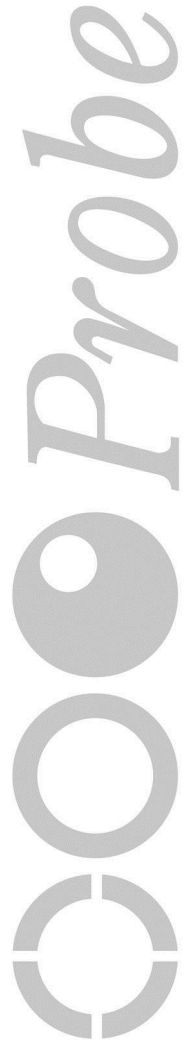


Candidate Services

With you towards a better future

Technical Recruitment Specialists



Welcome

Whether you are just starting on your career path or looking to move jobs, we hope you will find some useful information in this booklet that helps you get the job you are looking for and succeed in building a better future for yourself.

Career planning is an important part of everyone's life and is not something that should be taken lightly. There are many reasons why people look for new jobs - salary, unrest, difficult staff members, lack of progression, environment, etc. Whatever the reason for changing your career take time to research your reasons and ensure that your actions are in line with your long term objectives.

In order to evaluate where you want to be, you must first determine your long term goals. What do you want out of your career move? financial reward, progression, enhanced education plans, better working environment? All of these things, and more, should be considered carefully before making any decision to send your CV to an employer. The more you know about where you want to be and how you plan to get there, the easier it will be to achieve those goals. These will all have an impact on your CV, interviews and potential employers suitability.

We have put together some tips and advice to assist you on the recruitment road ahead, which will hopefully give you an advantage in securing your career goals.

We wish you every success in your search and the future and should you ever be in a position that you are looking to move, then we hope that you will contact us to assist you.

Happy Job Hunting

Probe Technical Recruitment



Cover Letters

Whether you are emailing your application, submitting it onto a Job Board website or sending it by post, the Cover Letter is your first chance to entice the reader into taking a detailed look at your CV. So take time and adopt a few simple rules to generate the right impression.

Address Your Reader

If you do not know the name of the person you need to address it to, find out and keep it professional, “Dear Mr Blogs” rather than “Dear Fred”.

State Your Intentions

Recruiters are busy and are often covering multiple vacancies, therefore clearly state in the first sentence your intention to apply for a given role and include any reference numbers if applicable.

Sell Your Skills

Your Cover Letter is not your CV, be brief, but tell them why you feel you have the skill to do the role successfully and meet the employer’s expectation, without sounding self-important. Pick the main responsibility they are looking for and give an example of why you are the person they want to employ. Two short paragraphs is plenty to get across all you need.

1 Page Maximum

Be as punchy as possible as the reader will probably be a very busy person with numerous applications to go through and will not want to trawl through a long letter.

Contact Information

Be sure to include your contact details which should also be on your CV but there is no harm with doubling up.

Spelling & Grammar

Ensure that it is properly checked for any spelling and grammar mistakes. Ask someone to proof read it for you.

Write a Great CV

Your CV is a powerful sales tool, so use it effectively to make a great impression. It usually is the first thing that an employer will have to judge your suitability & character to do the job. Take time in preparing your CV as it will be worth it.

What should your CV include?

Personal Details

Include your full name, address, email, contact landline, mobile telephone number, date of birth, marital status, nationality and whether or not you hold a full, current driving licence.

Personal Profile

This is optional but it should show brief information about your personality, characteristics, strengths and a brief overview of your career to date.

Key Skills

This is often overlooked when writing a CV and is often your key opportunity to display your level of competency.

Examples could include:-

Your proficiency with hardware, software, systems, etc.

Have you been involved in project work?

Have you got experience of working with specific systems?

Do you have relevant skills you should highlight?

Employment History

Always list your employment in reverse chronological order for your whole career. If you have worked for a significant time within one company, break it down showing each position held within the company.

Make sure you include dates of employment, job title, name of organisation, what they actually did and who their customers were.

List your responsibilities and achievements; the most important first. Remember to elaborate on those areas that are particularly relevant to the position you are applying for.

It is very important to mention names of specific processes, hardware, systems, machinery etc., you worked with and what skills the position required you to use.

It is also worth noting any specific achievements or projects you undertook whilst working for the company, such as improving uptime, developing PPM systems, or even being involved in plant moves, installation or commissioning projects.

Qualifications

List your highest achievement first stating qualification and grade.

With City & Guilds qualifications it is essential to identify the level you have studied to i.e. 1, 2, or 3 or A, B or C and if you continued to full technical certification level.

If you have studied via BTEC, it is well worth identifying what equivalent ONC, HNC or HND standard you have attained. Continue with other qualifications down to your apprenticeship stating whether this was indentured, time served, modern / advanced modern.

Additional Training

This section is also often overlooked in CV writing, and is almost as important as the qualifications you hold. Think about it, if you have undertaken a key course that may save your new employer hundreds of pounds, when it comes down to final selection, which candidate are they going to offer the role to? List any relevant training that you have undertaken and whether this was undertaken externally or in house.

References

Two references are adequate. You should include your current or last employer and if you are concerned about someone contacting your referee prior to your consent we suggest using "References available upon request".

Key Points to Remember

- Your CV will decide whether or not you are selected for interview - a good CV will show you have taken time and effort to apply for the role, a bad CV will show sloppiness and a lack of commitment from day one.
- Your CV has, on average, no more than two minutes to impress a potential employer, so it is important to sell yourself using positive language and emphasise your key skills.
- Use a standard font consistently throughout, such as Arial 12pt. Check and re-check your grammar, spelling and punctuation, do not always rely on a spell checker.
- Do not use an inappropriate email address, keep it professional and just use your name e.g. adamsmith@hotmail.co.uk not something like sexybabe@hotmail.co.uk
- Don't leave gaps in your career history. If you've been pioneering enough to take a year out to travel, say so. It could give you the edge over someone who hasn't.
- Never mislead a potential new employer with false or misleading information, you will very quickly get found out, so honesty is always the best policy.

Interview Advice

An interview is generally perceived as a nerve-racking experience, but remember that an interview is as beneficial to you as it is to the employer and with the right level of preparation you can promote yourself better than you ever thought possible.

Preparation;

Research as much as you can about the company, including past history, whether they are part of a group, products and/or services, end customers, culture and the future of the organisation. You can guarantee you will be asked, "What do you know about us?" this is an excellent opportunity to prove that you have prepared and in return ask your own questions in relation to the company to highlight your interest. They will be impressed by what you know and your interests!

Read the job description and your application, and analyse potential questions that they may ask you in regards to your relevant experience and in turn prepare questions yourself to open the job requirements and responsibilities, to clarify any grey areas that there may be.

TIP: One of the best ways to prepare is to run through a few likely interview questions and practice your answers before the day.

Some popular interview questions to be asked include: -

- What do you know about this company?
- What interests you about the job and how are you suitable?
- What key skills could you offer a prospective employer?
- What do you feel are your strengths and weaknesses?
- Describe your ideal job?
- You seem to have had a lot of jobs, what are the reasons?
- What are your career objectives - short and long term?
- Tell me about your current/previous boss?
- Has your job performance ever been appraised?
- What part of the job do you do best/worst?
- What are the most satisfying and frustrating parts of your current job?
- What would you change about yourself/colleagues/job?
- Why are you looking to move roles?
- How do you cope with stress in the work place?
- How would your boss describe you as a person?
- What have been your major achievements in the last 2 years?
- What has given you the most/least satisfaction over the last 2 years?
- Where do you see yourself in three years time?
- What has been your biggest challenge in life so far and how have you overcome it?
- What would you do on the first day of appointment to this job?
- Give me an example of a how you solved a recent work based problem?

When being asked about your current employer & manager it is crucial that you do not bad mouth the company or individual, this will only reflect negatively on you, how do they know that you are not the problem? Remember they have only just met you!

Examples of Questions to Ask: -

- How do you see the business progressing?
- Why is this position available?
- Will I be offered any future training?
- What would the career path be from this position?

Arrival:

Switch your mobile phone off before entering the building. Smile and be polite to the receptionist, introduce yourself and advise as to whom you are there to see and why.

Language:

It is important that during your interview you take your time to speak clearly and politely and do not use slang words or swear even if the interviewer does, stay professional at all times.

First Impressions: Dressing the Part:

This is an important part of any interview as it can make your first impression with a prospective employer so dressing conservatively is the way to go: -

- For men: a two piece suit with a shirt and tie or alternatively a shirt, tie and trouser along with polished shoes. It is advised to stick to solid colours, if you prefer a patterned tie wear something simple, not elaborate and leave the Homer Simpson one at home.
- For women: a two piece suit, alternatively a knee length skirt or trousers with a tailored blouse and polished shoes. No excessive Jewelry.

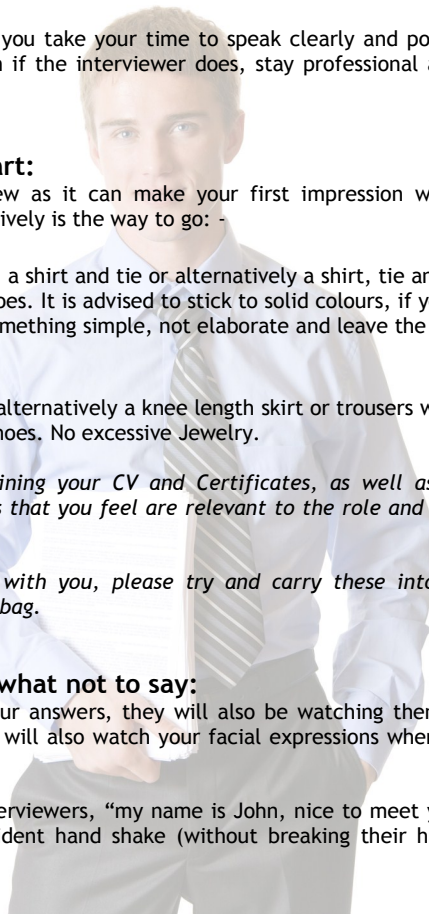
Tips: Also take a folder with you containing your CV and Certificates, as well as any examples of project work or achievements that you feel are relevant to the role and offer to show these to the interviewers .

If you are required to take work boots with you, please try and carry these into the interview in a shoe box or a plain holder / bag.

Body Language, What to Say and what not to say:

Employers will not only be listening to your answers, they will also be watching them, as your body speaks another language. They will also watch your facial expressions when you are answering questions.

Upon arrival, introduce yourself to the interviewers, “my name is John, nice to meet you”, smile and greet them with a strong confident hand shake (without breaking their hands) whilst maintaining eye contact.



Interview Advice - Continued

An interview is generally perceived as a nerve-racking experience, but remember that an interview is as beneficial to you as it is to the employer and with the right level of preparation you can promote yourself better than you ever thought possible.

On entering the interview room, wait until invited to sit down. Sit up straight, this is a sign of confidence, you can also lean forward to the interviewers to show interest.

This is probably a case of what **NOT TO DO** instead of do's. Therefore **DO NOT**: - Fidget, rock on your chair, tap your fingers, slouch, rub your head, scratch, touch or rub your nose (this is a sign of being dishonest), also do not invade the interviewers personal space by walking, standing or sitting too close to them: keep a 2ft gap! And **DO NOT** stare off into space as if you are bored!

TIPS: Remember, Firm Hand Shake, Eye Contact & Smile.

Sell Yourself!

Interviews are carried out so that employers can find the best candidate for the job; they will come to their decision through asking you to talk through your skills, experiences and achievements, and depending on how you answer will define if you get the Job.

This is your opportunity to shine, tell the interviewer of your achievements. They will want details, for example have you improved efficiency, output or reduced wastage? if so how did you recognise the need for improvement, how did you overcome the problem and what was the outcome. Keep an eye on the prize and where possible relate your experience to the job description to show how you could best benefit them by hiring you.

Be conscious of your answers and ensure that you do not come across arrogant, as no one likes a know it all.

You're Weaknesses!

You can be 100% confident and have done all the research possible, however you will be asked the dreaded what are your weaknesses question. When answering this question you want to come across as genuine, but you also do not want to draw attention to any negativity that may prevent you from securing the role.

A weakness can be an area of unfulfilled potential, or a deficiency to remedy. The trick is to turn your weakness into strength, put a positive spin on your answer, and tell them how you have improved on past weaknesses.

DO NOT say you have no weaknesses, no one person is perfect!

Site Tour:

It is possible that during the interview process, you may be invited on a site tour, if this is the case make sure you are prepared and if you have safety boots, take them with you, highlight this to the interviewers as it shows initiative and planning.

During the tour, be conscious of your body language, make sure you are not slouching and dragging your feet and instead of just looking ahead, look at the machines and the facilities, see if you recognise any plant or controls etc. and engage with the person showing you around, do not just follow them around and say nothing. You will be being watched to see if you are interested and keen. Remember positivity!!!

Certificates:

After a series of questions regarding your skills, experiences, the company and the role, if the interviewers have not asked to see your qualifications, we recommend that you offer to show this to them, as you have already prepared and taken them with you in a folder along with copies of any references that you may hold.

Again this shows forwarding planning and initiative.

Interview Close:

At the end of the interview the interviewers will more than likely thank you for your time and say we will be in touch or we have some more people to see.

Do not leave yet, thank them too for their time and interest then turn it around to the interviewers, "Thank you, however before I leave, may I ask if you have any reservations about me?" this may open more questions from them and if there are any concerns then this will give you the opportunity to over come them.

After which, once again thank the interviewers for their time, maintain eye contact, smile and shake hands and advise them that you look forward to hearing from them.



Job Offers & Counter Offers

Getting to the point of a job offer is ultimately what everyone wants. Negotiating a contract of employment is an important part of the job selection process and one that must be handled with a great degree of professionalism and caution.

During the interview process you should have already discussed your remuneration package, leaving it until after receiving your contract is often a poor signal of your ability to negotiate and communicate. If, when you receive your offer, it is not what you discussed, contact the company immediately and discuss it professionally. Inform them as quickly as possible on your decision to accept or decline the job offer. If declining an offer, give reasons why but be professional and constructive, don't have a rant and don't burn any bridges.

Resigning and the Counter-Offer.

Handing in your resignation can be a daunting task. We urge all candidates to first consider the consequences of their actions and to plan their resignation carefully.

Prior to your resignation, meet with your line manager to discuss your development and promotional opportunities together with time scales, future salary and career expectations. You need an honest view of your future career potential within your current organisation before making a final decision to leave. Consider your options and make the decision that's best for you and inform all parties quickly.

Above all, be professional, remember this is a business transaction.

In summary:-

- Plan your resignation. Decide who you need to inform and how you intend to handle it.
- Prepare what you are going to say, you could be in for a tough ride.
- Plan your timing.
- Ensure that you inform your employer before telling anyone else. Give your employer the opportunity to decide how they want to inform the staff, customers, suppliers, etc.
- Never be vindictive, no matter what your personal reasons are.
- Give your reasons for leaving, but be objective, employers will often respect you for this and you can learn from them.
- Always attempt to leave on good terms, this keeps your options open, never burn any bridges or close any doors behind you. *"All that goes around, comes around"* & *"be kind to people on the way up as you might meet them on the way down."* Are two well-known sayings that have a profound bearing on your future prospects.
- Never play brinkmanship with your employer, it may backfire. Resigning is the last chance for an employer to retain your talents and should not be undertaken unless you are prepared to go through with it.
- Be careful of counter-offers made to you by your current employer as these are often only knee jerk reactions to make you stay. Your employer needs to know your reasons for wanting to leave and has to address all your concerns before you should consider staying. Get any agreements made in writing!

Protecting Your Online Reputation

Social networking sites such as Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, Blogs are a great way to stay in touch with friends and family to share stories, pictures and videos, but did you know that employers are using these networks as a way of vetting their applicants suitability.

More and more employers are using social networks to screen candidates, so if your profiles are public or you have posted something using your real name then your future employer could have an insight into more than just your qualifications and career history and as such the content you post online could have a big impact on your career prospects.

So how can you manage your online reputation and use social networks to your advantage when searching for a new role?

The easiest way to do this is to separate your professional and personal personas, think about what you are happy for anyone to see and read about you.

Don't forget that anything posted under your name or email address can be searched on, so if you have ever ranted about an organisation, individual or expressed views that are contrary to their policies, you could be shooting yourself in the foot. Do a Google search on your name and email address and see what you get and if any of it appears less than professional, deal with it before sending any applications.

Think about your email address as well and see if it reflects a professional persona, so if you are using something like sexybabe@hotmail.co.uk then get a new one quick!

Check your voice mail message on your mobile or any other answer phones you use. The last thing you want is a prospective employer to call you and get an answer like *"hey dude, not here, leave a message..."*

The web isn't there to catch you out so don't become a social hermit, the web can be your friend in the recruitment process, as many employers say that information they have found, has positively influenced their decision process, so consider 'Professional' social networking sites such as LinkedIn, designed for business networking and which also allow you to post your experience and qualifications.

You could also consider setting up your own website or blog to demonstrate your initiative and if done right, this could show off your creativity and communication skills, as well as being a platform to sell yourself through.



Probe Technical Recruitment
6 Emmanuel Court
Mill Street
Sutton Coldfield
West Midlands
B72 1TJ

t: 0121 321 4300
f: 0121 321 4301
e: info@probejobs.co.uk

www.probejobs.co.uk

