

# Job Application Toolkit

Your detailed guide to finding a new role



# Your Job search journey



# How to define your career goals

Before you update your CV and start applying to new jobs, you'll need to understand what you're looking for. Are you hoping for more responsibility, or a shorter commute? Are you keen to work for a company that offers better perks such as home working, medical insurance or even allowing dogs in the office? Taking time to identify your goals, both big and small, will help you to home in on the types of jobs you should be targeting

## TOP TIP



Try browsing job postings for the different types of roles you're considering. Do you find the responsibilities described to be interesting and exciting, or dull and boring? Make note of the duties that appeal most to you and keep them in mind as you begin searching and reading job descriptions.

Feeling stuck? Try tanking these five key factors in order of importance:



**Company culture**



**Opportunity for growth**



**Pay and benefits**



**Job stability**



**Level of responsibility**

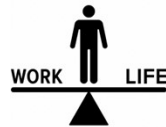
Deciding what specific day-to-day responsibilities you would like to have will also be essential as you begin to update your CV, cover letter, and LinkedIn profile. Try asking yourself what you've enjoyed doing most throughout your career and what you'd prefer never to do again. This exercise should help you to picture your ideal role more clearly.

# Finding the right employer for you

Finding a job that ticks all your boxes is never easy. It is important to prioritise the elements that are most important for you, and striking the balance between them. Of course, everyone has different priorities, but few top contenders.

Here are some of the key factors you should be thinking about on top of salary:

## 1. WORK-LIFE BALANCE



In a recent survey, three in five (60%) selected work-life balance as the biggest job satisfaction ranking – nearly 20% more than the 43% who selected salary (the second most popular factor). Really think about what level of flexibility you want and ensure you're applying for roles that can offer that to you.

## 2. MENTAL HEALTH SUPPORT



As awareness around mental health issues continue to increase, people have rightly become more protective of their mental wellness. In fact, 8 in 10 people would choose their mental health and having a good worklife balance over career success. It is something that employees are taking seriously – and employers need to respect and support them in every way they can. Here are a few questions to ask in an interview to assess how seriously a new employer takes their mental health support:

- What measures do you take to prevent stress and burnout amongst your employees?
- How do you manage peaks in workload when it comes to staffing?
- Do you have an employee assistance programme or a healthcare plan, and what does that look like?
- Do you provide training for line managers and employees on recognising and supporting people with mental health concerns?

# Finding the right employer for you

## 3. CAREER DEVELOPMENT

When it comes to the workplace, one in two people are motivated by career progression.

Make sure you look for employers and businesses that can offer you the speed of progression you want. A good way to find out this sort of information is to look through a company's career page, or work with one of an expert recruitment consultants who will know exactly which companies can offer you the progression you want.



# Tweak your CV

Now you know what you want, it's time to start applying! The first thing to do is making sure your CV is up to scratch. The structure and contents of your CV are both essential to get the attention of prospective employers, who are often filtering through dozens of others. Here is a guide to laying out and filling in a logically structured and easy to read CV, so that your application goes to the top of the pile.

## TOP TIP



Always do a typo and grammar check before sending out your CV. Any errors will severely dent your chances of a job interview or offer. If you can, get another person to look at your CV too and if you're applying for a job vacancy in the UK, remember to name it as a CV and not a resume.

**John Smith** IT Project Manager

Phone 774-00504-02  
E-mail j.smith@pagegroup.eu  
LinkedIn linkedin.com  
Twitter @johnsmithutw

### Brief personal statement

Write a few lines to summarise your career experience so far and what you can offer the employer. Make sure it's concise and unique to your specific skill set and the role you are applying for.

### Career history

Starting with your most recent employer, list your past jobs in chronological order. If you do have gaps in your work history, due to travel, furlough or job loss, just be clear about them. Think about things that you have done in the past that will catch the eye of the recruiter. Include skills that are relevant to the role and use stats or examples to back them up.

### Skills and achievements

Keep this section brief - list a few short bullet points, describing some of your key achievements and skills. Tailor these for the job you're applying for and make sure they're as relevant as possible.

### Education and training

Starting with the most recent, lay out your education and qualifications in chronological order. Make sure that you have the 'to and from' dates of the institution you attended, then fill out the subjects, grades obtained, and other related awards and achievements.

### Interests and activities

This is a good opportunity to reveal a little of your personality. Talk about some of the things you like to do outside of work and any interesting or fun facts you might have.

### References

Use this extra space on your CV wisely. List the name, job title, and address of a former employer and also make sure you give them a heads up that you're using them as a reference.

# Selling your strengths and spinning your weaknesses

In most job interviews, you will be asked to describe your strengths and weaknesses. In preparation for an interview, you should consider how best to answer this question so that the information is useful to employers and improves your chances of being hired.



# Selling your Strengths

## Example Answers

### Communication Skills



"Thanks to my experience as an HR representative, I have gained excellent communication skills. I was responsible for setting up workshops for staff members and mediating any conflicts in the workplace. I have also completed a course on effective communication."



### Leadership Skills

"I consider my leadership skills to be one of my biggest strengths. During my time as a team manager, I successfully merged two teams and organised training programmes for all team members to ensure that everyone was confident in their new role. As a result, we were able to increase sales by 5% within our first month as a new team."



### Teamwork

"In my current position, I'm part of the team that coordinates the company's lunch-and-learn sessions. Each week, we meet to brainstorm who will be our upcoming guest speaker. We all work together to ensure a diverse mix of speakers, aiming to appeal to a wide swathe of people in the company. Because everyone on the team comes from different areas within the company, we've all learned so much, from marketing to tech."



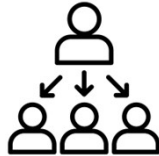
# Spinning your weaknesses

## Example Answers

### Public Speaking



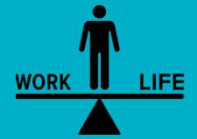
"I sometimes find public speaking intimidating in a new environment. To overcome this I have recently signed up to a public speaking course to help boost my confidence when it comes to presentations or speaking in meetings."



### Delegation

"I can sometimes struggle with delegating and choose to take on a larger workload to ensure that a task is completed perfectly. I know that this puts more pressure on myself, so I have recently been using new software tools such as Asana to assign tasks to others and track their completion. So far this has helped me to trust my co-workers and focus more on my own tasks."

### Keeping a healthy work/life balance



"Because I truly love my work and I am very ambitious, I sometimes find it difficult to set boundaries between my work and personal life. However, I know that ignoring my personal needs can have a negative impact on my motivation and focus. To overcome this weakness, I now actively create time in my schedule to spend with my family. Small changes, such as putting my phone on silent, have made a huge difference. Having more balance in my life between work and leisure makes me more productive at work."

# Optimise your LinkedIn

Making sure your LinkedIn profile is up to scratch is key to getting noticed by recruiters and hiring managers. Here are our five steps to creating a LinkedIn profile that'll get your noticed.



1. **Photo** – Keep it professional. It is all too easy to use LinkedIn as an extension of your personal Facebook or Twitter. While it might be amusing to have a social picture as your profile picture, this is not conducive to finding a new job.

2. **Headline** – A clear job title/function and a USP helps recruiters and potential hiring managers to know whether you fit their criteria or not right away.

# Optimise your LinkedIn

3. **Summary** – Writing a summary in the 'About' section on your LinkedIn will help recruiters or hiring managers find out more information about you and your career history. This is also a great place to promote your personality and you can make this section as formal or as informal as you see fit.

4. **Jobs/history** – Make sure you have a clear career history with employer, job title and ideally some detail about your role and responsibilities. It also helps when you add in a small summary of what the company does, or the industry they're in for extra clarity.

## About

Hi, I am John. I'm a skilled IT project manager with over 5 years' of experience in...

## Experience

IT Project Manager

PageGroup

Jan 2017 - September 2021

London, United Kingdom

In my role as a IT Project Manager for PageGroup I'm responsible for:

- Activity and resource planning
- Organising and motivating a project team
- Controlling time management
- Cost estimating and developing the budget
- Ensuring customer satisfaction
- Analysing and managing project risk
- Monitoring progress

# Optimise your LinkedIn

5. **Recommendations** – This means that recruiters can see that your services are valued, and others have had positive experiences working with you.



A new feature is now available on LinkedIn where you can add in any career breaks onto your profile, whether that's because of travel, paternity leave, or a relocation. Make sure to include these so employers get a better understanding of your career history.

## Skills & endorsement

**Project management**  
Endorsed by 10 connections

**Meeting management skills**  
Endorsed by 8 connections

**Communication**  
Endorsed by 15 connections

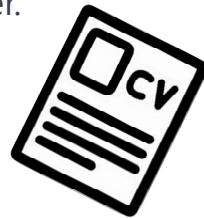
# AI- powered job hunting

If you're considering leveraging AI technology to enhance your job search, there are several factors to take into account. AI tools such as ChatGPT can offer numerous benefits, but they also come with certain pitfalls and things to avoid altogether.

## The Pros

### CV structure enhancement:

Crafting a well-structured CV is crucial for catching the attention of hiring managers and recruiters. AI tools can analyse your CV, provide suggestions for improvements, and ensure that your resume is optimised for applicant tracking systems (ATS). This can increase your chances of making it through the initial screening process.



### Spelling and grammar checks:



A minor spelling mistake can make a negative impression on potential employers. AI-driven tools can help you detect and correct spelling and grammar errors in your cover letter or CV, ensuring it's well polished and professional.

# AI-powered job hunting:

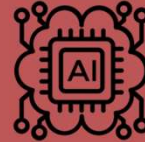
## The Pitfalls



**Data privacy concerns:** Be careful when entering personal information into AI-powered platforms or tools. Read the privacy policies carefully and consider the implications of sharing your data online.



**Negative impressions from hiring managers:** While AI can assist in optimising your application materials, it's essential to remember that 'the human touch' remains significant in the hiring process. Some hiring managers might be able to tell if an application has been heavily AI-optimised, and this could potentially be perceived negatively depending on the type of role you are applying for.



**Unethical AI use:** While AI can be a valuable aid, it's essential not to rely solely on technology throughout the job search process as it can lead to a lack of personality coming through your application

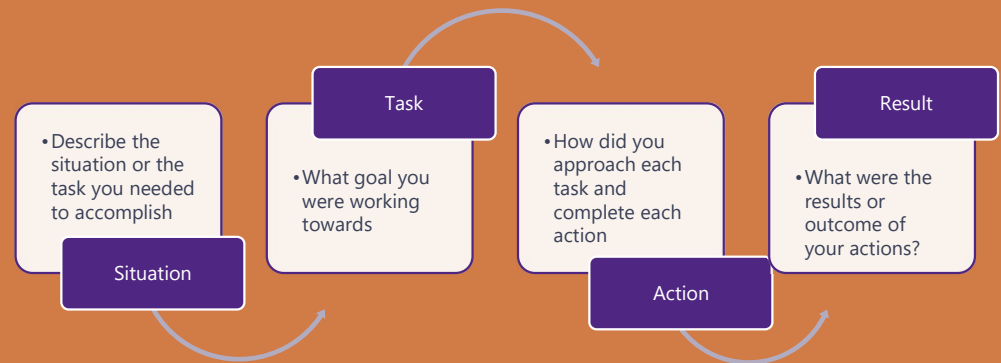


**Lack of expertise:** Relying solely on AI during your job search may also lead to missing out on the personal experience of interacting with human recruitment professionals. Recruitment consultants have a thorough understanding of various job sectors, the specific skills required, and the expectations of employers that they work with. This enables them to offer tailored career advice to job seekers, with insights that AI can't provide.

# Perfect your interview skills

Getting to the interview stage is an exciting time for any job hunter. However, when you enter a job interview it is crucial to have answers to several typical STAR interview questions prepared.

With this tried and tested interview technique, you can structure your answers to common interview questions clearly and professionally:



# Your video interview checklist

Video interviews are commonplace in most industries, especially for the first few stages of the interview process. That's why it's important to know how to tackle them. Here's a handy video interview checklist that'll help you conduct yourself perfectly in an interview:

- **Power, connection, and your device** If you are using a laptop, make sure that it is properly charged or plugged in throughout the interview. You don't want to get cut off in the middle of your conversation! Make sure you choose a location with a good internet connection too.
- **Light, background, and what to wear** Try to arrange your space so that there is a good source of natural lighting. Otherwise, ensure you have strong lights overhead and slightly behind. Shadows can distort your appearance and your interviewers will want to see you clearly. A plain, light-coloured background is best.

- **Avoid distractions** You need to be away from all distractions when you sit down for your interview. Choose a quiet room and make sure that any people who are around are aware that you should not be disturbed.
- **Practice makes perfect** A practice run before the interview is essential. You want to ensure that you look good, can be seen clearly and all the equipment is working properly. A huge advantage of video interviews is that you can have prompts. Set them just above the line of the camera and no one will even know you are using them.
- **Camera** Make sure your camera is set in line with your eyes. If it is too high, the interviewers will see too much of the top of your head, and if it is too low your face will be distorted. You want them to be able to see your head and shoulders clearly, so do not sit too close or too far from the camera.



## TOP TIP

Always Often on camera, there is a slight delay. So, it's a good idea to wait a few seconds before responding to a question just in case. You don't want a situation where you accidentally cut off your interviewer mid-sentence.



# The importance of doing your research

Company research is the best way to learn about what the company does and what they look for in a candidate. You'll also be better prepared to answer questions and position yourself as the best candidate. As you prepare for your upcoming interview, here's what you need to know about the company and the job you're applying for:

1. The skills and experience the company values You want to know what the company looks for in qualified candidates. This enables you to position yourself as the best candidate for the job. Find out exactly what skills employers are looking for this year.
2. Key players of the organisation These might be managers or directors, all the way up to the CEO. Good places to look are 'About us' pages on company websites or LinkedIn.
3. News and recent events about the employer Going into an interview, it's always a good idea to be knowledgeable about the company's latest news and updates. This will show that you are engaged and are taking the interview seriously.



4. The company's culture, mission and value Pay attention to what's written on their website regarding culture and company values. It's also a good idea to follow the company on social media for the inside scoop.

5. Big clients, projects and services You want to have an idea of the type of work you'd be doing once hired. So having a general idea of who the company's top clients are and the type of products and services they offer is a great place to start.

## TOP TIP



Don't forget to use LinkedIn to find out some more information on your interviewer's background, their role within the company and you may even pick up on some common interests you both share.

# Writing a follow up email

After a job interview, it's only natural to want an update on the hiring process, particularly if you feel it went well. But it's important to strike the right tone when you do so, or you may risk undoing your hard work in the interview. See below for our handy follow-up email template, which can help you craft the perfect message to get the information you need:

## Email Template

**SUBJECT:** John Smith – Re: Interview on Tuesday at 4pm

### INTRODUCTION:

Hi <Julie / Ms. Jones>,

### BODY TEXT:

Thank you for your time <yesterday / date of interview>. It was great to speak to you about the <job title> role and I'm convinced that the position is a perfect fit for this stage in my career. I was hoping to get an update on the recruitment process, so any information that you can give me about the next steps would be greatly appreciated. Also, feel free to ask me any follow-up questions that may have come up since we last spoke.

### SIGN OFF:

Looking forward to hearing from you,

John Smith

Send



Discard



peopleteam



**Leave time for the dust to settle.** Wait a few days before sending that all important follow-up so the interviewer has time to reflect on the experience.

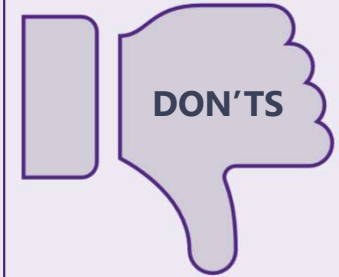
**Keep your follow-up professional and courteous.**

No matter how well you thought the interview went, or how informal the process felt, it's always best to keep your follow up email professional.

**Be clear about the purpose of your message.**

In your follow up email, mention your interest in the position and why you're the best candidate for the job.

**Read over your follow-up email before sending.** Ensure it's well-spaced, correctly punctuated, and free of typos



**Don't waste time and words on unnecessary small talk.**

Presumably you're simply looking for an update on the recruitment process, so get straight to the point.

**Don't be pushy.** Keep it casual and avoid being too demanding to a potential new employer.

**Don't pester.** Refrain from continually contacting the hiring manager if they have already informed you that you are no longer being considered for the position.

**Ghost an interviewer.** If after the interview you feel like the job is not right for you, just let the company know in a follow-up email that you would no longer like to be considered. This is much better than just ignoring their calls or emails because maintaining good relations could be beneficial should another role come up in future

# How to handle a job offer

## Nail the negotiation with this four-step plan

Congratulations on getting this far on your job search! Now you've made it to this stage, you need to make sure you join the company on terms that will suit your lifestyle and keep you financially content for the foreseeable future.

- 1. Find out your worth:** It's important to negotiate your salary when accepting a new role, but you also don't want to risk souring the process by asking for an unrealistic amount. Do some research about salaries in your sector or specialism, then you just need to aim towards the higher end of that salary bracket during the negotiations.
- 2. Consider external factors:** Your value to the business is not the only factor at play. Few companies have limitless financial resources, so it is important to understand potential factors before entering negotiations.
  - Do your research and find out any industry conditions that might come into play
  - Find out what others are saying about the immediate and longer-term future of the market

This will help you to anticipate potential objections when discussing your salary.

**3. Work out your financial needs:** Sit down and work out how much you really need to live the life you want. Think about the following:

- How much do you need to live on? This will show you the minimum salary you require.
- How much would you need to feel satisfied and live comfortably? This gives you a middle ground ready for negotiations.
- What is your dream salary? This is your top tier pay bracket. It's always good to aim high so have this figure in mind when you start negotiating.

**4. Outline your non-financial benefits:** It's not all about the money. Don't forget that, sometimes, non-financial benefits can mean more than a pay increase. Check to see if your new company offer:

- Support for education and training: this could involve paying for a certification, or simply guaranteeing you the time out of the office to complete training programmes
- Flexible working hours
- Health insurance
- More annual leave, plus the option to purchase additional days off
- Free gym membership
- A company car or mobile phone
- Childcare benefits

# Handing in your notice

For a lot of people, handing in their notice is one of the most stressful parts of changing jobs. It's only natural: we don't like to feel that we've let people down or misled them by searching for a new role behind their backs. In reality, there's no reason for it to be a difficult process. If you keep it professional, you can look forward to moving on with your career, safe in the knowledge that you've done everything right and not left the business on a sour note. With that in mind, we're going to look at all the do's and don'ts for how to hand in your notice.

## WHAT TO DO



### Speak to your manager in person:

If you can meet up with your manager in person to hand your notice in, that is always the best option. This is an important discussion with major ramifications for both you and your employer, so a more personable discussion is always best. However, if that's not possible or you're in a fully remote role, try giving them a call to discuss over the phone rather than via email



**Give adequate notice:** Your notice period should be spelled out in your contract of employment, so consult it before writing your resignation letter and use it to calculate your finish date.



**Help with the transition:** Your current employer might ask you to help with the transition period, which could include anything from sitting in on interviews to holding handover meetings. Either way, it's in your best interests to do so, because it'll help you maintain a good relationship.



**Ask for a reference:** Chances are your future employer will ask for a reference, so it makes sense to ask your current line manager or HR department if they'd be happy to provide one.

## WHAT NOT TO DO



**Watch the clock:** While you might feel a little less motivated than usual after you've handed in your resignation later, don't dial out and start counting down the days until the end of your notice period. Otherwise, you risk leaving your team with a massive workload of incomplete tasks, which is a guaranteed way to burn bridges.



**Forget to say 'goodbye':** On your final day, be sure to write a goodbye message to your coworkers to let them know you're moving on and thank them for being such great colleagues during your time with the company. You might also wish to include your contact details so they can keep in touch after you've left.

# Get ready for onboarding

You've got the job, well done! Now it's time to prepare for the next phase – onboarding. Whether your first day is remote, or in the office, it's important to stay positive by following these simple steps;

- If you're starting your first day from home, make sure you have a comfortable home office space.
- Read through any induction documents you get sent, familiarise yourself with any tools they might use, and ensure all your tech has arrived and is working correctly.
- Get to know your colleagues by setting up catch-up calls in your first few weeks.
- Identify someone who could be your 'buddy' to guide you through unfamiliar processes.
- Learn how your team communicates and works together

- Get to grips with expectations and set clear boundaries.
- Request regular catch-up calls with your line manager so you always know what you are doing.
- Don't be afraid to ask for help. It's far better to be willing to learn by asking questions, than waste lots of time trying to figure something out yourself.
- Remind people who you are: reintroduce yourself in meetings or at the start of emails just to remind colleagues of your name and role in the business.



## TOP TIP

Back yourself! Always remember you were hired for a reason, so you've nothing to fear. Be yourself, ask plenty of questions and most importantly have fun.

# Handling rejection

## What to do if you don't get the job

Unfortunately, after your final job interview, it usually goes one of two ways. If a rejection email does ping into your inbox, here are a few things to remember to help you remain positive, optimistic, and motivated on your job search:

- 1. It is not personal:** It's easy to take rejection to heart and blame your ability or interview skills. These decisions are rarely based on your performance and more likely around strengths of the other candidates and other external factors.
- 2. Always ask for feedback:** Always ask the recruiter or employer for more detailed comments about your interview in order to help you improve. Remember though, interview feedback can sometimes be bland and unhelpful, so do seek out other genuinely useful feedback where possible.

**3. A fresh approach:** Don't carry interview baggage around with you. Approach each new job opportunity with a fresh perspective and learn from the feedback you received previously.

**4. Keep learning and developing:** Your confidence can take a hit when you get a rejection, so it is important to work hard at keeping your morale and motivation levels buoyant. Especially if you are not in current employment, it is a good idea to keep your skills sharpened and your experience up-to date. This may take the form of a part-time training course (if relevant), a charity project, mentorship, or a voluntary position in a company of interest.