

abpm
experts in *financial* recruitment

GUIDE TO PLANNING YOUR CAREER

1. WHY IS CAREER PLANNING IMPORTANT?

The Market

Due to the structure of most organisations the higher up the seniority scale you go the less opportunities arise. Competition is also extremely tough due to the sheer number of candidates sharing each role. Therefore it is essential to map out your employment history to sell yourself in the best possible light to compete.

The Motivation

Setting yourself goals – short, medium and long term you will be able to set yourself tangible aims. This will improve your motivation levels, which in turn improve your performance and likelihood of success.

Your Marketability

Ensuring your CV makes sense to a potential employer will increase your chances of getting interviews. Once through the door you can then discuss your career plan. One of the most common reasons for failure at interviews is an inability to talk about career plans over the following 5 -10 years.

Momentum & Timing

It is never too early to start planning, but this plan needs to be constantly reviewed so you can adapt to changes in circumstances.

Plan your career so you do not peak too early, give yourself options.

General Rules

- Keep momentum going
- Ensure you have a solid base of technical and managerial experience is necessary. Do not be in too much of a hurry to get to the “Directorship”.
- Obtain the best training available. Learn from more experienced people.
- Seek professional advice. Follow the news, check adverts, and keep checks on the market.
- Carry out an honest appraisal of your strengths and weaknesses. Decide what type of personality you are and hence which organisation you will fit in with. Think about which business sectors interest you.
- Not all best career moves involve massive salary increases and fancy job titles. Do not over-estimate their importance.
- Look ahead, set objectives and review performance. This will enable you to maintain performance

CV PRESENTATION

WHAT IS THE PURPOSE OF A CV?

The immediate purpose of a CV is to gain an interview, therefore make sure that it has: -

- Brevity
 - aim for 2 sides of A4. Remember an ability to express oneself concisely in a managerial strength
 - the first page should include key personal details, information on education and your most recent appointment. A reader interested thus far will read on.
- Fact
 - a good principal is to include only information, which can be factually verified rather than open to opinion.
- Positive
 - aim to emphasise what you have done: achievements, strengths, transferable skills and experience. Use positive languages and expressions.
- Content
 - ensure you have the following – personal details, nationality, language skills, statement over whether relocation is an option, positions in reverse chronological order, current salary and benefits, responsibilities, and achievements for each role, brief information on your current and previous employers such as products and turnover, and finally leisure interests.
- Action Verbs

➤ Accomplished	➤ Delivered	➤ Finished
➤ Accelerated	➤ Developed	➤ Generated
➤ Achieved	➤ Demonstrated	➤ Implemented
➤ Approved	➤ Designed	➤ Improved
➤ Conceived	➤ Directed	➤ Increased
➤ Conducted	➤ Doubled	➤ Introduced
➤ Completed	➤ Eliminated	➤ Launched
➤ Consolidated	➤ Ended	➤ Maintained
➤ Created	➤ Established	➤ Negotiated
➤ Decided	➤ Extended	➤ Ordered

Action Verbs
Continued:

- Performed
- Scheduled
- Traced
- Pioneered
- Serviced
- Traded
- Planned
- Simplified
- Trained
- Processed
- Set-up
- Transferred
- Programmed
- Sold
- Translated
- Proposed
- Solved
- Tripled
- Promoted
- Started
- Trimmed
- Purchased
- Structured
- Turned
- Redesigned
- Streamlined
- Uncovered
- Reduced
- Strengthened
- Unified
- Reorganised
- Stressed
- Utilised
- Revised
- Stretched
- Vacated
- Scheduled
- Succeeded
- Waged
- Serviced
- Summarised
- Widened
- Simplified
- Superseded
- Want
- Set-up
- Supervised
- Worked
- Sold
- Terminated
- Wrote
- Solved

Use these action verbs to describe what you have done and achieved.
Use the stronger verbs selectively for maximum effect.

- Conclusion

Your CV is the key to your campaign. Give it the time and effort it deserves. The process will enable you to understand yourself in relation to your experience and achievements.

INTERVIEW TECHNIQUE

AT THE INTERVIEW

In this section we focus on these 'formal' interviews and how to sell ourselves to best advantage. The interview is a business meeting between a seller (you) and a buyer. A well-trained salesperson will focus attention on the buyer's needs and concerns, and will outline the benefits of the product or service, which are relevant to those needs. The same applies in the interview you need to find out as much as you can about the employer's business and the role you hope to be offered. From this, you can decide your key marketing points and the principal benefits you are able to offer, relating directly to the interviewer's needs.

Here are just some of the interviewer's main concerns

Can you do the job?

A fairly basic concern. Nevertheless, you must remember that the only source of information is you and what you actually say. Never assume "But I thought they would know that". Make sure your preparation has included prioritising those skills and experiences, which are critical to the position offered.

Are you better than the rest?

Every skill you describe must be backed up by achievements. You cannot overdo the preparation of achievements, but you must use them appropriately and judiciously.

Do you really want the job?

It is your objective in the interview to make sure your relevant strengths shine through. The interviewer needs to feel confident that you are really motivated. Show your enthusiasm even if you have reservations about the role under discussion. Remember, it is the offer of the job you want and until that is in your hand your reservations are academic.

Will you fit in?

Research will give you a good insight into the organisation's culture and whilst waiting in reception, by scanning the material displayed and observing how staff behave and relate to each other, you can often pick up useful insights.

Do I like you?

No matter how good you are if I do not like you, you are not going to get the job. Yes, it is unfair, subjective and amateurish; but it is true! All research indicates that the selection process is most strongly influenced by personality and cultural factors. This is not to underrate the importance of personal competence. Skill and ability normally form the basis of exclusion, whereas subjective factors form the basis of inclusion. The initial decision to invite you to the interview is normally based on your perceived competence to do the job. The further you progress, however, the more attention shifts to you personally, your attitude and suitability for the particular style and culture of the organisation.

INTERVIEW TECHNIQUE

AT THE INTERVIEW

Preparation

Interviews will be less of an ordeal through careful planning and research. Creation of the right impression is essential. Problems arise through lack of preparation.

Research the company and its products; this will give you an advantage in interview. Look at websites and trade journals, ring the company and ask for literature i.e. reports and accounts. This will give you the confidence and enable you to relax. Ensure you have all the necessary background information regarding the size of company, function and location, and any other details that will help you succeed such as whether you will be interviewed by Personnel or the Line Manager.

Think about what questions you will be asked such as – strengths and weaknesses and successes and failures.

Interview Technique

It is a mistake to expect experience and qualifications will get you the job alone. Personality is as important. Confidence will single you out as a candidate to be taken seriously. Sell yourself to the interviewer and never criticise previous employers.

First Impression

This cannot be overstated. An opinion is formed from the very second you meet an interviewer therefore: -

- Be early (at least 10 minutes)
- Give a firm handshake and greet with smile. This breaks the ice and dispels nerves
- Be well presented, wear a suit and be clean and tidy
- Do not slouch
- Always have a positive attitude. It is easy to reject a position you may feel unsuitable once offered, but not as easy to retrieve an interview after discovering it's your perfect job.
- Speak clearly and concisely. Think carefully before answering technical questions and make sure your answer shows initiative, common sense and imagination. But if you don't know, say so.
- Use of voice, eye contact and overall posture create the right impression.

Possible Interview Questions

Be aware that the interviewer is not always prepared. A good interviewer will ask you open-ended questions, so give them detail and be positive, also have examples ready.

Tell me about yourself. This is a common question; discuss briefly your qualifications, your career and your skills.

Why do you want this job? They want to hear the positive aspects that attracted you to applying to the position, not the negative aspects of your current job or the job in question.

What do you like about your current role? They want to hear the positive side of your current role – make sure you don't go over the top.

What do you dislike about your current role? Be careful, do not bad mouth anyone and remember the details of the job you are going for, before you speak.

What are your Strengths? An interviewers favourite! You should have a list of 3 / 4, stating technical ability, positive attitude, ambition and flexibility. Give examples for each point.

What are your weaknesses? A difficult question that many people have problems in answering. Do not be negative, describe a personal / professional weakness, but state you have taken steps to resolve it. Make your weakness a potential strength.

How would your boss / colleague / friends describe you?

Where do you see yourself in five years?

Describe the biggest problem that you have faced in the present role, and how did you handle it?

How can you contribute to this organisation?

What interests do you have outside work?

There will also be a number of technical questions about your skills and experiences.

Asking Questions

This is your chance to impress. Remember the interviewer is looking for someone who genuinely wants the job.

Questions need to be reasonably general but relevant to the role, company or industry. Prior research will bring to mind the right questions.

Treat this as an opportunity to clear up any area of doubt you may have.

At the End of the Interview

Last impressions are as important as the first as the way you leave will be remembered. Thank the interviewer for their time, give a firm handshake. If asked about your interest in the opportunity always answer in the affirmative even if you are unsure.

Second Interview

If a second interview takes place do not assume you have got the job or change your interview style. This interview may re-cover areas from the first meeting, but be patient and make sure you give the same answers. Plan for the second interview by following up points raised at the first and do not be afraid to go into details on areas not adequately covered.

SUGGESTED ANSWERS

Tell me about yourself.

This is a golden opportunity to sell your main matching points, and may encourage them to progress the interview from one of the points you make. You may also choose to use this opportunity to get your redundancy out of the way on your terms if it seems appropriate. "The organisation was restructured and this has given me the opportunity to..."

Why did you leave/are you leaving your job?

Regardless of how angry and bitter you feel and whether or not your feelings are justified, answer the question and move on. Do not dwell on what happened.

Demonstrate that you have left the past behind and are looking forward positively to the future – preferably within the interviewer's organisation. You are encouraged to rehearse your response to this question with your consultant.

Why were you made redundant? What do you feel about your employer/boss now?

Remember, it was the job that was made redundant, not you. Sometimes jobs disappear in an overall restructure, but it may be that yours was the only one to go. Avoid mentioning a personality clash or politics and look for a rational answer. Regardless of how you feel, prepare a statement that is factual and pleasant if not full of praise for your previous organisation. If possible, mention something positive you learnt, experienced, etc. while working together.

Why have you been on the job market so long?

You may feel vulnerable and defensive because of the length of time you have been job hunting. You should feel more at ease with the question as you explain that you have made a deliberate choice to take the time to identify the job/career move/change of direction, that is right for you, rather than be panicked into the first available job.

How long have you been with your previous employer?

If it has been a long time, this is not the time for a straightforward statement of fact. You must add that you were so long with one employer, or stayed with your job, because the opportunities for promotion/to be in the forefront of technological change/to extend your management experience were comparable, if not better internally, than externally. You can also reassure them that by moving around inside the organisation you were experienced in coping with change. This is important because recruiters are often concerned when someone has a long period of employment with one organisation as they fear that the individual will find it difficult to adjust to a new environment.

I notice that you have changed job fairly often – why is this?

The opposite of the previous answer. If your reasons for moving were good ones – tell the interviewer so.

You are a little older than we had in mind for this position – how do you feel about this?

Age cannot be a deciding factor or you would not have been invited to interview. Present your maturity to the interviewer as a benefit. The concerns in the interviewer’s mind may relate to stereotypes, such as lack of flexibility, poor health, or the inability to be innovative, to work for a younger boss, etc. Interviewers may not always be aware of why they (or their boss) have a reservation about age. They may use this question to find out information that is hard to uncover directly, for example, it is pointless asking you directly if you are flexible.

What is your greatest achievement?

No problem here – choose the most relevant.

What are your strengths?

These you will know well and can choose the two or three which are relevant to the job, and show an appropriate balance of technical, managerial and personal strengths.

What are your weaknesses?

One approach is to treat the question light-heartedly and tell the interviewer something peripheral to the job **and** how you have dealt with that weakness, for example:-

“I used to dread speaking at meetings but I find now, that with adequate preparation, I quite enjoy it”!

“I get very involved in my work and was reluctant to delegate, however, I find it an excellent way of developing my staff/team”.