

Client: Hamilton Bradshaw
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**STAND OUT
FROM THE CROWD**

In today's overcrowded jobs market it can be a real challenge to get noticed and make your next career move. We show you how to go about it successfully...

Whether you're a new graduate, a first-jobber looking to work your way up the career ladder, or an established name keeping an eye out for your next move, you can't have failed to notice that the competitive scramble for desirable positions is at an all-time high. The recession has meant more applicants are fighting for fewer roles - figures show employers get an average of 70 CVs for every vacancy, so making your application stand out is crucial.

But where do you begin? Well, reading this article is as good a start as any - we bring you our ultimate guide to making your CV work for you, impressing at interview stage and standing head and shoulders above the rest. Good luck!

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STAY FOCUSED

The first thing to consider is that your search for a new job won't be easy. Unless you are lucky enough to be headhunted, you are likely to be in this for the long haul, with numerous rejections and knock-backs before you clinch a new role. But, as business entrepreneur James Caan explains, it's vital that you keep your eyes on the prize and avoid losing momentum.

'Job searching is a job in its own right. It can be time-consuming to read the trade press, send your CV to a recruitment consultant and scour online jobs boards in search for opportunities,' he says. 'It can be disheartening to apply for dozens of jobs and for nothing to come to fruition, but stay focused and proactive and your persistence will pay off.'

Every stage of the application process needs to be considered – are you looking for jobs in the right places? Many desirable positions are never advertised, and so career success can rely on being in the right place at the right time. Maximise your chances by networking within your industry and sending out speculative CVs – the more people who've heard of you and know you're seeking work, the better.

Creating a targeted CV and covering letter is vital (see *Is Your CV Up To Scratch?*, right). Many people make the mistake of sending out the same, tired catch-all CV, and lose out to candidates who have prepared one that showcases work relevant to the job in question.

DRESS FOR SUCCESS

When it comes to choosing which clothes to wear for an interview, think about the type of role you've applied for. If it's a creative role in the media industry, you're probably better off not

wearing a suit. But if you'll be facing clients or attending board meetings, it makes sense to smarten up.

Either way, avoid looking scruffy – if it's appropriate to wear trainers for your job interview, ensure they are box fresh. You should be neat and freshly showered, but avoid putting on too much perfume or aftershave – be sure to leave an impression, but for the right reasons. Less is definitely more – and that goes for make-up and accessories, too. If you have any visible tattoos or piercings, consider covering them up or taking them out for that vital first meeting with a prospective employer.

TALK THE TALK

Think about the responses you give at an interview, and whether you are going into enough depth with your answers. It's very important to include examples of what you've achieved so that the interviewer can relate to what you're saying. Be descriptive to bring examples to life and use words with impact such as "dedicated" and "committed".

For ideas on questions an interviewer may ask you, a good resource is www.whatwilltheyask.co.uk. The way you handle yourself is key to how others see you and can give an insight into the way you are viewed. Body language and behaviour expert Judi James says: 'Around 55% of the communication we make on a face-to-face basis is through body language.'

So what are Judi's tips for projecting the right image in the workplace? 'Pause before you walk into a room – whether it's for a meeting or job appraisal. Straighten your posture, iron out your facial expressions and walk in expecting to give a firm handshake, without letting your hand go too limp or allowing your arm to get pumped.'

It's also a good idea to maintain eye contact during your interview, accept a drink if you are offered one (sipping water can provide valuable thinking time before answering trickier questions) and have a couple of questions prepared – but avoid asking about salary or holiday entitlement. These potentially contentious issues can be broached at a later stage.



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IS YOUR CV UP TO SCRATCH?

You may have a CV, but does it really show your skills and attributes in the best light? Follow these steps to be sure yours will end up on the 'shortlisted' pile...

1 TARGET YOUR CV FOR EVERY JOB YOU APPLY FOR

Always refer to the job advertisement that you're responding to and make sure that you fulfil each of the criteria. Think about things you've done that may be relevant to this new role – there might be a work placement or achievement that could help your CV shine.

2 PUT A POSITIVE SPIN ON EVERYTHING YOU'VE DONE

However insignificant it may seem to you, eg work experience placements taught you to manage your time. Nearly everything can be turned into positive CV-speak – it's just a matter of identifying your strengths and playing them up.

3 IF YOU LACK EXPERIENCE, EMPHASISE SKILLS

Open with a paragraph outlining the skills that make you perfect for the job. Perhaps you can talk up deal-clinchers such as IT and language skills.

4 AVOID OPENING WITH A PERSONAL STATEMENT OR OBJECTIVE

Your prospective employer would rather you just laid out the facts. If you can't resist a self-indulgent paragraph, put it at the end of your CV.

5 KEEP YOUR CV TO TWO PAGES AT THE ABSOLUTE MOST

Three pages is overkill, while one page will struggle to contain the must-haves for a CV and still be at a readable font size (no smaller than 11 point).

6 ADD VALUE

Savvy candidates have used the recession to add value to their CV by undertaking courses or developing their transferable skills to make them stand out from the crowd.

7 STILL STRUGGLING?

Then maybe it's time to call in the experts. CV-writing pros can whip yours into shape from £10 a pop. Go online to find someone who can help.



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