Two or more practitioners cannot always be guaranteed to agree on an analysis of the same handwriting sample. Graphology seems to be as much of an art as a science and, as such, may have as much in common with the interview as with the psychometric test.



GIEN-1.

HUMAN DEVELOPMENT REPORT 1994

Military spending and the peace dividend: The World Summit for Social Development in 1995 provides a unique opportunity to agree on capturing the potential peace dividend and translating it into improved human development. The cover page shows the decline in global military spending during 1987-94, which generated a peace dividend of \$935 billion. Unfortunately, this peace dividend has not been used to finance the world's social agenda. During 1995-2000, if global military spending were to continue declining at 3% a year, another \$460 billion could emerge as a peace dividend.

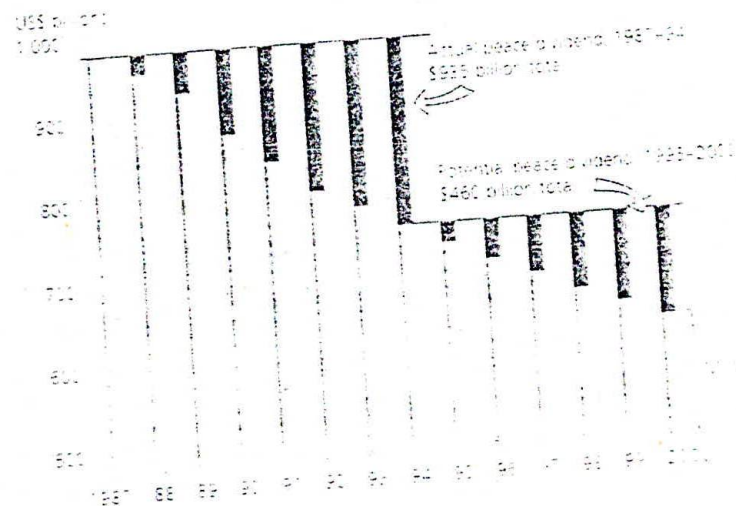
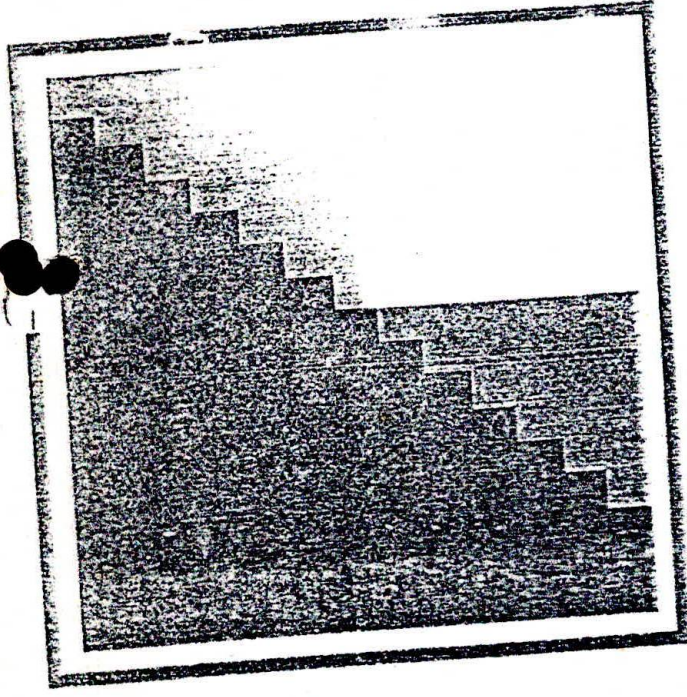


FIGURE 5.4
South Africa: disparity between blacks and whites four times larger than in the United States
National average = 100

Gaps between blacks and whites in South Africa separate "not just two different peoples, these are almost two different worlds." *HDR 1994*

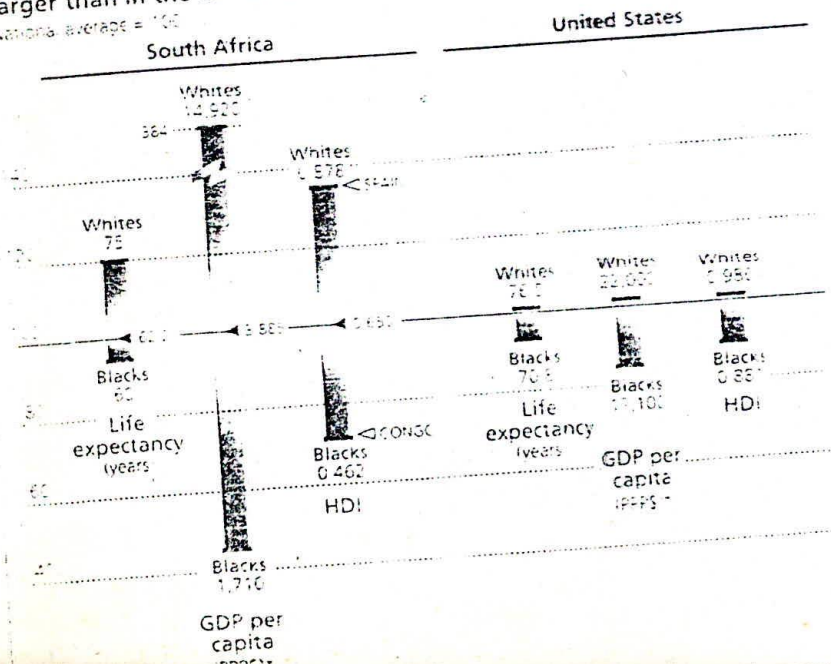


FIGURE 3.2

The human cost of military spending in developing countries

Current annual cost:
US\$ billions

Military spending in
developing countries
\$125 billion

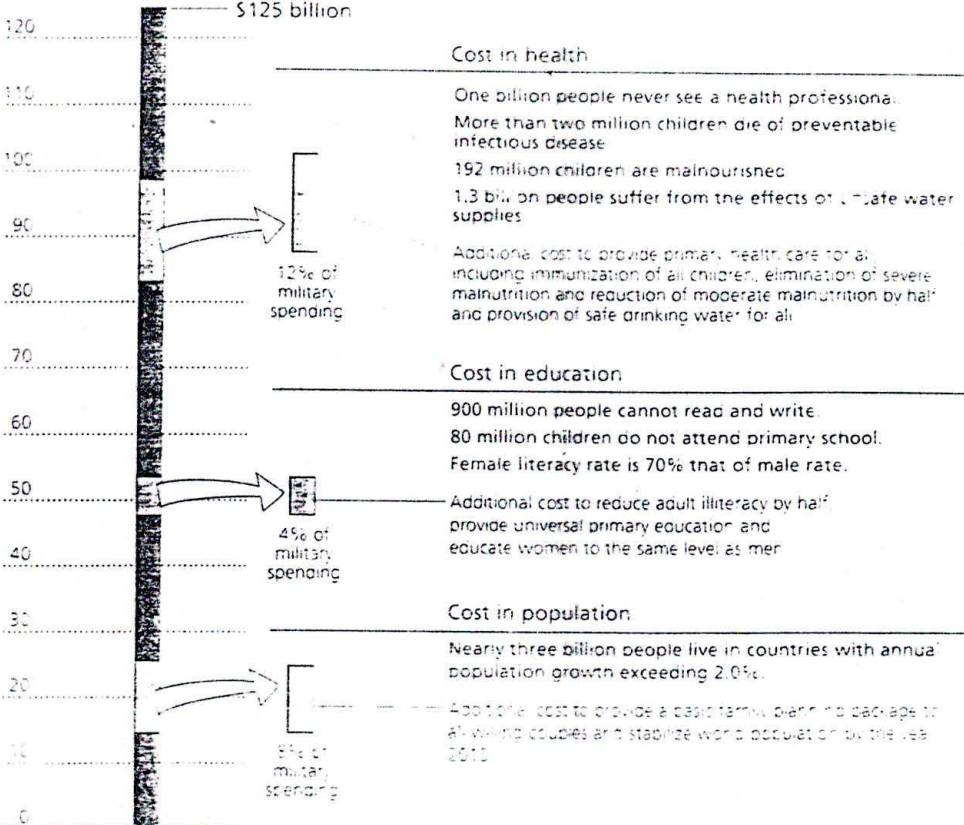


FIGURE 3.4

Suppliers of weapons to three trouble spots

Percentage of conventional weapons sales only, 1980-90

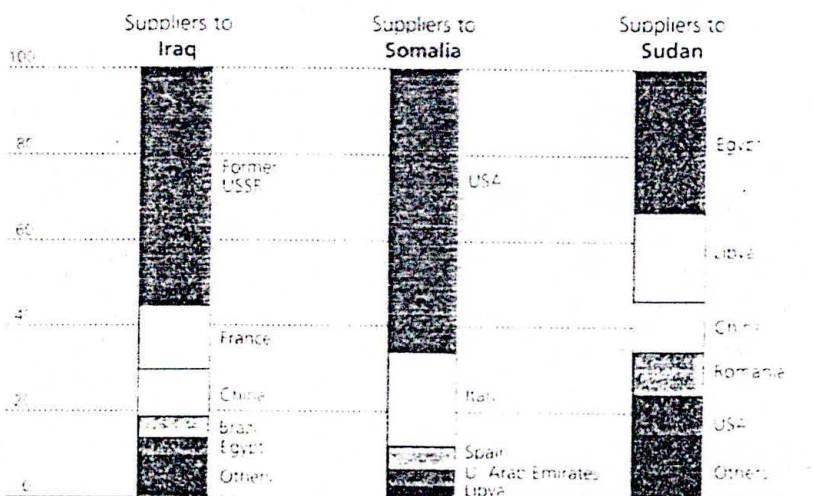


FIGURE 3.5

World military spending equals the income of nearly half the world's people

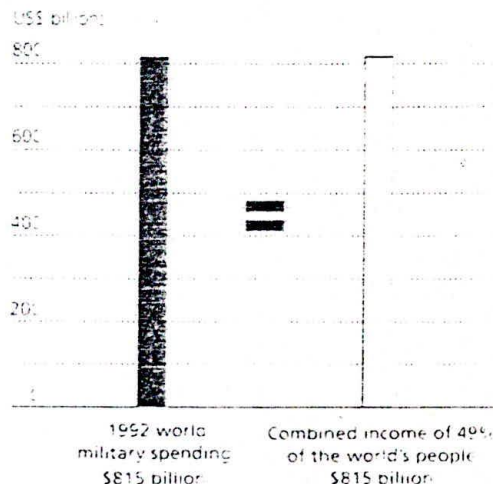


FIGURE 2.5
Profile of human distress in industrial countries

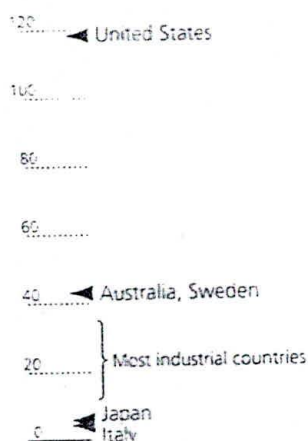
MURDER

Intentional homicides by males per 100,000 males



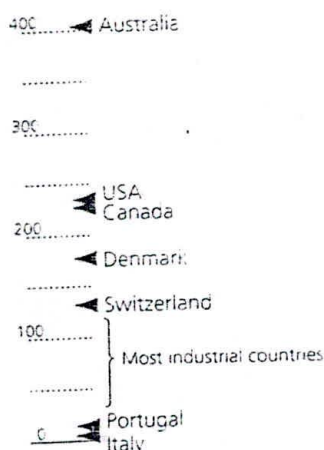
REPORTED RAPES

Per 100,000 women aged 15-59



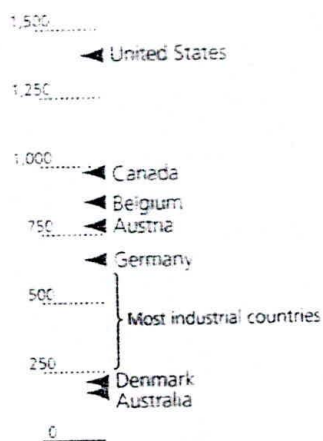
DRUG CRIMES

Per 100,000 people



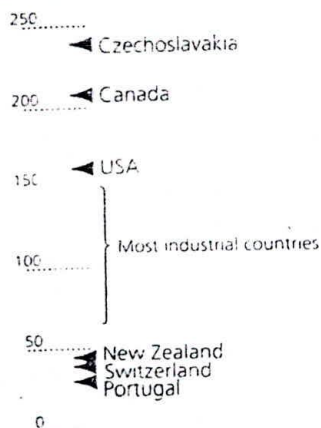
INJURIES FROM ROAD ACCIDENTS

Per 100,000 people



POLLUTION

Kilograms of sulphur and nitrogen emissions per capita

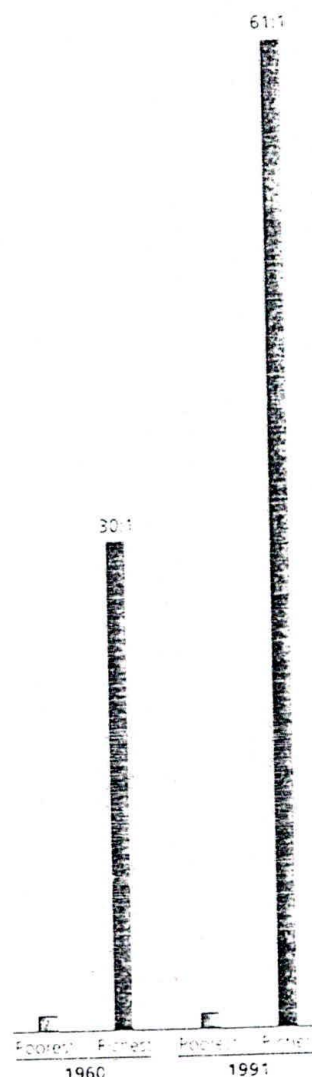


INCOME DISPARITY

Ratio of income shares: richest 20% of households: poorest 20%



FIGURE 2.6



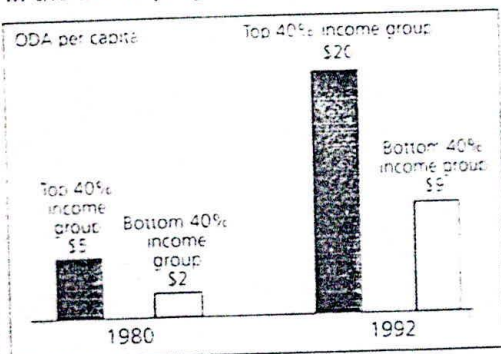
The widening gap between the rich and the poor

Ratio of income shares = richest 20% : poorest 20% of world population

FIGURE 4.7

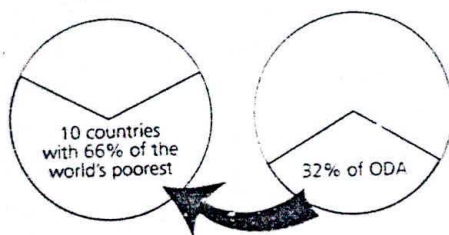
ODA distribution not linked to human development objectives

In the developing world, those with higher incomes receive the most....



The top 40% income group now gets twice the assistance given to the poorest. In 1980 the ratio was 2.5 to one

and the poorest receive the least.

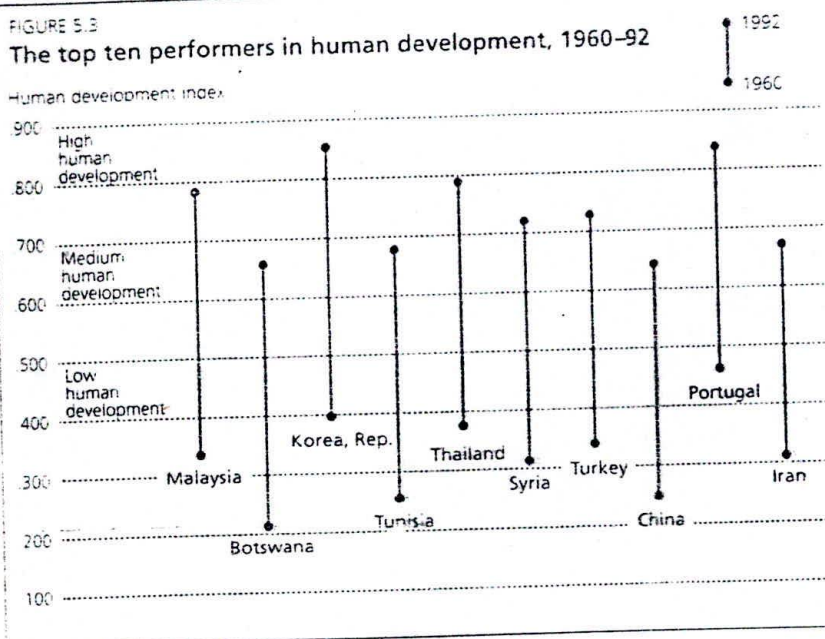


Two-thirds of the world's 1.3 billion poor live in ten countries that together receive less than a third of ODA.

FIGURE 5.3

The top ten performers in human development, 1960-92

Human development index



Human Development Index Ranking by Country

High human development

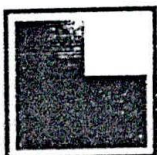
1	Canada
2	Switzerland
3	Japan
4	Sweden
5	Norway
6	France
7	Australia
8	USA
9	Netherlands
10	United Kingdom
11	Germany
12	Austria
13	Belgium
14	Iceland
15	Denmark
16	Finland
17	Luxembourg
18	New Zealand
19	Israel
20	Barbados
21	Ireland
22	Italy
23	Spain
24	Hong Kong
25	Greece
26	Cyprus
27	Czechoslovakia
28	Lithuania
29	Estonia
30	Latvia
31	Hungary
32	Korea, Rep. of
33	Uruguay
34	Russian Federation
35	Trinidad and Tobago
36	Bahamas
37	Argentina
38	Chile
39	Costa Rica
40	Belarus
41	Malta
42	Portugal
43	Singapore
44	Brunei Darussalam
45	Ukraine
46	Venezuela
47	Panama
48	Bulgaria
49	Poland
50	Colombia
51	Kuwait
52	Mexico
53	Armenia

Medium human development

54	Thailand
55	Antigua and Barbuda
56	Qatar
57	Malaysia
58	Bahrain
59	Fiji
60	Mauritius
61	Kazakhstan
62	United Arab Emirates
63	Brazil
64	Dominica
65	Jamaica
66	Georgia
67	Saudi Arabia
68	Turkey
69	Saint Vincent
70	Saint Kitts and Nevis
71	Azerbaijan
72	Romania
73	Syrian Arab Rep.
74	Ecuador
75	Moldova, Rep. of
76	Albania
77	Saint Lucia
78	Grenada
79	Libyan Arab Jamahiriya
80	Turkmenistan
81	Tunisia
82	Kyrgyzstan
83	Seychelles
84	Paraguay
85	Suriname
86	Iran, Islamic Rep. of
87	Botswana
88	Belize
89	Cuba
90	Sri Lanka
91	Uzbekistan
92	Oman
93	South Africa
94	China
95	Peru
96	Dominican Rep.
97	Tajikistan
98	Jordan
99	Philippines
100	Iraq
101	Korea, Dem. Rep. of
102	Mongolia
103	Lebanon
104	Samoa
105	Indonesia
106	Nicaragua
107	Guyana
108	Guatemala
109	Algeria
110	Egypt
111	Morocco
112	El Salvador
113	Bolivia
114	Gabon
115	Honduras
116	Viet Nam
117	Swaziland
118	Maldives

Low human development

119	Vanuatu
120	Lesotho
121	Zimbabwe
122	Cape Verde
123	Congo
124	Cameroon
125	Kenya
126	Solomon Islands
127	Namibia
128	São Tomé and Príncipe
129	Papua New Guinea
130	Myanmar
131	Madagascar
132	Pakistan
133	Lao People's Dem. Rep.
134	Ghana
135	India
136	Côte d'Ivoire
137	Haiti
138	Zambia
139	Nigeria
140	Zaire
141	Comoros
142	Yemen
143	Senegal
144	Liberia
145	Togo
146	Bangladesh
147	Cambodia
148	Tanzania, U. Rep. of
149	Nepal
150	Equatorial Guinea
151	Sudan
152	Burundi
153	Rwanda
154	Uganda
155	Angola
156	Benin
157	Malawi
158	Mauritania
159	Mozambique
160	Central African Rep.
161	Ethiopia
162	Bhutan
163	Djibouti
164	Guinea-Bissau
165	Somalia
166	Gambia
167	Mali
168	Chad
169	Niger
170	Sierra Leone
171	Afghanistan
172	Burkina Faso
173	Guinea





THE UNITED NATIONS DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMME

UNDP is the world's largest multilateral grant development assistance organization, serving more than 170 developing countries and territories through a network of over 130 offices worldwide. To execute its projects and programmes, UNDP draws upon developing countries' national technical capacities, as well as the expertise of specialized UN agencies and non-governmental organizations. Developing country governments provide personnel, facilities, equipment and supplies that cover more than half of total project costs.

People are at the centre of all UNDP activities, which aim to build countries' capacities for sustainable human development in six priority fields: poverty alleviation and grassroots development; environment and natural resources; management development; technical cooperation among developing countries; transfer and adaptation of technology; women in development. Entrepreneurship is promoted as a force for human progress. Global and interregional programmes address worldwide problems, including HIV/AIDS. All activities are scrutinized for their environmental impact.

Of UNDP's approximately 8,000 staff members, 85 per cent serve in the field. In 1992 UNDP recruited 9,093 international and 12,896 national experts and made specialized expertise available through 2,098 United Nations Volunteers. It awarded 10,366 fellowships to enable developing country citizens to undergo advanced training abroad, in addition to providing training for national personnel within nearly all projects funded.

UNDP also administers several associated funds, including the UN Sudano-Sahelian Office; the UN Capital Development Fund; the UN Fund for Science and Technology for Development and the UN Development Fund for Women. With the World Bank and the UN Environment Programme it manages the US\$1.3 billion Global Environment Facility. It plays the chief coordinating role for development activities undertaken by the whole United Nations system. At the country level, the head of each UNDP office is usually designated as Resident Coordinator of the United Nations System's Operational Activities for Development and is the local representative for many UN organizations and agencies.

UNDP's funds come from the voluntary contributions of nearly every nation on earth. In 1993 UNDP received over \$1.4 billion in contributions to its various funds and programmes. Fifty-eight per cent of resources are allocated to least developed countries; 87 per cent go to countries with annual per capita GNPs of \$750 or less.

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