

JOB HUNTING ADVICE





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APPLICATION FORM ADVICE

How to complete an application form

Being asked to complete an application form when you're well into a successful marketing career can seem rather unnecessary. But in fact, application forms are surprisingly common, especially in the Not-For-Profit and Education sectors where employers are particularly sensitive to ensuring equal opportunity measures are being observed. So if the thought of completing an application form fills you with exasperation, read on for a few handy tips...

General

- Allow plenty of time – application forms always take longer than you think, and it's worth giving yourself a chance to take a break from it (preferably over night) before checking through and sending. Stick at it though – once you've done one, they get easier (promise!)
- Make sure you read the instructions and complete every part of the form as instructed. A computer often does the first sifting, and straightforward omissions or mistakes can get you booted out of the process before your application makes it to a real person!
- If a question is not applicable, don't leave it blank – put N/A
- Check and stick to word limits
- If you're also sending a CV and/or covering note, don't worry about repeating yourself on the form...assume that the reader will ONLY have the app form in front of them, so don't refer to other documents or use 'see attached CV'
- Use the correct tense – present tense for your current role, past tense for previous roles

Qualifications and training

- It may seem obvious, but be as accurate as possible. The type of company who use application forms are also the type who will check your dates and certificates, so don't be tempted to stretch the truth
- If your qualifications are not from the UK, it's worth pointing out what the UK equivalent would be i.e. 'equivalent to an A Level'
- If asked for details of professional training, only include courses that are relevant to the role

Employment history

- Again, be accurate and make sure that the dates and details on your CV and LinkedIn profile match – it's easy to cross-reference!
- Tailor to the role – cover your whole employment history (and explain any gaps i.e. travelling, caring) but for those jobs that are less relevant to the role, you can be brief
- For your relevant roles, start with a snapshot/overview of what the role entailed and then use bullet points to cover the key duties, checking that you are covering off the requirements in the job spec where possible. It should be as easy as possible for the reader to match your experience with the required skills

Supporting statement

- This may also be phrased as 'relevant experience' or you may be asked to write a covering letter
- Some may be specific about what they expect you to cover, but others will give free rein to explain exactly why you're perfect for the job
- Shortlists are drawn up based on how well you match the job and person specification so these should be your reference points
- Write in the first person, but try not to start each sentence with 'I', as this can start sounding like a list i.e.
 - Rather than 'I am a highly motivated, results oriented marketing manager with a proven track record...' try 'As a highly motivated, results oriented marketing manager, I have a proven track record...'
- Start with an overview of who you are, what your career aim is, and why you're applying for the role
- Then address each of the requirements (or the most important/relevant ones) in the job and person specification and demonstrate how your experiences/character traits match them. Use specific examples where you can, supported by measurable results. i.e.
 - "Experience of managing new product launches." I managed the launch of ACME Product from start to finish, including product development, creating and implementing marketing plans across PR, website, email and direct mail. Sales in the first month beat target by 30%.
- If you don't have demonstrable experience in an area, look for any transferable skills that might fill the gap, and if all else fails, an enthusiasm to learn is always appreciated!
- Don't worry about repeating details you've put in your employment history – you can't assume the reader is taking in everything or even reading every section, so if it's pertinent to the role, put it in
- Conclude with an overview of why you're the best candidate, thank them for considering your application and reiterate your interest/excitement. Don't be afraid to put some personality into this section - a little enthusiasm can go a long way!

**"A LITTLE ENTHUSIASM
GOES A LONG WAY!"**

Final checks

- Re-read it, check you haven't missed anything and that you've followed the instructions. Ideally, give it the 'overnight test' and come back to it with a fresh eye for a final re-read
- Ask someone else to check for typo's, grammar issues and generally that it reads well. Your friendly recruitment consultant will be able to do this for you too!
- Take a copy! You'll need this to refer to when you're called for an interview...

Good luck!



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www.stopgap.co.uk



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COMPETENCY BASED INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

During an interview you're likely to be asked a series of questions designed to determine your behaviour when faced with specific scenarios. These are known as 'competency based' interview questions and our team of expert Stopgap consultants have written this handy guide on how best to answer them.

You need to prepare thoroughly for a competency-based interview for a marketing job, as it can be difficult to think on your feet and quickly come up with good examples in an interview scenario.

Structuring your answer

When answering a competency-based question, follow the **STARS** approach to structuring your answer – this ensures that you don't waffle and that you give the interviewer the answers they are looking for.

- S** First describe the **Situation** you were in
- T** Describe the **Task** that was involved
- A** Next describe the **Action** you took (be certain to say 'I' not 'we' when explaining this – interviewers want to know what YOU did, not the wider team)
- R** Then explain what the **Result** was
- S** Describe the **Skills** you used in your achievements

You can use the questions below to come up with a number of examples that you can talk through confidently and concisely, using the structure outlined above.

Clients will sometimes be specific about what competencies they'll be looking to test you on, other times they will be less so – the ideal is to have a variety of examples prepared that you can adapt to any interview question they might ask.

“BE PREPARED”

Before you speak

- Take your time to think about your answer- ask for clarification if you need to
- Take a deep breath and a sip of water and try to speak slowly and calmly
- Answer the question, and when you've finished, stop talking - don't keep rambling!!

Practice questions

Practicing on some example questions will really help you structure your thinking about certain areas of competency and have a 'stock' of scenarios and examples that can be adapted to pretty much any question. Practice out loud so you get used to the sound of your own voice.

Adaptability

- Tell me about a time when you changed your priorities to meet others' expectations.
- Describe a time when you altered your own behaviour to fit the situation.
- Tell me about a time when you had to change your point of view or plans to take into account new information or changing priorities.

Client focus

- Give an example of how you provided a service to a client/stakeholder beyond their expectations. How do you identify the need? How do you respond?
- Tell me about a time when you had to deal with a client/stakeholder service issue.
- Describe a situation in which you acted as an advocate within your organisation for your stakeholder's needs, where there was some organisational resistance to be overcome.

Communication

- Describe a situation you were involved in that required a multi-dimensional communication strategy.
- Give an example of a difficult or sensitive situation that required extensive communication.
- Tell me about a time when you really had to pay attention to what someone else was saying, actively seeking to understand their message.

Organisational Awareness

- Describe the culture of your organisation and give an example of how you work within this culture to achieve a goal.
- Describe the things you consider and the steps you take in assessing the viability of a new idea or initiative.
- Tell me about a time when you used your knowledge of the organisation to get what you needed.

**"HAVE A 'STOCK' OF
SCENARIOS AND EXAMPLES"**

Problem Solving and Judgement

- Tell me about a time when you had to identify the underlying causes to a problem.
- Describe a time when you had to analyse a problem and generate a solution.
- Tell me about a situation where you had to solve a problem or make a decision that required careful thought. What did you do?

Results Orientation

- Tell me about a time when you set and achieved a goal.
- Tell me about a time when you improved the way things were typically done on the job.
- Describe something you have done to maximise or improve the use of resources beyond your own work unit to achieve improved results.

Teamwork

- Tell me about a time when you worked successfully as a member of a team.
- Describe a situation where you were successful in getting people to work together effectively.
- Describe a situation in which you were a member (not a leader) of a team, and a conflict arose within the team. What did you do?

Developing Others

- Tell me about a time when you coached someone to help them improve their skills or job performance. What did you do?
- Describe a time when you provided feedback to someone about their performance.
- Give me an example of a time when you recognised that a member of your team had a performance difficulty/deficiency. What did you do?

Impact and Influence

- Describe a recent situation in which you convinced an individual or a group to do something.
- Describe a time when you went through a series of steps to influence an individual or a group on an important issue.
- Describe a situation in which you needed to influence different stakeholders with differing perspectives.

**“GET USED TO THE SOUND
OF YOUR OWN VOICE”**

Innovation

- Describe something you have done that was new and different for your organisation that improved performance and/or productivity.
- Tell me about a time when you identified a new, unusual or different approach for addressing a problem or task.
- Tell me about a recent problem in which old solutions wouldn't work. How did you solve the problem?

Leadership

- Tell me about a time when you had to lead a group to achieve an objective.
- Describe a situation where you had to ensure that your "actions spoke louder than your words" to a team.
- Describe a situation where you inspired others to meet a common goal.

Relationship Building

- Describe a situation in which you developed an effective win/win relationship with a stakeholder or client. How did you go about building the relationship?
- Tell me about a time when you relied on a contact in your network to help you with a work-related task or problem.
- Give me an example of a time when you deliberately attempted to build rapport with a co-worker or customer.

Resource Management

- Describe a situation in which you developed an effective win/win relationship with a stakeholder or client. How did you go about building the relationship?
- Describe a situation in which you took a creative approach to resourcing to achieve a goal.
- Tell me about a time when you had to deal with a particular resource management issue regarding people, materials or assets.
- Describe the options you would consider to resource a project or goal if you did not have the available resources within your own span of control.
- Describe a situation in which you established a partnership with another organisation or stakeholder to achieve a mutual goal. What steps did you take to ensure the partnership was effective?

**"EXAMPLES CAN BE ADAPTED
TO ANY QUESTION"**

Self-Management

- Describe the level of stress in your job and what you do to manage it.
- Describe a time when you were in a high-pressure situation.
- Describe a time when things didn't turn out as you had planned and you had to analyse the situation to address the issue.

Strategic Thinking

- Describe a challenge or opportunity you identified based on your industry knowledge, and how you developed a strategy to respond to it.
- Describe a time you created a strategy to achieve a longer-term business objective.
- Describe a time when you used your business knowledge to understand a specific business situation.

Best of Luck - and remember, the more you prepare and practice, the easier it'll be.



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CV ADVICE

Your CV needs to be more than a simple list of your previous responsibilities and job titles. It must promote you by showing **WHAT** you can do, as well as **WHERE** and **HOW** you have done it. In other words, it describes your achievements and skills as well as former job titles and functions.

Your CV should be:

- **Truthful**
- **Relevant**
- **Interesting**
- **To the point**
- **Devoid of waffle**

The Basics - CV Format Checklist

- Print in black ink on one side only of A4 white paper, using standard typeface e.g. Times New Roman, Arial or Helvetica
- Your name should be at the top of the page
- There is no need to write 'CV' at the top of the page – it wastes space!
- Font sizes of 10-12 for text and sizes 11-14 for headings. Use capital letters/bold for emphasis
- Don't use italics, underlining, shading, graphics, vertical/horizontal lines or boxes
- Use key words picked from the job description that you're applying for
- Set off your achievements by solid bullet points and with action words or phrases
- Date ranges (i.e. years at a company) should be on the same line
- Avoid using personal pronouns i.e. instead of 'I managed a team of four', write: 'Managed a team of four.'
- Use the past tense
- Choose strong action verbs
- Generally, avoid abbreviations
- Make your point quickly in the upper third of the page
- Avoid coloured paper or strange fonts
- There is no right length for a CV – get all the information down without waffling
- Keep the look simple and clean

**“USE KEY WORDS PICKED
FROM THE JOB DESCRIPTION”**

Types of CV

CV format is not 'one size fits all'...you can adapt the way you lay out your CV to fit the type of role you're looking for and where you want the emphasis to lie. And don't forget – you can tailor your CV every time you apply for a role – there's no reason to send the same version to everyone.

1. The chronological CV

This is the traditional CV format that focuses on your career history. Use it when you are looking for a job in a similar career area, and use the layout detailed above.

2. The Functional or Skills-based CV

Useful when you are making a career change to a different job type or industry. This type of CV emphasises your skills and abilities rather than your recent employment history.

You might consider using a functional CV if:

- you want to change to a new area of work and show your relevant transferable skills and experience
- you've got gaps in your employment history
- you've had a lot of jobs and you want to describe the experience you've got as a whole
- you want to highlight skills you've gained in previous jobs but that you don't use in your current or most recent job

Switch the order of your CV content so 'Achievements' comes ahead of 'Key Skills' and 'Career History'. When writing a Functional or Skills CV, you can provide details of the functions or skills that you've performed, depending on which fits best with your experience and goals:

Functions:

- CRM
- Campaign Management
- Direct Marketing
- Market Research
- Planning

Skills:

- Leadership/Management
- Negotiation/influencing
- Analysis

"CVS ARE NOT 'ONE SIZE FITS ALL'"

CV Content and Order

Name and Contact Details

Summary/Profile

Key Skills/ Achievements

Career History

Qualifications & Professional Development

Your hobbies

Name and contact details

Keep it brief with name, email and phone number. You **don't** need to include other personal details like:

- nationality, unless you will need a UK work permit
- marital status
- age
- details of children
- your health status

Summary/ profile

Your opening paragraph should aim to summarise your key selling points. Think, 'if I were a brand, how would I sell myself?' This needs to be hard hitting and rather than being a personal objective, should aim to give the reader an overview of your key strengths.

- It should be written with your goal/next job in mind
- It should state who and what you are i.e. how do I describe myself
- It should indicate your breadth/length of experience
- It can include 2/3 key skills/strengths
- It should state your USP
- It may state your next move/objective

Key skills and achievements

Whether you're using a chronological or function/skills based CV format, you should detail your achievements under each heading. Think back through your work history and identify work that produced especially good results. You can use the following **STARS** guidelines to write up these achievements:

- First describe the **Situation** you were in
- Describe the **Task** that was involved
- Next describe the **Action** you took (be certain to say 'I' not 'we' when explaining this interviewers want to know what YOU did, not the wider team)
- Then explain what the **Result** was
- Describe the **Skills** you used in your achievements

Examples of work achievements

Money

Think of a time when you saved or made money for your company or client

Time

Did you save time or increase efficiency?

Organisation

Have you organised, planned or implemented an event or project?

Making Improvements

Have you made improvements to a process or project? Are you creative, innovative and good at coming up with new ideas?

Teamwork

Do you work well with others? Where have you exhibited this?

Client Management

Are you good at winning, retaining and managing clients? How have you managed tricky situations or difficult clients?

Presentation/Public Speaking

How good are your communication skills? Have you presented in public?

Writing Skills

Do you write reports? Where do you use your writing skills?

Flexibility

Think of a time when you were called on to be adaptable in handling new or different situations

Training, Coaching

Have you mentored team members or others in or outside the organisation?

Check:

- Does each achievement begin with an action word or phrase?
- Is the language you have used concise, specific and professional?
- Have you highlighted the results of your actions clearly?
- Is each of your skills illustrated with at least one solid achievement or result?
- Have you chosen skills that relate to your job objective?

“THINK OF A TIME WHEN YOU...”

Action words to describe your achievements and pep up your CV:

Achieved	Designed	Initiated	Predicted	Simplified
Accomplished	Detailed	Innovated	Prepared	Solved
Accelerated	Developed	Inspected	Presented	Standardised
Acquired	Devised	Installed	Prevented	Streamlined
Acted	Directed	Instructed	Procured	Strengthened
Activated	Displayed	Integrated	Produced	Stretched
Adapted	Distributed	Interpreted	Programmed	Structured
Addressed	Documented	Introduced	Projected	Studied
Administered	Drafted	Invented	Promoted	Succeeded
Adopted	Dramatised	Investigated	Proposed	Summarised
Advised	Earned	Judged	Proved	Supervised
Analysed	Edited	Launched	Provided	Supplemented
Appointed	Educated	Led	Publicised	Supplied
Appraised	Eliminated	Logged	Published	Surveyed
Arranged	Employed	Made	Purchased	Tailored
Ascertained	Enforced	Maintained	Qualified	Taught
Assessed	Engineered	Managed	Quantified	Tested
Assisted	Enlisted	Manipulated	Questioned	Tracked
Attained	Ensured	Mapped	Raised	Trained
Awarded	Established	Marketed	Realised	Transferred
Balanced	Estimated	Matched	Reasoned	Transformed
Budgeted	Evaluated	Met	Recommended	Tripled
Built	Examined	Modelled	Reconciled	Uncovered
Calculated	Expanded	Modernised	Reconstructed	Undertook
Checked	Facilitated	Modified	Recorded	Unified
Coached	Finalised	Monitored	Redesigned	United
Collaborated	Formed	Motivated	Reduced	Updated
Communicated	Formulated	Navigated	Referred	Upgraded
Completed	Fostered	Negotiated	Refined	Used
Conceived	Founded	Nominated	Reinforced	Utilised
Conceptualised	Generated	Observed	Reorganised	Vacated
Conducted	Guided	Obtained	Reported	Verbalised
Constructed	Handled	Opened	Represented	Verified
Consulted	Headed	Organised	Researched	Weighed
Controlled	Helped	Originated	Restructured	Widened
Converted	Identified	Oversaw	Reviewed	Withdraw
Co-ordinated	Illustrated	Participated	Revised	Withstood
Created	Implemented	Perceived	Revitalised	Won
Decided	Improved	Persuaded	Scheduled	Worked
Decreased	Improvised	Piloted	Secured	Wrote
Defined	Increased	Pinpointed	Selected	
Delivered	Influenced	Pioneered	Shaped	
Demonstrated	Informed	Planned	Showed	

Qualifications & professional development

Detailing your GCSEs really isn't necessary – a quick summary of number and grades will suffice. You don't need to mention your individual University modules either unless they are of real importance to a role. Make sure you don't forget your professional qualifications such as the ISP, IDM, CIM, etc and any other courses you may have attended such as Presentation or Negotiation skills, and IT knowledge.

Your Hobbies

Be careful that this part of your CV isn't longer than your some of your previous roles! This is usually used as an ice breaker in an interview so do put something you are passionate about here, which brings your personality to life.

A word about creativity

Although you may have a creative background, this creativity does not have to be portrayed visually on your CV. The old rule of keeping it simple and sticking to a clean and consistent format will work best. The CV needs to look and sound professional otherwise it may not be taken seriously. It's also likely that recruitment agencies will be using automatic CV scanning technology, for which simplicity is key.



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JOB HUNTING ADVICE

INTERVIEW PREPARATION

Interviews can be nerve-wracking but with the right preparation you can keep those jitters at bay and make sure you feel as confident as possible.

Our Stopgap consultants have given their advice and support to thousands of candidates over the years, helping them find their perfect new job. Here are their top tips for a successful interview.

Before you start

Before you start, make sure you're sure why you want this job. Are you clear about your career objectives and goals?

It's important to be able to reassure and convince the client that you know what you want, so consider:

- Fit with your skills
- Exciting/interesting
- Career opportunities/learning
- Ability to impact results
- Broadening of responsibilities
- Salary
- Life/work balance

Once you're convinced that it's the job for you, prepare well, use these tips, and give us a call for any support or advice you need...good luck!

**"KEEP THOSE
PRE-INTERVIEW JITTERS
AT BAY!"**

The interview prep topline top 10

- **Do your preparation:** Make sure you have reviewed your skills and accomplishments ahead of the interview and can summarise them succinctly.
- **Dress appropriately:** For the culture of the company you are applying to.
- **Do your research on the company before the interview:** Know what questions you want to ask.
- **Develop a positive attitude:** Be polite and personable to everyone you encounter from the moment you walk in the door. The receptionist can have an input too! Demonstrate enthusiasm and project optimism. Be an interested listener and observer. Take a positive view of things - never talk to an interviewer about personal problems
- **Avoid premature salary discussions:** Don't talk money until your value has been built and understood, do not seem primarily concerned with salary
- **Always protect the confidence of a past employer:** If you can't be nice about a past employer the future employer won't trust you.
- **Be yourself and not what you think someone else expects:** You will develop confidence if you have really spent the time reviewing what you have done well in the past.
- **Be efficient:** Bring extra copies of your CV. Prepare questions in advance. Check out the venue so you arrive in plenty of time.
- **Listen as well as talk:** Pay attention to your interviewer. Make sure you are answering the question he/ she is really asking and reading between the lines. Make sure your answer is understood.
- **Be specific:** Illustrate what you say with examples of your achievements and skills. The more specific you can be the easier it is for the interviewer to see how well you will fit into the company.

**“DRESS FOR THE CULTURE
OF THE COMPANY
YOU'RE APPLYING TO”**

First Impressions count:

30 seconds

The amount of time it takes us to judge economic and educational levels, social position, level of sophistication and success.

240 seconds

The amount of time it takes us to make decisions about trustworthiness, compassion, reliability, intelligence, capability, humility, friendliness and confidence.

40%

Of interviewers made up their minds about a candidate in less than 20 minutes, while nearly 20% had made up their minds in less than 10 minutes.

7%

Content – what you say

55%

Body language (non-verbal communication)

38%

How you sound (how you say it)

“Tell me about yourself”

Scary, huh? Most interviews start with an opener like this, especially in marketing jobs where the ability to articulate yourself well and convince others are often important qualities.

It can be quite daunting to just start talking about yourself straight off the bat, but the impact you have in the first few minutes of the interview is hard to shift so make sure you make a good one. It is useful to be able to summarise your background, achievements and objectives in between thirty seconds and three minutes, and here are some tips to help you do that:

Focus on three areas

- Your background
- Your achievements
- Your current career goals

“BODY LANGUAGE IS 55% OF COMMUNICATION”

Career Highlights

When it comes to editing your career highlights into a manageable pitch, it helps if you start by filling a whole page with what you would want to say to a potential employer.

Cut that down to half a page. Keep cutting until you get to a quarter of a page. Then pull out your bullet points that give a snapshot of your career.

Try to cover

- Your most recent role
- Your key achievements and responsibilities
- Your USP
- Your skills / strengths
- What you want to do next

Practice, practice and practice some more

Always rehearse out loud, in front of a mirror, to a friend or into a tape or video recorder. Force yourself to sound enthusiastic.

Too often job candidates recite their pitches in a monotone or rush through them without passion. Remember – your tone of voice and body language have a greater impact than the words you say!

The first few times you try out your pitch may be a bit uncomfortable, but it gets easier. After a while it will become second nature to you and, when it does, you will be glad you practiced.

Example 30 Second elevator pitch

I have 5 years' experience in retail marketing. My principle skill is managing a team to deliver against business and marketing objectives. I have worked for companies in the UK and France.

At my last company I was responsible for a profit rise of 30%. I also set up a team of four people who I trained and managed.

I'm looking for a marketing manager position with hands on e-commerce and website management as part of the role, using my team building and leadership skills as well as my marketing experience.

**“REHEARSE OUT LOUD
IN FRONT OF A MIRROR”**

What do Interviewers want to know?

Putting yourself in their shoes makes it easier to understand what you should be putting across.

CAN you do the job?

- Can you do the job now or be trained to do the job?
- Can you be trusted?
- Do you have the skills, experience, training to match the job?
- Are you fit enough?
- Do you have the learning potential?
- Your strengths
- What did you learn from your last job?
- What do you know about our products and services?
- Have you done this type of work before? (if so, how long and at what level)

WILL you do the job?

- How motivated are you?
- Will you work non 9–5 hours?
- Would you travel abroad – maybe for prolonged periods?
- Would you work to different processes than you're used to?
- Will you stay in the job for a reasonable time?
- Will you find the job a challenge?
- How interested are you in the company?
- What's your work ethic?
- What are your energy levels like?
- How enthusiastic are you?
- Are you interested in this type of work?
- Do you want a life outside work?
- Are you prepared to relocate?
- Will you get bored in 6 months?
- Will you learn?

What's your FIT like?

- Do you fit with the company culture?
- What are your relations with existing team members like?
- Do you have hobbies outside work?
- Does the interviewer like you?
- Chemistry
- How, and how well do you communicate?
- What's your style like - formal, relaxed etc?

- What's your dress/appearance like?
- Will you work as part of a team?
- How do you get on with people?
- How do you react to change?
- What are your values and needs?
- Shared vision

Answering interview questions

Talking about achievements:

STARS

S First describe the **Situation** you were in

T Describe the **Task** that was involved

A Next describe the **Action** you took (be certain to say 'I' not 'we' when explaining this – interviewers want to know what YOU did, not the wider team)

R Then explain what the **Result** was

S Describe the **Skills** you used in your achievements

Practice questions

CAN questions

- Your skills / strengths
- What you want to do next
- What can you offer us?
- What did you achieve in your last job?
- Can you give me an example of an achievement - when/where/how did you do this?
- What was your role in relation to this?
- What skills did you use?
- What was the result?
- What are your strengths?

WILL questions

- What do you look for when seeking a new job?
- Why do you want to join this company?
- What hours are you willing to work?
- Can you work under pressure/tight deadlines?

FIT questions

- What is important to you in your next job?
- Would you prefer to be a big fish in a small pond or a small fish in a big pond?

- Why should we employ you?
- How do you feel about looking for another job?
- What have you been doing since your last job?
- What are your hobbies & interests?
- How do you get on with other people?

“Any questions?”

Even if you feel you already have all the information you need from your interviewer, the ‘any questions?’ question is a great opportunity to add to the positive impression you’ve already given. Before you pick and choose from the following top 10, be sure to consider the culture of the organisation you are hoping to join and the nature of the person doing the selecting. Adopt the right tone and convey a positive attitude – you want to ensure this opportunity works for you, not against you.

What are the most enjoyable and the least enjoyable aspects of the role?

This can show that you like to know what sort of challenges you are going to face and that you like to be properly prepared for it, all in the expectation of being able to rise to it.

What types of training opportunities can you offer?

This is one of the classic questions as it can highlight that you are keen to advance your skills and add further value to a company.

Is there a chance for promotion in the future?

This is another classic question, and in a similar vein. It can emphasise a determination to make progress and to do so over the long term.

Can you please tell me how the role relates to the overall structure of the organisation?

With this question you are drawing attention to a preference for teamwork. It looks as though you want to know where you would fit in and how your contribution would affect the rest of the company.

How would you describe the work culture here?

Here you are signalling that you want to be able to operate at your optimum and understand that for this you require a positive environment. In turn, this can indicate you are a good self-manager who is aware of how to get the best out of yourself.

In what way is performance measured and reviewed?

This question can flag up that you appreciate the importance of delivering real results. You can be seen to be someone who understands the value of commitment, reliability and returns.

What are the most important issues you think your organisation will face? Or, You have recently introduced a new product/service/division/project; how will this benefit the organisation?

These variations both show that you are interested not just in the job but in the employer behind it. It will be apparent you have done some research, done some thinking, and are now eager to hear their analysis.

May I tell you a little more about my particular interest in communicating with clients/developing new ideas/implementing better systems ..?

Okay, so this is a cheeky and obvious way of getting permission to blow your own trumpet but then that's what this interview is all about.

Do you have any doubts about whether I am suited to this position?

This is a rather more brazen way of emphasising some of your strengths. It suggests you are open to constructive criticism and willing to learn from the experience of others. In addition, it gives you a real chance to address any weaknesses the interviewee may think you have. Finally, it allows you to finish on a high, re-stating why you think you are the right person.

You mentioned there will be a lot of presenting/researching/liasing; what do your most successful people find most satisfying about this part of the role?

This question can serve two purposes. It can demonstrate your listening skills. Also, it can associate you with being successful in the role and finding it satisfying.

Best of luck - and remember, the more you prepare and practice, the easier it'll be.



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JOB HUNTING ADVICE

LINKEDIN ADVICE

15 ways to pimp your LinkedIn profile

LinkedIn has fast become a necessity in any job hunt, whether you're using recruitment consultants or going it alone. It's the biggest and best social media networking tool for professionals and, love it or hate it, it's where any potential employer will go to check out your credentials. So, here are our top 15 tips on how to get the most out of your LinkedIn profile during a job hunt.

1. Add a photo

Having no photo creates suspicion. Everyone has at least one good photo of themselves – make sure it goes up, and make it a professional looking one – this isn't Facebook!

2. 100% completion

Completing your LinkedIn profile to 100% will increase your search ranking and will give employers a good impression. This is really simple but can be time consuming. Do use the experience section to explain what each company you worked for did and what you did there.

Remember to include any board, advisory or voluntary positions. For the qualification section, do add in context to each qualification you quote, such as why you went there and what value it may or may not bring to your professional or business life.

HR people and recruiters use LinkedIn for candidate searching and they do it by key words so make sure you put buzz words in here. The location is very important as well, as recruiters look for potential candidates close to the client's site first.

3. No mistakes

Online first impressions count just as much as face-to-face first impressions. It's also even easier to make assumptions about someone when viewing their online persona rather than face-to-face.

Make sure that your profile, as well as being error-free, is succinct and articulate. Spend as much time working on your LinkedIn profile as you would your CV.

4. Who do you want to be seen as?

Every time you appear on LinkedIn your headline or personal tag line goes with you. Make sure you brand your headline as what you want to be seen as by the online community, and especially potential recruiters. It is better to brand yourself for the job you want rather than the job you have. The reason? Recruiters will often search for a specific job title when looking for potential candidates.

5. Write your elevator pitch

The summary box in your profile needs to be your personal elevator pitch but targeted at the people you want to see it – i.e. recruiters. Your elevator pitch needs to be why you are different and the value you can bring to an organisation.

Make sure you include some of the keywords which recruiters are likely to be searching for. Use the second paragraph – specialties, to list your specialties as this is a good opportunity to add in keywords as recruiters search on this section.

6. Be found

Search Engine Optimisation is very important on LinkedIn so make sure your profile is full of keywords that will attract a recruiter's attention. Look through job postings and LinkedIn profiles that appeal to you and incorporate some of the same words or phrases.

In addition to job and industry-specific words, include leadership terms (Director, Manager) and action words (managed, designed).

7. Make it consistent

Consistency just like integrity and reliability is very important in the online world. Make sure the messages on your website, Twitter biography, Facebook page and other online sites you maintain a profile on are all consistent. For example you should use the same avatar for each online profile.

Recruiters will do online searches for you BEFORE they decide whether to call you and yes, they will check out Facebook so make sure you either have your privacy settings locked down, or that there's nothing there that a potential employer wouldn't like!

8. Connect more

Make a habit out of asking to connect with people you deal with on a daily basis, as you never know when these contacts will come in handy. Try to connect with as many people as possible in order to create more awareness and to sell yourself.

Get involved in groups and discussions to help find more useful contacts and improve your profile. Ask questions, answer questions, link up news articles and other relevant information. If you add value to others, you will be noticed by people in your industry.

“RECRUITERS WILL CHECK YOUR FACEBOOK PAGE”

9. Get Recommendations

Having other professionals vouch for you is very powerful. Ask your counterparts (i.e. your customer or supplier), colleagues, your manager and even friends if it is relevant.

Getting people to do this for you is not difficult, it's all about timing – the time to ask is just when you have done somebody a favour.

10. Research people and companies

Use LinkedIn to your advantage and always check up on the recruiter you work with, hiring managers in the company and even potential future colleagues. When you see a job you like on another job board, use LinkedIn as a company research tool.

Check out the LinkedIn company page of any organisation where you'd like to work and click "Follow company." That organisation's activities (job postings, hires, announcements) will appear on your homepage and alert you to potential opportunities.

On the company pages you can find out what a company does, how many people they employ, how many connected employees etc. For instance, you can see if they have hired or fired recently as well as where these people came from/went to. If you see a wave of professionals jumping ship, you might want to reconsider that offer.

11. Personalise your LinkedIn URL

There is an option of having your name in the URL of your public profile. For instance, instead of www.linkedin.com/67w84rj32wef09 you can change it to www.linkedin.com/in/johnsmith. This will make it easier for you to be found both within LinkedIn and Google searches.

As well as your LinkedIn URL you need to think about other websites that you want your profile to display. Do take the time to put the actual title of the link in rather than leaving them as 'My company' or 'My website'. Do include links to any profiles you have on social media sites where you maintain a professional presence.

12. Visibility settings

Be aware of these. Every time you look at a profile, this person can see that you paid a visit. It is recommended you change this setting to invisible as checking out a potential interviewer 5 times in one day may look a bit odd.

"MAKE A HABIT OF CONNECTING"

13. Make sure you are open for business

If you are on LinkedIn and using it to look for a job you DO want to be found. Common sense really! Make sure your contact settings are set to include; career opportunities, consulting offers, new ventures, job inquiries and reference requests.

Make sure your profile is public and as suggested earlier, customise your public profile URL so that it contains your name.

14. Update your status regularly

To build your credibility and stay on people's radar during your job hunt, regularly update your status on LinkedIn and other social networks. Regularly tell potential employers and recruiters what you have achieved, or are doing in the course of your normal working life.

For example, tell people about great client wins, new recommendations, product/service launches or networking meetings you are attending. Recruiters are looking for evidence that you are keeping your LinkedIn profile active and up to date. LinkedIn can be your very own micro-PR machine. Do remember to update the content in your LinkedIn profile regularly. For example, you should refresh your profile at least once a quarter.

You are more likely to show up in the LinkedIn updates if you regularly update your status and general profile. If you are actively (and openly) looking for a new role, then sprinkle your updates with phrases such as this: "I'm looking for a new Senior Account Manager position in London. Who do you know who may be hiring?"

15. Persist (without pestering)

Sending follow-up messages through LinkedIn can help you stand out from other candidates. Every time you send someone a message through LinkedIn, the recruiter or hiring manager can easily click over to your profile and check out your credentials.

Good luck!



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JOB HUNTING ADVICE

STAYING MOTIVATED

When it comes to looking for a new marketing job, staying motivated and positive is key, but not always easy if you've had knock-backs or it's taken longer than you'd hoped. Our experienced and passionate marketing recruitment consultants have worked with thousands of candidates over the years through the highs and lows of their job hunts and have put together their top 10 tips for staying motivated.

- 1. Surround yourself with positive people** - ideally those who have been in a similar place to you right now and have succeeded.
- 2. Focus on what you want from your new marketing job** - avoid spending time, energy and emotion focusing on what is wrong in your current employment situation. Instead, focus on building a strong, vivid picture of the type of marketing work you really want.
- 3. Give yourself goals** - write down 6 transferable skills that you want to use in your next job and your 'must haves' for the role e.g. location, money, and responsibility. Set yourself a deadline before which you won't compromise. This really helps you stay focused on your priorities and gives you a sense of urgency.
- 4. Ask five trusted friends and colleagues that you respect to tell you:**
 - a. what they most admire about you;
 - b. what they consider to be your greatest strengths and
 - c. what they value most about your relationship

You might be surprised with the answers that they give (It's also good to reciprocate and tell them what you value about your relationship with them!).

- 5. Arrange your schedule to devote time to job hunting and preparing for an interview** - you're seeking an exciting and profitable new opportunity and it is those who get-up-and-go who will get it first. There is an equation that reads Luck = Preparedness meeting Opportunity. Ensure that you are fully prepared and always looking for opportunities.
- 6. Enthusiasm secures more marketing jobs than any other attribute** - remember, it is relatively easy for a company to fill any hard skills gaps with a training course (or for you to do so yourself!) but enthusiasm cannot be 'given' to you. It comes from within. If you do not feel genuinely enthusiastic about a particular marketing job, think again. If you do, display it - it will be one of the most attractive things about you during the selection and interview process.
- 7. Take action towards your new marketing career every day** - even if it is something small, like making one phone call, completing a task every day will maintain momentum and ensures that you are one step closer to success.
- 8. Keep yourself well** - changing permanent marketing jobs can be stressful, so ensure that you are in great condition to meet any challenges that face you. That means plenty of sleep, drink lots of water (sorry, heavy drinking sessions are not recommended!) taking more

exercise, enjoying good-tasting healthy food and feeling great about your increased energy levels.

- 9. Notice when things get you down and eliminate them** - these can be small things that you would normally brush off, like the blown light bulb in the cupboard, or bigger things such as a friend who leaves you feeling flat and depressed after meeting. So limit the time you spend with that friend and eliminate five of the smaller items each week.
- 10. Clear the decks** - be primed for an interview at a moment's notice. Work on your personal space: create the psychological feeling that you are ready for this new marketing job at any time (sometimes things can move very quickly indeed). Ensure that your clothes are in tip-top condition with all dry cleaning up-to-date and gain the confidence from knowing that you are ready to go!

Getting the best out of your recruitment agency

When you're looking for a new job, it's key that you make the most of all options available to you and one of these is using recruitment agencies effectively. There are lots of unscrupulous recruiters out there, so even if you don't choose to work with Stopgap, we want to make sure you have all the advice at your finger tips, so here are a few key pointers:

How to identify and choose a suitable recruitment agency to work with

- Perhaps we're being obvious, but it's usually best to go with recommendations from people whose opinion you respect
- Generally, it's best to work with agencies that specialise in your industry, and have positive brand recognition in your sector.
- When meeting with a consultant make sure you get to know them to see if you can work with them on a personal level - the better the chemistry fit, the more you'll enjoy working together.
- Check out their website for the types of roles they advertise
- Do you feel that the consultant knows enough about you, your experience and your career goals to be able to advise you in the best way? Have you met the consultant personally or at least had a detailed telephone interview?
- Check that your CV will be shared with other consultants so you get to hear about every opportunity - some consultants will be cagey about sharing good candidates because of the way commission structure works in many agencies.
- Are you happy for that consultant/company to represent your personal brand to potential employers? There's often only one chance to be considered for a role and you need to be sure that you're being presented well.

"GET TO KNOW YOUR RECRUITMENT CONSULTANT"

Benefits of a close working relationship

- The closer your relationship, the better the results will be – the more they know about you, your strengths and your goals, the better placed you'll be against others in a similar situation.

Things you should avoid when establishing the relationship

- Avoid spreading yourself too thinly – using two to three agencies at most will enable you to build meaningful relationships with the relevant consultants.
- You are selling yourself, not your house! Less can actually be more. A client that is seeing your details across their desk six times from different agencies can leave a negative impression.

What should you do if you're dissatisfied with your relationship?

Talk and be honest

It's as much about keeping your consultant up-to-date with your situation as it is their responsibility to keep you up-to-date with feedback.

If you're not getting enough feedback, ask for more – you're entitled to it!

Three top tips...

- 1.** Don't chop and change – invest the time in building long-term relationships. A good recruitment agency can be your long-term career partner!
- 2.** Remember that the consultant is your best, and only, representative until you get in front of the client yourself.
- 3.** Be proactive – keep in touch with your consultant and call them even if they do not call you.

Good Luck!



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JOB HUNTING ADVICE

TELEPHONE INTERVIEW SURVIVAL GUIDE

Telephone Interview Advice

Telephone interviews are on the up, which I'm sure some of you will be relieved to hear. There's nothing better than picking up your handset in the comfort of your own home, rather than rummaging for your Oyster Card and hopping on public transport to attend an interview right?

Well, yes, but be aware - the telephone interview is full of pitfalls, which could turn them into your worst enemy.

Why, oh, why?

The phone interview is usually used to narrow down candidates for a face-to-face interview when an employer has received a lot of applications.

It is also a way of cutting down on travel expenses if the employer is recruiting nationally or internationally.

Surprise, surprise

Most employers will contact you beforehand to arrange a time slot for your phone interview however; there are a handful of employers who prefer the element of surprise.

These employers will call you out of the blue and interview you right there and then. Nothing like putting you on-the-spot eh?

So, to help you wow the socks off a potential employer, here's a telephone interview survival guide with hints and tips from our experienced consultants.

**“PHONE INTERVIEWS
ARE USED TO NARROW
DOWN CANDIDATES”**

The Survival Guide:

- 1. Do your research** – From knowing what attracted you to the position and how it fits into your career goals to knowing the ins and outs of the company and what questions you want to ask – the more you know, the more confident you will be.
- 2. Prepare, prepare, prepare** – we can't emphasise this one enough. There is no such thing as too much preparation. If you get a chance beforehand, or even at the beginning of the interview itself, ask what structure the interview is likely to take so you know what to expect. For more on interview preparation, check out our Interview Preparation guide.
- 3. Technology troubles** – If you're using a mobile, consider using a headset so you have both hands free to write notes. If you're not 100% confident about your mobile signal, use a landline. Also turn off call waiting – you don't want to be distracted by your mum or your nan on the other line.
- 4. Practice makes perfect** – sit in front of the mirror, record yourself or rope in your bestest bud – we're not too fussy how you do it, but make sure you practice. This will help you come across well and help you judge whether you're speaking too quickly or quietly.
- 5. Make yourself look smart** – sounds a bit odd if you're sat at home alone right? But believe us, if you don your smartest slacks it will put you in a better frame of mind and boost your confidence.
- 6. Find a quiet location** – being interrupted by the barista, your daily dose of 'Doctors' or being cut off while going through a train tunnel won't do you any favours.
- 7. Smile before you dial** – you'll forget about your nerves and your confidence will beam down the telephone line.
- 8. Sit next to a table or desk** – this will allow you to have your notes, copy of your application or CV, interview details, pen and paper to hand. If you do this, make sure they are neat and tidy so you are able to refer to them with ease.

**“IF YOU'RE NOT CONFIDENT
ABOUT YOUR MOBILE SIGNAL,
USE A LANDLINE”**

- 9. It's only words and words are all you have** – not to point out the obvious, but you don't have body language to back up everything you are saying. To overcome this, ensure you use active listening skills – use phrases like 'right', 'ok', 'mhmh'. Speak slowly, clearly and don't interrupt the employer.
- 10. Pause** – don't be afraid to take some time to think, ask for clarification or ask for some time to reflect on the question – this will buy you some valuable time to get your thoughts in order and answer the question effectively.

Hopefully you will follow our survival guide and bag yourself a second interview but if not, don't be afraid to phone your interviewer for feedback. A few small pointers could be all you need to really impress the client on the end of the line at your next phone interview.

For examples of the type of questions you may be asked during your telephone interview, take a look at our Competency Based Interview Questions.

Don't even go there

Bad habits to stay well away from during your telephone interview...

- Eating your lunch or having a beer
- Taking other calls or responding to texts
- Replying to emails
- Slouching on the couch
- Checking your Facebook or posting a tweet

Good Luck!



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