

Handbook



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In addition to the Job Toolkit video series, the project team would like to provide you with a comprehensive tool that will assist you on your way to successful employment. Job Toolkit handbook will go further into detail on each specific step you need to take in order to reach your final goal to find the right job for you.

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Introduction

The average person will spend about 90 000 hours at work over a lifetime. That is about a quarter of your adult life. It is absolutely true to say that your job has a huge impact on your quality of life, your physical, mental and emotional health.

The ideal career should consist of all elements essential for your happiness and fulfillment. Those elements are different for everyone, but there are some basic things you need to consider in order to find out the unique combination to your perfect career path. Once you have all elements together, in place, you can design you own unique life.



2. Self- assessment

Starting the job search and career planning process can be somehow overwhelming.

The best way to start your career development process is to find out more about yourself because the better you know yourself, the easiest it will be to find a fulfilling career. Self-assessment and self-exploration should be the first and most important step in your search process and this should help you determine your career direction.

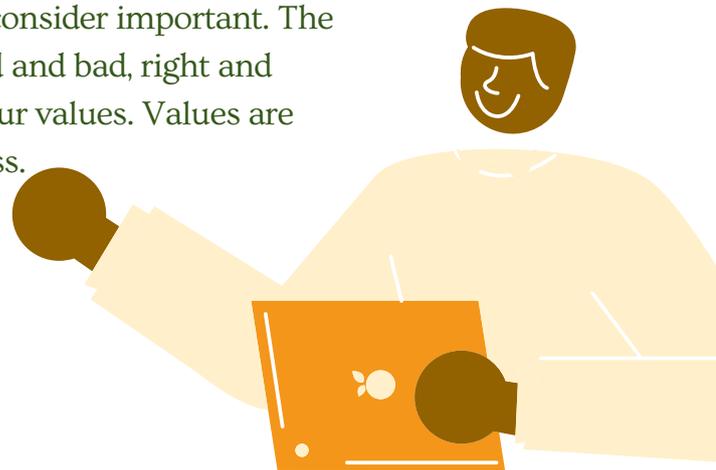
Reflecting on your interests, skills, strengths, values, talents, ambitions, personality type, asking people you know well for feedback can give you useful clues that will help you make more informed choices as you explore the career opportunities that will arise. The knowledge gained during the self-assessment process also translates into greater self-confidence and savvier answers during interviews.

Interests

Interests are reflected in your activities and talents. Identifying your interests often helps you focus on what ideas and pursuits keep you engaged, an important element in satisfying and successful employment. If you are unsure what exactly your career-related interests and preferences are, one of the best ways to help you determine those is by trying things out. You can participate in part-time and seasonal work, internships, volunteering jobs, etc.

Values

Our values are deeply coded beliefs and ideas we consider important. The way we view the world and what we consider good and bad, right and wrong, more or less important has all to do with our values. Values are often underestimated during the job search process. However, finding a position that fits with our values is of huge importance to our long-term career satisfaction.



Skills and Experiences

Skills are the specific learned abilities that you need to perform a certain job. They are usually divided into two main types; Hard skills and soft/transferable skills.

Hard skills consist of factual knowledge primarily learned at school or during other formal courses, training or education. They are concrete and can be easily measured.

Soft skills are continuously obtained during your whole life. These skills are deemed transferable as they have been acquired from one experience or position to the next. They are acquired in various areas of one's life, from school, work and volunteering. Soft skills are important and all employers, regardless of industry or field, look for a range of soft skills in potential employees.

Taking time to identify and articulate your skills is critical not only for a successful career exploration but also for the creation of a convincing CV and Cover Letter.



Strengths and competencies

Strengths and competencies are the person's knowledge and behaviors that lead them to be successful in a job. It might sound obvious but your strengths and competencies are the foundation of why an employer might want to hire exactly you.

Tie your strengths to your target position. Don't leave it up to the employer to figure out how your strengths relate to what they need.

Talents

What if you could make a living out of your passions and talents? Working with what you really love and focus on the activity, rather than your paycheck is a tempting thought and for many people an impossible scenario. It might seem like a distant dream for those on the traditional market but the truth is that this kind of activity is more possible than you imagine.

More often than not, we have talents that are so intrinsic that we don't even realize that they are skills. It could be anything - being excellent in communication, taking care of animals, drawing, being great at certain sports, etc.



Working conditions, environment, and location

Although it's important to show some flexibility, there are certain working conditions that are absolutely important for each individual to be happy and productive. You should think about what working conditions are you willing to accept which will help you stay motivated and satisfied.

Some examples to think about include: Travel, Work Environment, Size and Type of Organization, Position Characteristics, Hours Worked, Shifts, Holiday allowance, Type of Contract.

Career goals and ambitions

For the majority of people, a job is just a job. It is something they do five days a week, eight hours a day, hoping to get that paycheck at the end of the month. Every day is like the previous days and exactly like the day after, with some variables here and there, but generally speaking, the same thing over and over again. The primary driving motivator for the majority of people is a steady paycheck, but there's more to life than just feeding your bank account, and that's where career goals come into play.

Career goals are not defined by the job or the position you want to have. The actual goals are the steps you need to take, in order to reach the place, you desire. You should determine your short-term and long-term career goals which will indicate your direction down the necessary path. Once you have determined your career goals, you'll be able to recognize the basic necessary steps you need to take in order to end up in that place.

Short-term goals are goals you want to achieve in a short period of time. They are the building blocks of the path you need to walk in order to achieve your long-term goals. Some examples are: learning new skills, gaining experience, breaking into a new industry or field, etc.

Long-term goals are goals that take a long time to achieve. They are a very important part of everyone's life because they are the place where you'll experience complete fulfillment, happiness, and enjoyment. Some examples are: starting your own business, making a career switch, becoming an expert in your field, reach a leadership position, win an Award, etc.

Having a clear idea of what your long-term and short-term career goals are will help you to create your own, unique Job Searching Strategy!



3. Ways to search for a job

Networking / Face-to-face marketing

Understand the hidden job market! We must accept the fact that many of the job positions never see the market. One of the most effective methods to find a job is through our social and professional circle. In-person networking includes not only meetings but also attending events, joining professional clubs, keeping up the contact with your colleagues from college, university, etc. Statistics show that the majority of job positions are found through networking. If you develop a wide network, you will have more chances to find the desired position.

Job search platforms

Everyone is online! The easiest and most effortless way to see what positions are being listed in your desired professional field is the online job search platforms. Some of them include job positions from the whole professional spectrum, others focus on a specific professional field. I advise you to search for a job position in a job search platform, dedicated to a specific field, with reliable employers registered in it. Be sure that the platform is not fake and offers real job positions! Always check the authenticity of the employer before applying for the position!

Labor offices register those persons, actively looking for a job.

They offer information on vacancies, employment and training programs, mediation, counseling, vocational and motivational training, and scholarship for courses for acquiring professional qualifications.

If you have certain skills, but you don't know where exactly to apply for a job, the Labor office can offer you many opportunities, based on your professional background and competencies!

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A letter of intent

Be proactive! You can send your letter of intent, accompanied by your CV, to any company you are interested in, which hasn't yet publicly advertised a particular job opening. It is an especially useful tool if you are interested in working for a particular company or to fulfill a particular position. Although a letter of intent looks a lot like a cover letter, it's basically slightly more personal and extended, compared to a cover letter.

Linked In

Having a LinkedIn account is a very useful tool in the job search journey. It has become a standard part of any professional's profile. If you are looking for any professional or corporate job, you definitely need to have an up-to-date LinkedIn account. For people falling into the manual labor category, a LinkedIn account might not definitely be as essential, but having one can always be a helpful tool. What makes LinkedIn so great is that the true power doesn't necessarily come from your primary contacts but through your second and third-degree connections.



Job fairs

A great way to meet your future employer! You can communicate face-to-face with potential co-workers, exchange contacts, fill in a CV form and resume, etc. Have in mind that job fairs are usually oriented towards specific professional areas, which means that you should make a detailed research on what and when is being organized, and which companies will participate. Nowadays, online job fairs can offer the same experience and success, as the regular ones. Through a virtual platform, you can contact employers directly, share your experience and expectations, and learn more about different companies in your field of interest.

Internships, temporary job positions, voluntary work

Very often, it is hard to enter companies directly through the front door. What do you do, if you are interested in a specific organization? Apply for an internship or see if they offer temporary employment on a short-term contract. Even if the internship is non-paid, or if the salary does not meet your requirements, you might be able to take a closer look at the insight environment of the dream company and maybe end up with useful contacts, which might help you in the future. It is worth devoting a couple of months to volunteering in order to have a chance to show your abilities and hope to be offered a permanent position. Even if you don't get a job a permanent or paid job offer, you'll definitely learn new skills and gain work experience.

Remember – it's all about building relationships!

4. Applying

When it comes to applying you basically have two options - quality or quantity of applications.

- Quantity approach is to keep sending the same CV to many vacancies, without even reading the job advert. This method will increase the number of jobs you apply for, but it will significantly decrease the quality of each one and will therefore decrease your chances of getting hired.
- Quality approach is to tailor your CV accordingly to reflect the requirements of each job. Applying to fewer vacancies with a strong, targeted CV will significantly increase your chances of getting hired.



Getting acquainted with the vacant job position

There are many important things you should be aware of, before applying for a certain vacant job position. Take a closer look at:

- The content of the job position, what expectations they have from the candidate
- The company profile – their history, current activities, partners, vision, mission, etc.
- What requirements do they have – work experience, professional certificates, etc.
- Working conditions – what does the company offer to the employee – salary/bonuses/social benefits/bonus cards etc.
- Work graphic – full time/part time/2 on 2/seasonal job/other
- Location. Does the job require you to travel within your country/abroad?
- Minimum or specific education requirements
- Driving license requirements
- Do they offer training?
- What type of documents you should provide in order to apply for the job (CV, Letter of motivation, certificates, etc.).



Skills mismatch. What it means and what can we do about it?

According to the European Centre for the Development of Vocational Training (CEDEFOP), a skill mismatch is a balancing act between the demands of workers' jobs and their own skills and attitudes.

Why does this occur in the first place?

Well, it might be because the educational system hasn't prepared you right for your future profession, or because later you have chosen a different professional path, for which you are not well prepared. Another reason might be that the employers demand too much from their employees, or that the labor market has changed the demands over time. Basically, the skills gap is often associated with changes in the economic context or changes in technology.



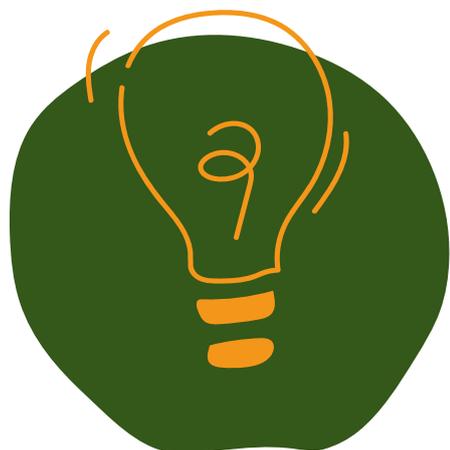
Nevertheless, if you do not possess the skills, required for your dream job, you should do something about it.

Upgrade your skills – match your skills to the needs of the employer. If you miss more generic or specific skills you can undergo training, organized by the Labor Office or another public body. In this case, you will be equipped with a set of skills in demand on the labor market. You can search for companies who offer training in specific skills for a particular occupation.

Seek career guidance – Career guidance centers can provide information, identify skills needs, clarify career options and develop positive attitudes towards learning. If you encounter problems finding your professional path, and you are not sure what you might be good at, do not hesitate to seek professionals in career guidance! Career guidance can help you:

- Determine your strengths and weaknesses
- Feel more motivated
- Determine your goals
- Understand the labor trends/which are the best opportunities for you
- Find the most suitable job position

Tips:



- Don't apply for random job positions from different sectors – focus on a specific field of your interest and knowledge and if necessary – upgrade your skills through training programs
- Always read carefully the content of the vacant job position in order to avoid confusions
- Do be well prepared with all the requirements – this makes a good impression
- Don't give up if your skills and competencies are not enough for your dream position – qualify yourself in order to get the job!
- Don't waste valuable time wondering what might be the most suitable career path – ask the professionals for career guidance!

5. How to write a CV

A good Curriculum Vitae is every candidate's best chance to make a great first impression with a prospective employer. Obviously, the impression it makes will have an impact on the screening process. Depending on the industry applying for, the goal is to make sure the CV reflects that. If one is applying for a creative job, they have to make sure to have a creative CV. If applying for something more technical, one has to make sure to have a resume that would fit that field.



Your CV should be to the point and concise. It should be factual and no more than two pages long. It is customary to send a one-page CV when applying for an entry-level position or when there is a lack of work experience. A two-page CV is acceptable if the applicant provides a good description of their skills and experience. A good CV highlights skills and accomplishments and excludes irrelevant information.

Moreover, you shouldn't underestimate activities outside work and studying, as they are very important for most employers. Many employers do like to see that a candidate values their out-of-work time, so showing leisure activities is also important, as well as making sure they elaborate on their volunteer work experience, side jobs, and civic responsibilities.

The candidate should not embellish roles or responsibilities nor exaggerate their own abilities - honesty is always the best policy.

CVs should follow a logical, easy-to-read format and be free of any spelling, punctuation, or grammatical errors.

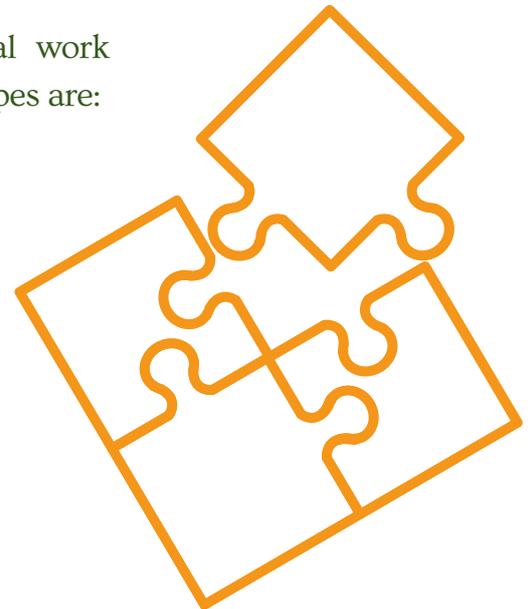
The following list provides a very simple overview of the structure of a good written CV.

Layout

Deciding on the right layout depends on your personal work experience, education, and skills. The two most common types are:

Chronological CV (a.k.a. Reverse Chronological)

The most common, traditional CV layout. Its structure is arranged in chronological order. Employment history is usually listed on the first page, underneath the personal profile, in reverse chronological order (most recent first). It enables you to match qualifications and work experience to the key requirements of the job applying to. Best used by candidates with solid, consistent work experience.



Functional CV (a.k.a. Skill - Based CV)

Highlights your skills, education, abilities, qualifications, and achievements, listed on the first page, underneath your personal profile. It enables you to draw focus on key skills you have developed through different aspects of your life. For people using this kind of layout, it's important to match the skills to the specification of the job they are applying to. Best used by people with gaps in their employment history, people with little to no work experience, or people seeking a career change.

Length: 1-2 pages maximum
Format: The A4 European standard

Personal details

- Full name
- E-mail address
- Phone number
- Date of birth is appreciated but not obligatory

Education

The highest degree/ current degree should be first. Mention the names of the schools, specializations/type of degree, and date of graduation for the basic information. There is no point in going into details, especially if they are not relevant to the situation.



- Other degrees, it's very useful to have. It indicates that you want to develop your professional skills and you don't rely only on standard education. Describe what you have learned in your life as additional skills. Mention relevant educational and training courses as well as study abroad. To be mentioned briefly; it's important for them to be relevant to the situation.
- Various internships are good to demonstrate if you have any. But if they are at least close to the topic. It depends on the presentation whether you should mention previous experience. Find a good balance in describing your duties and responsibilities in previous work or internships. Just mentioning one post does not provide enough information. A secretary may mean that you managed the entire office administratively, or that you only made coffee.

Work experience

- In reverse chronological order, most recent experience first, following this up with previous experiences.
- Stating the name of the previous employer, job title, and most importantly, tasks and responsibilities. Part-time and voluntary work experience should be included, if applicable.
- Listing work experience in short, plain sentences. (Tip: start each line with a verb such as coordinated, managed, organised, etc.)
- Pointing out any additional qualities or experience gained during employment.
- Use common sense and include only relevant information. For a clean, well-organised look, bullet points could be useful.



Other Skills

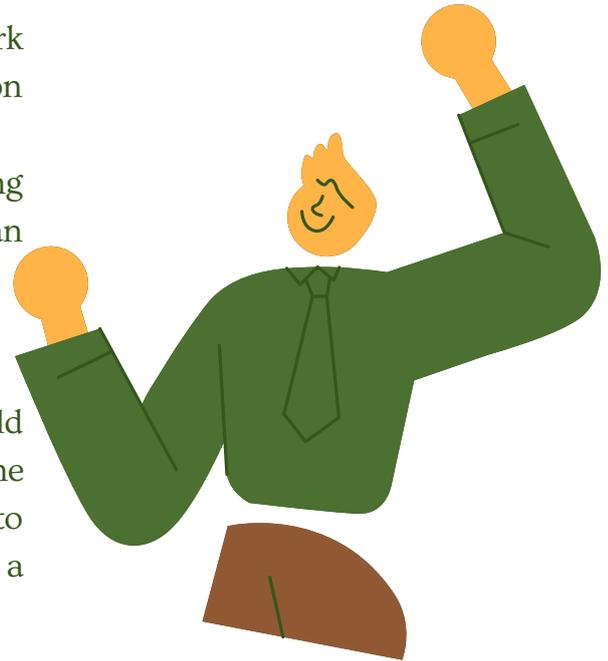
- Foreign Languages - level of fluency
- Computer skills - proficiency in software packages, internet, etc.
- Driving license
- Describe them to make sure you know them. If you happen to not know them, learn them as fast as you can. There is no modern office that does not use most of them.

Hobbies / Interests / Leisure activities

While the CV includes information about your work experience and skills, the hobbies and interests section reveals a little more about your personality.

This section is highly valued, so taking the time in listing relevant activities is recommended. They can give an employer a more complete picture of the applicant's personal qualities.

Wherever possible, your hobbies and interests should reinforce your application and the idea that you'll be the right fit for the position. Adding a long list of hobbies to cover up for lack of work experience or skills is never a good idea.



Photo

Although not obligatory, a photo is an excellent way to attract the attention of a recruiter. But it only brings value to the applicant if it is a professional, appropriate photo that matches the position! A smile, neutral background, clear light, and paying attention to the clothing and exterior care are of high importance.

Be cautious about choosing a photo. Most times, unfortunately, candidates don't make the right choice, which could lead to a wrong first impression and therefore a rejection.



Selfies, party or beach photos, full-body length, inappropriate clothing, facial expressions are just to name a few. The first impression, even on a photo, is very important and cannot be undone.

References

Although not required, it is customary to provide the names and contact details of two references. Graduates and starters can list college lecturers, teachers, and the managers of their internships, if applicable.

Give phones and names of people who can be reached and can confirm your story.

Adjust your CV for different job applications

Adjusting your CV doesn't mean you should re-write it for each application. It is basically reading the advert carefully in order to understand what are the key requirements and which of your qualities are most important to a particular vacancy. Quick adjustment to your CV ensures that it has maximum appeal to every employer you send it to.



- Use a moderate amount of professional terms. Not to irritate and flaunt, but to make it clear that you understand the profession.
- **Don't lie.** Lying is a bad idea for many reasons, not the least of which is that one is likely to get caught. Being dishonest about education, work experience, and personal history all fall within the remit of criminal fraud.
- Find out where you apply, what the organization is, what they want, how do they work. If the company is in the art sector, focus on visual elements. If they are analytically tuned, write in bullets and points.
- The CV should be factual and no more than two pages long. The impression it makes has an impact on the screening process. Depending on the industry, the goal is to make sure the CV reflects that. A good CV highlights skills and accomplishments and excludes irrelevant information.
- It is important to make sure your CV is laid out with clear headings and enough spacing between sections so that the information is easy to read. Keep it simple and concise so that the reader does not lose interest.
- Check for grammatical, punctuation, and spelling errors. Employers are less concerned with the actual mistake in an applicant's CV and more concerned with the root cause of the mistake: the applicant's skills (or lack thereof).
- Typos or misspellings are often not considered a serious mistake, although they could be an instant deal-breaker. Misspelling represents a lack of attention to detail, bad formatting shows applicant's inability to represent themselves or the company, and rambling demonstrate poor communication skills.

- Random capitalisation of common nouns in the middle of the sentence, presumably in an attempt to draw attention to particular words is an odd mistake. Fancy fonts and distracting colours should also be avoided.
- If you have no experience in writing a CV and in the process of job search, use one of the templates available on the Internet. Standard Bulgarian/Greek/Dutch, Europass format, or even some of the newer applications that make more artistic looks. They will help you not forget something or spill over into a prolonged description of your life.
- Most employers will “google” you. All your social media profiles should be cleaned up from some photos or exposure posts.



6. How to write a Cover Letter

Writing a Cover letter can be very challenging. Your challenge is to create a work-centered and employer-centered letter, that communicates your potential contribution. The main focus is to explain how your unique combination of skills and experience meets the requirements of the job description. An ideal cover letter leaves the hiring manager with a positive and memorable impression of you, something a CV alone won't always do.

There are two main forms of cover letters – application letters and letters of interest.

Application letter

Written in response to a specific job opening. This type of letter is used to formally apply for an available position and explain how your skills and qualifications meet the requirements of the job description.

Letter of interest

Written to demonstrate your interest in a specific company or position, that is not currently advertising a job opening. The main focus in this proactive type of letter is to match your skills and qualifications to the specific company and a wider occupational area, rather than a specific position.



Structure

The cover letter should be written in a formal, professional tone, but still flow like natural speech—this will make it easier for your reader to absorb the information quickly. It's important to include all the requisite information clearly and efficiently in a concise, short, direct, and professional style.

The information should be divided into paragraphs. This creates a basic structure and it's easy to follow your thoughts. It also makes it easy for you to customize, update, and personalize for different candidacies.

Keep it short, preferably 1 page. Even if you are a great writer, an employer won't take the time to read a Lord of the Rings-sized letter.

The cover letter should always be customized for each employer, position, and purpose. Never use a generic version because your letter could quickly end up in the bin.



Sections

Header

The header should contain your contact information. Regardless of the format you use, a header should include your:

- Name
- Email
- Phone number
- Address (optional)
- LinkedIn (optional)



You can also include links to your social media accounts, portfolio, or website if the information is relevant to the position you are applying for.

Beware! Before you include every social account in your application, consider whether each profile is in conjunction with your job application effort. Even if you don't include your social accounts, beware that a prospective employer is most likely to "google you". Make sure that the information you would like to be private, is private!

Under the header and above the salutation:

Place, today's date



Salutation

Greeting

The greeting is the first thing a recruiter will see, therefore it's important to convey an appropriate level of familiarity and respect. In most cases your letter will be addressed to a person, you don't know (very well), so using a formal greeting such as "Dear" could be a good option.

Title

Right after the salutation, you can include the recipient's job or personal title (Mr., Ms., Dr.,) If your contact person has a gender-neutral name and you are unsure about the gender, then skip the title.

Name

Do be specific and do your best to include the name of the contact person responsible for hiring. If it is not listed in the job description, try to look at the company's website or you can even call the company to find out to whom it should be addressed. You can use the first and last name or just the last name. Including the name is especially important when you are making an inquiry with a company for unadvertised openings. Double-check if the spelling is correct because a wrong written name could let the reader think that your sense of detail is lacking.

Unknown addressee

In those cases where the addressee is unknown, you can address your letter using general neutral title terms. Some examples include 'Director of Human Resources', "Hiring Authority", or "Employment Representative". Use capital letters for each word in your salutation.

Introduction / First section

The first couple of sentences are the most important ones. One way to open your letter is by highlighting accomplishments and describing your enthusiasm and passion for contributing to the employer's mission.

Another way to make an opening is to express your interest in working for this particular company and your interest in the field. Use the opportunity to demonstrate your knowledge about the employer and what they do, convey enthusiasm, and compliment them. This type of opening shows your engagement and passion.

In this first paragraph, you have to introduce yourself and explain your reason for applying. If you are writing in response to advertising, include the exact title or the number of the position of your interest. If you have been referred by someone you know, include their name and position.



Body

Middle section

Motivation is one of the main selection criteria. In this section, you should explain what motivates you and why you are interested in the specific organization and the position.

Demonstrate your excitement and knowledge about the company and the specific position. Make a strong connection between your most important qualifications and the job requirements. Try to explain why you are a perfect candidate.

Showcase how your unique combination of your skills, work experience, additional qualifications, and personal achievements, relevant to the position, match what the employer is seeking. Keep mentioning the company, the position, and your competencies – this way you keep demonstrating your passion and excitement for the position and the company.

Back arguments with facts. Try to show that you really possess the skills you mention. Describe the experiences of how you received and gained those skills, mention specific places you worked and specific positions you held.

The key is to maintain professionalism while showing personality!

Conclusion

Final section

Finish strong and be polite and confident! The words and phrases that you choose do make difference.

Let them know that you are looking forward and very excited to get to learn more about the job opening and the company (rather than just attend an interview and possibly get hired). Share your thoughts on how the unique combination of your skills, qualifications, and experiences can contribute to the growth and success of the company.

Suggest an action plan, but try not to sound too pushy. Use a closing statement such as, “I look forward to hearing from you” or “I also can be reached at (telephone number) if you have any questions”

Closing

Thank the reader for their consideration! Choose a proper greeting, such as “Kind regards”, “Respectfully” or “Respectfully”, followed by your full name.

Proofread, double-check, and finalize!

Tips:

- Don't underestimate yourself. One way to turn off a hiring authority is by appearing less than excited about the job. "I suppose you've seen much more qualified candidates" or "I hope I'm not taking too much of your time..." are examples of weak opening lines.
- Try to write your letter forward-looking. That gives the impression that you really like the position applying for and are excited about the future.
- Avoid overusing "I", especially at the beginning of your sentence.
- Avoid cliches. There are certain words and phrases that you should try to avoid and they mostly consist of overused cliches or tired expressions. Not only could using them risk mildly irritating the person in charge of hiring, but one could also end up blending into a sea of similar candidates. Some examples include passion, excellent communication skills, multi-tasker, self-motivated, goal-driven, team-player, etc.
- Get out in front by expressing your passion for the job and company, and just how excited of an employee you would be. Make sure you are aware of the company's history, current achievements, and future goals.
- Write down the idea that you will be pleased to meet the new challenges, that you will learn new things, that you are open to the new. Show your future employer that you are open to new knowledge and skills and that you are not Mr. "I know everything". Everyone has something new to learn.
- Mention only your strengths. There is no need to mention your weaknesses.
- Back statements always with facts. It allows the reader to get a better view.
- Provide a unique letter. Don't use a generic or a copied from the internet version.
- Write a custom letter every time.
- Make sure your cover letter complements your CV,
forming a whole and interests the person reading it.
- Proofread, proofread, proofread! There is no place for grammatical or punctual mistakes.
Display your written communication skills!



7. Job Interview

The fact that you've been invited for an interview means that you've definitely made a good first impression, on paper! The final and most crucial procedure you need to go thru is the job interview – you'll either “marry or get divorced”. If you want to walk into your interview feeling confident, you need to be well prepared.

Research the company



Do your own research and find out more about the company's vision, mission, goals, and current activities. By having extended knowledge about the company, you will be prepared to answer any given questions and even engage in a conversation about the company itself.



Research the position

Review in detail the requirements, responsibilities, and work description. Try to understand what type of employer the company needs. By doing so, you will be able to present yourself based on the job requirements.

Do the requirements match your skills?

If you have seen the job position in detail, you will already know what are the requirements for the perfect candidate. Make a list of all the needed skills and competencies for the specific position and see how many of them you have. During the interview, you can show that you are prepared and can start a conversation about the skills they need and those which you possess. If you miss key skills and competencies you should better prepare yourself before going to an interview – pass a course, or try to make a self-preparation.

Make a rehearsal

It will be useful if you make a rehearsal – by yourself or with the help of a friend. Prepare and ask yourself general questions like:

- your personality – goals, vision, your view of yourself in general
- education and work experience – what, when, where
- last job position/s – why you left, was there any problem, what did you learn, etc.
- your professional skills, teamwork, and management abilities
- your advantages, compared to other candidates? Why you should be their choice? What can you give to the company and what can you take as experience?
- what do you expect as a salary – any requirements and red lines you might have

Appearance

Prepare your outfit the night before, don't waste time choosing your clothes and accessories before the interview. This might cause you some valuable time, and if you are late for the interview – other candidates might be there on time! Decide in advance what will be your overall appearance, as you should always try to keep a formal and clean look. Clean clothes and polished shoes always make a good impression!





What to bring with you during the interview?

Take a pen, a notebook, your CV and resume printed, references (if you have any). Don't use or play with your mobile phone during the interview. You should put it aside and on a silent mode before the start of the meeting.

Be there on time

To be there on time means to be ready with your look, all the things you should take with you, and calculate your travel time well. Make sure you have enough time to reach the place and be there 5-10 minutes earlier! It makes a very bad impression if you are late and it might cause you the dream position! Another positive side of being there earlier is to refresh yourself and to have enough time to calm down.



Effective personal presentation

The effective personal presentation starts with your appearance – personal hygiene, clothes, posture, body language, preparedness, well-structured sentences and thoughts, polite behavior. If you follow these general rules, you will leave a good impression on the interviewer. And don't forget, when you compete with fierce competition, each one of these components is important and can tip the scales in your favor!



Behavior and etiquette

Attitude

Starting a job interview with the wrong attitude can sabotage the whole process before it even begins. Having a positive attitude, being friendly, open, honest, and confident is just as important as your skills and experiences.

In a job interview, being positive means that you always see the bright side in every situation. The glass is half full, rather than half empty. Even when things look so bad, that they can't get worse, you believe that things can always be fixed or that there is at least something to learn from the experience.

Body Language

Physical behavior can have a strong impact on your success (or failure). Body language is very important because it shows your feelings and emotions. All your gestures, posture, and facial expression can be controlled, in order to show confidence and professionalism. Due to nervousness, your voice might be a bit shaky in the beginning. Make sure you don't whisper - your voice should be firm and confident. One of the most important aspects is your posture. Sit comfortably in the chair, maintaining a tall posture, meaning keeping your chin up, shoulders down and hands lying on the table or in your lap, which projects confidence and decisiveness. The way you sit should be neither tense nor too laid back. If you choose to cross your legs, do it toward the interviewer, keep the contact open. Another important aspect is to keep good eye contact with the interviewer, which means not to look down or aside the whole time. Furthermore, try to control your hands and the way you use them to "describe" your words. It is preferable to practice the "open hands" position - when your hands stay open and your palms and fingers are visible it shows that you can be trusted. Make sure to smile and to show polite and friendly behavior.

Appearance

For a formal corporate interview, men should wear a suit and a tie in classic colors (blue, black, grey), leather shoes, and some accessories like a watch and a belt. Women should bet on the same classic look - a suit with pants or a skirt (just below or above the knee), matching shoes (not too high), clean hair and a professional hairstyle, clean manicured nails (not too long), and daily makeup. Make sure to look smart, but don't exaggerate with make-up, jewelry, or (especially) perfume. Definitely don't wear a short skirt of a deep décolleté.



If the company/organization you have applied for is a more casual one, like a startup, or the position does not require you to wear a suit and is more oriented towards production, industry, etc. you can choose a more casual look: like trousers, combined with a long sleeve shirt, a blazer, and leather shoes.

No matter how formal or casual your future working outfit will be, it makes a good impression if you show class, style, and choose the business look for your interview. So, try to do your best to impress your future employer!

Mindset

Even if you are highly skilled and very experienced, you could fail to present yourself optimally, due to not being mentally prepared. Lack of self-confidence, pessimism, stress, and distraction are among some of the culprits that can sabotage your interview performance.

Stress is one of the main reasons for the inability to concentrate and the tendency to make mistakes. You would drastically reduce your stress level if you attempt the interview optimally prepared.

Thinking positive is a key factor during a job interview as well. Focus on your positives, appreciate yourself and give yourself a chance. Be excited and optimistic about the future and create an attitude of confidence and determination. Forget about feelings such as pessimism, negativity, or self-doubting during a job interview, especially because they never go unnoticed.



The actual interview

Switch off your cell phone or switch silent mode with no vibration!

Try to identify your interviewer's communication style early on and modify your responses accordingly.

Listen carefully, then answer questions thoughtfully. Think about answering the actual question you've been asked! Avoid talking too much. You can easily get off track, say something that isn't in your favor or just annoy your interviewer.

Common questions

You'll be asked a series of questions that will help the interviewer determine whether you are a suitable candidate that has the abilities to fulfill their expectations. Some common questions should ideally be prepared to answer, include:

Tell me more about yourself

It's not really a question, it's more like an invitation to introduce yourself. Consider it as an opportunity to share with the interviewer whatever you think is important about you in their hiring decision.

Why do you want to work here?

Your answer should demonstrate your knowledge about the company's mission and your desire to be able to contribute to their future success.

Where do you see yourself in five years?

What they really want to know is whether your goals align with the career path and the role for which you're applying. Keep in mind that they want to hire a candidate that will most likely work for them in the long term.

How do people describe you?

Try to focus on a description of yourself that corresponds to the requirements of the job position or the company vision. You can focus on qualities, such as loyalty, creativity, leadership, honesty, etc.

What is your greatest accomplishment?

It is a question related to behavior. It can be a tough question because you can feel uncomfortable discussing your achievements, even when asked directly.

Don't be shy and try to convince your interviewer that you are the best person for the job.

Stand up from the crowd and embrace what makes you great!

Why did you quit your previous job?

The meaning of this question is to understand the importance that your career plays in your life and how ambitious, responsible or reasonable you are.

Do you have any questions?

Always say “Yes”! Use this question as your last opportunity to show you’re interested, engaged, and informed about the company and the position.

Tough questions

Most recruiters intentionally ask tough questions that can help them determine whether you are a good candidate for the position. Beware that the main reason is not to just hear your story, but to try to determine whether your vision, professional behavior, action, and conclusion are proportional to the specific position and company.

Once you come face to face with an interviewer, you’ll probably be challenged with questions, beyond the expected ones. The interviewer may ask you to describe a job-related challenge or a problem you had and the way you handled it. Another possible question could be to describe a situation in which you did something wrong and how you handled it.

Every interviewer knows how tough it can be to talk about your own biggest flubs and imperfections. Realizing what the interviewer is really asking, can do you a favor. Don’t be afraid to admit that you’re less-than-perfect and be open about a specific example of when you’ve made a mistake. Everyone makes mistakes, even a job interviewer. Take advantage of those tough questions and make them work for you.



Strategy



By communicating with you, your interviewer will ultimately hope to find out more about your professionalism, your sense of judgment, your problem-solving skills, and your personality. Every aspect of your conversation can be very revealing about you as a worker. The last thing you want is to appear unprepared.

Don't talk about a situation that has led to a disciplinary or termination. After all, if you have made a mistake that has been bad enough to get you fired, it surely won't help you win the trust of the interviewer.

Beware of your answers! Make sure you avoid answers that could let the recruiter think you're lacking vital skills, needed for the position.

It's in your best interest to share (if asked) a certain situation that has helped you grow as a professional. Explain how you handled the situation and what you've learned from the experience. Describe how this particular situation has influenced your behavior or affected your decisions. If you want to go beyond positivity, then this experience has helped you overcome a weakness or develop a skill that the current employer 'accidentally' requires.

Ways to avoid inappropriate questions

Although you really should answer all the questions you've been asked during your interview, you can find yourself in a position where you don't want, cannot, or should not answer. Some examples include questions related to your marital status, religion, age, or political preferences.

As an alternative to give the impression that you're feeling uncomfortable, lying, or hiding something, you can deflect! Deflection, in this context, means passing the attention away from yourself. One way to do so is by answering the question with a question, while sticking to the initial subject, passing the attention to the interviewer. Another approach is by giving a humorous answer. A bit of humor can change the direction of the conversation to a different topic and give the impression that you want to create a pleasant interaction.

Deflection doesn't come naturally for many people. Some people could be able to invent deflecting questions right on the spot, but most of us, unfortunately, need to practice. Try to anticipate questions that you are likely to be asked and prepare different deflection responses. This way you'll be well prepared to redirect a conversation. The same rule applies here – practice makes perfect!

Humor during an interview?

No matter how qualified or skilled you are, people still have to interact and work with you. Many employers believe that a fun working environment increases productivity. Demonstrating an appropriate sense of humor during an interview can increase your chance of being chosen for the position.

There are countless benefits of humor and being funny. Humor reduces stress, increases productivity, prevents burnout, provides motivation, increases acceptance of new ideas, gets people to listen, and many, many more benefits.

Humor can be used in almost every situation. The tricky part is knowing how and when to use humor. If humor is natural to you, then you'll definitely know what to say and when to say it. Unfortunately, not many people are gifted with such a great gift. If humor doesn't flow naturally to you – don't use it!

Although it can be very beneficial, be very careful using humor, as it could turn out to be a double-edged sword. Beware and be very careful because they may have a hidden agenda and take great offense about something you think to be innocuous and inoffensive.

Don'ts:

- Don't use your phone unless you're taking notes.
- Don't talk negatively about your previous job or employer.
- Definitely not the time to have a discussion about wages, benefits, or vacation.
- Don't use cliches.
- Don't use unprofessional language.
- Don't use personal information, irrelevant to the job.
- "I don't know." is an unexpected answer.
- Don't chew gum or anything else, not even your pen!
- Don't lose your sense of humor during your interview. If the interviewer says something that is intended to be funny – laugh, even if you think it's not.



8. Job Abroad

Working abroad can be a great opportunity to explore new cultures and customs, meet new people and discover new places, as well as benefit your career by helping you expand your skillset and experiences. Having international experience plays a big role in your future career development, as it is a good indication of soft skills and cross-cultural competence.

If you are deliberating and weighing, whether or not working abroad is suitable for you, here is a list of some pros and cons.

Things to consider before deciding to work abroad

Communication skills

Learn a new language, or put your knowledge of foreign language skills to use – living abroad will help you learn new languages, improve your knowledge and general communication skills.

Cultural awareness

Living abroad gives you the opportunity to communicate with people from different cultures, languages, religions, people with different lifestyles and habits. Cultural awareness will benefit you well in international relations and make you more employable.

Financial benefits

Working abroad is often motivated by the possibility of a better income/living standard/not enough jobs for your skills in your home country/quality of life.

Adaptability

By becoming more adaptable, willing to take risks, experienced in working in a multinational environment. Having to adapt to new culture, traditions, language, laws, climate, currency, food, transportation, and regulations are all experiences that help a person to become flexible, adaptive, and resilient. Such skills are highly appreciated by employers.



Increasing employability

Having international work experience is an advantage, compared to other candidates, when it comes to a specific job position.

Self-awareness

Examining your own beliefs and practices in the face of diversity helps you nurture self-awareness and widen your perspective. You'll become able to have a wider view of the world around you, noticing problems you were unaware of, or discover things you are passionate about. Self-awareness encourages people to become kinder.

Obstacles you might have

Finding a job

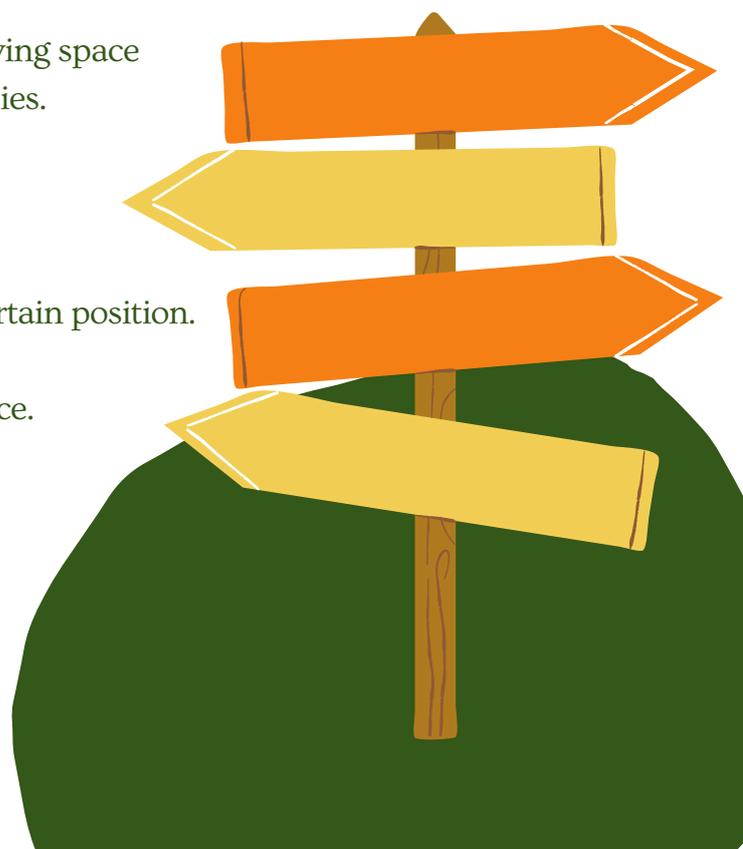
Finding a job abroad has its difficulties. You should leave your comfort zone and get used to living without your family, friends, and past social life. Feeling homesick is one of the top reasons why adults return home.

Housing

Finding suitable, not too expensive, long-term living space can be very challenging, especially in popular cities.

Big competition

You are not the only one who wants to take a certain position. This means that in the beginning, you might get a lower-level job, compared to your experience.



Cultural differences

Adapting to the new mentality, rules, and environment might be frustrating. Be prepared beforehand with the established rules and do as the locals do. Also, you might suffer from a “shock”, because of the different cultures, values, habits, etc. in the host country.

Living expenses

Living and working conditions might not always be ideal. Have in mind that high living standard means high rent and living costs. If you want to save some money, you should settle for less than what you have in your own country.

Financial investment

Going abroad requires an initial investment. Before you receive your first salary or before even finding a job abroad you need money for rent, food, bills, different types of documents, etc. enough for a minimum of one month.



Important steps before going to work abroad

The steps you need to take depend on your personal situation and goals. Before creating your own personal action plan, you need to make sure you have a clear idea of what, why, and how you want to achieve it. Once you know that you can start preparing.

Destination

Choose a destination based on your personal preferences and professional aspirations. Get familiar with the living conditions and regulations for the different aspects of life for each specific country you're considering.



Finding a job

It's best to find a job before moving to the country of choice. If that's not possible in your particular situation, make sure you are financially prepared to be able to survive during the searching period.

Working conditions

Since we spend a huge part of our life at work, it's important to have work that motivates and satisfies us. Before accepting a job offer, make sure you carefully go true the working conditions, obligations, and requirements. Travel, working environment, size and type of the organization, holiday allowance, and pension capital are just to name a few, that are an important part of every employment contract. Discuss the options with your future employer and negotiate, if you need to.

Finding a residence

Finding a place to live is even more important than finding a job. It is a stressful experience because it concerns your peace of mind and security. Research the neighborhoods and transportation possibilities that fit your requirements. Check out the website of the municipality you're planning to live in, oftentimes they provide useful information on housing and other essential matters for (future) international residents and ex-pats. For professionals, there are many international companies that also offer accommodation.

Prepare your finances

You'll have a lot of expenses before your first paycheck. Make sure you have enough money to pay for your housing. You'll also need money for your daily expenses, definitely until your first paycheck.

Laws and Tax

Investigate the laws of the country you're moving to. Something that's considered legal and accepted in your country might be illegal and unaccepted in the country of choice.

In order to avoid tax problems or having to pay tax in both countries, make sure you are well informed on the matter. Consult a tax advisor or the tax authorities.

Economic factors and costs of living

Do the math! Rent, utilities, groceries, and other recurring living expenses need to be considered. Will the ratio salary/living expenses meet your expectations?



Documents

Check whether or not you need a work permit or a visa.

If your passport or driver's license is expiring soon, or in the next couple of years, extend their period before you leave.

Translate and legalize your diploma(s), in case you lose your initial job and need to search for a new one where your diploma might be required.

Health insurance

Medical bills can be extraordinary in other countries. There is nothing worse than being sick or injured in another country, away from your family and friends, let alone not being able to afford a visit to a medical specialist. Make sure you are well prepared by setting International Health Insurance initially, then switch to Domestic Health Insurance (in some countries is even mandatory).

What about your partner

In rare cases, where you have been offered an important position, you might be able to take your partner (and children) with you. In most cases though, you are on your own.

9. Long term unemployment

Unemployment occurs when someone is actively searching for employment, but unable to find work. Being unemployed could be short-lived or long-term. Long-term unemployment is considered when someone has been unemployed for 12 months or longer.

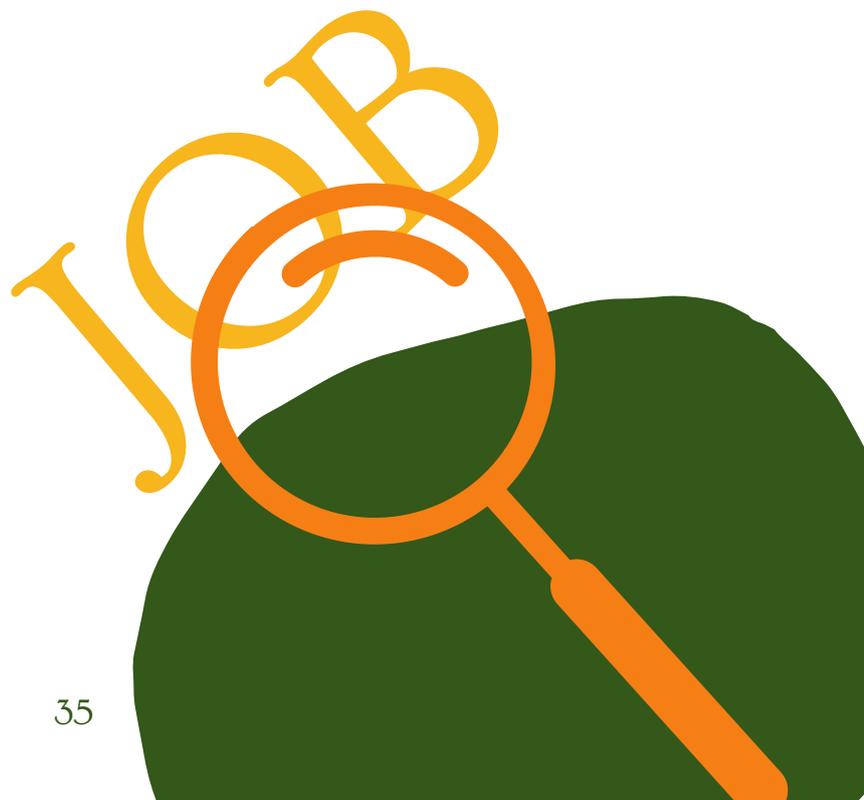


Becoming (long-term) unemployed

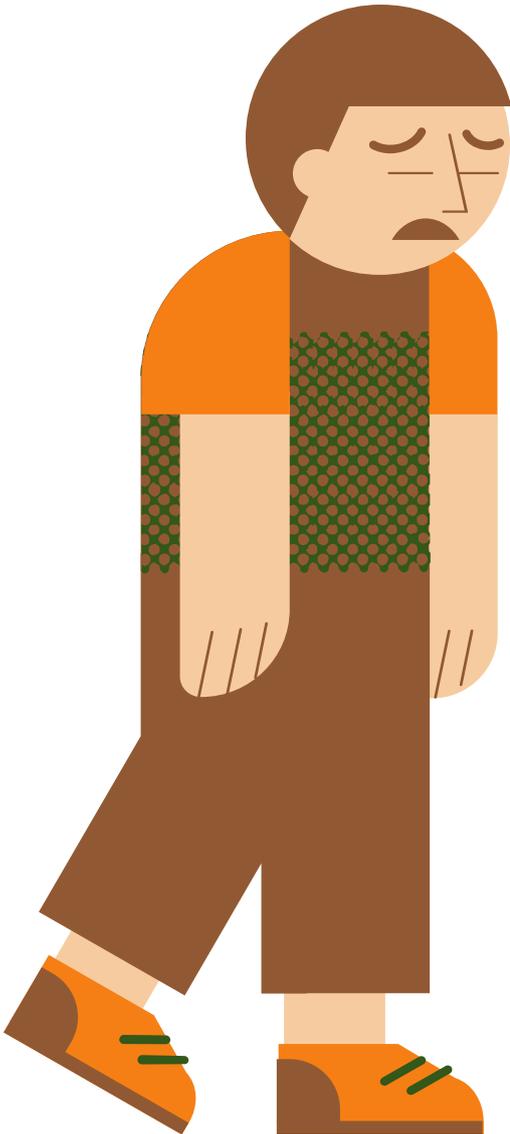
There are three most vulnerable groups at risk of becoming long-term unemployed – young adults, older workers, and low-skilled people. Long-term unemployed differ in their chances of finding a new job. Younger people and people with a lot of work experience have a greater chance of finding a job faster, compared to the older, lower educated and people with poor work experience.

Long-term unemployed solicitors

As the unemployment period progresses, the probability of finding a job decreases further and further. Employers are always looking for the most productive employees, but It could be very challenging for them to accurately estimate the productivity of an applicant. Therefore, when selecting applicants, employers often use objective characteristics such as age, education level, and work experience. Work experience specifically, plays a major role when selecting suitable candidates. Candidates with gaps in their work history, due to unemployment, have a lower chance of being selected. The duration of unemployment is of course of huge importance – short-term unemployed have a greater chance of being selected, compared to long-term unemployed. The reason is that the productivity of someone who has been inactive can decrease with longer unemployment periods because knowledge and skills become outdated.



General effects of long-term unemployment



The well-being of an individual depends on many things, including income, job characteristics, and market status. Unemployment among the working-age population is one of the most damaging individual experiences. The immediate consequence of unemployment is reduced or loss of income, which immediately increases an individual's stress levels. Long periods of unemployment may have a harmful impact not only in the present time but in later life too. It can lower future income levels, skills validity, future employability, job satisfaction, happiness, and health levels.

The duration of unemployment plays a major role in an individual's personal and professional development, as well as physical and mental health. The longer a person is out of work, the more likely is their skills will begin to deteriorate, through lack of use and training, which unavoidably leads to skills atrophy. Long-term unemployment tends to have psychological consequences as well – loss of identity and self-esteem, increased stress, depression, social exclusion, along with greater future uncertainty. The negative impact keeps increasing over time. The anxiety among long-term unemployed can influence their physical health, family dynamics, and even the well-being of their children.

The search behavior of the unemployed can also change over time as the person may become discouraged and seek less actively. They could even get used to not having any job-related obligations and begin to appreciate the available time they have each day.

Solutions

Reassess yourself

Take the time to reassess your skills and experiences. Rethink your goals and motivation, expand your idea of the job you want and set new goals. Having a clear idea of where you stand and where you want to be is the first and most important step.



Review your strategy

If you can't find work after countless attempts, you'll have to stop and look back. Are you doing everything right? You might want to ask employers, that have rejected your candidacy, for feedback? Maybe your CV or Cover letter is not optimal or you are completely missing the point. Do you set unrealistic goals? Are you applying for the right positions?

Step back

People love to be successful, so do you! After being long-term unemployed you would prefer to find a job at the same level as before, or even above, but sometimes that is simply not possible. Take a strategic step back and consider looking for a job below your level or even a lower salary. You shouldn't let go of your ambitions, but you may have to reach your ultimate career goal via a detour. By working below your level, you will quickly perform above average and you will quickly be noticed. The route is indirect and may take longer than you actually want, but it can provide the solution. Investigate if the company you're aiming at creates opportunities to grow. Some companies are simply looking for people who will continue to work in the same position for a long period of time and do not want someone who is too ambitious.

Avoid negative mindset

The problem with long-term unemployment is that you can become more desperate, insecure, and depressed. This subsequently has a negative effect on the application process, your motivation and could even be noticed during a job interview. Decreased motivation and negativity can be the reason why you don't get the job. Talk to friends about the situation or possibly hire a career coach. It is important to take a positive step in every application, no matter how difficult it may be. Having a gap in your employment history may be less interesting for an employer, but adding a negative attitude on top of that only decreases your chance.



Stay active

Staying active can help you overcome the negative effects of being unemployed. Keeping fit is all about maintaining your motivation. Physical activities will boost your confidence, build endurance and strength and increase your energy levels. It is one of the best remedies to help you improve your mood and allow you to continue to stay positive.

Keep your networking in check

The quickest way to get a job is by being referred to a position by someone who is trusted by the employer. Although it sounds simple, it's actually not that easy to find people to refer you, considering the fact that you've been long-term unemployed. It is, therefore, essential that you are able to promote yourself to people who are in a position to refer you.

Keep your social media accounts active and in check. Let everyone know that you are looking for work. Prepare your enthusiastic speech in case you get a job offered. It is always easier to find work through a friend. The fact that you've been referred, puts you 1-0 ahead of the other applicants before you even have applied. A large number of vacancies are filled through the network of employees, some vacancies, which may perfectly match your profile, are therefore not even published!

Avoid gaps in your CV

A common presumption is that when you don't have a paid job, you automatically create a gap in your work history. This is just half of the truth. You don't necessarily need to have a paid job, to be allowed to add it to your CV. You can use the experience, activities, knowledge, and skills from your personal life as well. Following a training course or doing volunteer work not only prevents a gap in your CV but also increases your chances in the labor market.

Even if you've done nothing during your unemployment, the same advice applies. If you start now, you will be better off in a few months. Even if you haven't done anything for a number of months, you can subsequently demonstrate that you have picked up the thread and want to get back to work.

If you have been unemployed because you had to take care of a family member, you have to be honest about it. Mention it briefly in your cover letter, but do not emphasize it too much, the focus should be on relevant work experience, not on the hole in your CV.

Reach out

It's not a secret that long-term unemployment causes deterioration in a person's social interactions. Most people who have been unemployed for a long time feel embarrassed and ashamed of themselves. As the unemployment period progresses, they get more and more discouraged, depressed, and self-isolated. Isolation is one of the most common symptoms of long-term unemployment and is almost impossible to overcome without the help and support of family, friends, or even a professional advisor or a social worker. You can even join employment projects.

Volunteer

The benefits of volunteering for those receiving help are clear. However, there are many benefits for the volunteer as well, including stress reduction, combating depression, and providing a sense of purpose. Voluntary work will help you enhance your personal skillset, attitudes, and knowledge that can potentially help you in the labor market. It might even help you discover that your passion lies quite elsewhere. Another possible benefit is that volunteering can serve as a pathway to employment. Although it doesn't necessarily guarantee paid employment, it definitely brings many personal and social benefits and creates durable contacts.



Learn new skills

Consider your unemployment as a full-time job. Try to spend your time wisely, in a way that can be beneficial for your further professional development. Learn new skills or take classes.

Career change

Most people think that career change is a start-over process, but that isn't always true. Regardless of your previous position, chances are really good that you have some transferable skills. You might not be doing the same kind of job, but your existing experience is still valuable.

Abroad

Consider looking for work abroad. It is a huge step in an unknown direction, but if your personal situation allows it, why not consider this option. If you are a person who is not limited by borders, there are certainly many available options. Your skills and experiences might be highly appreciated and wanted beyond the borders of your country. You should only consider this option only if you actually are willing to work abroad.

Start your own business

If you've always had an entrepreneurial dream, now is your opportunity to realize it. Having your own business gives certain lifestyle advantages, independence, freedom, flexibility, and a chance to benefit from your own hard work. There are also some disadvantages that you need to consider, such as financial risk, stress, and the fact that having your own business is far more time-consuming than being employed.

Escaping long-term unemployment is difficult and requires a lot of effort. It is important that you keep developing yourself, keep improving your application strategy and stay positive despite all setbacks so that you increase your chances of success.

Long-term unemployment could overcome us all, but it is the way we deal with it that can keep the long-term unemployment from becoming eternity.





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