

Job Seeking Strategies

Career Planning Workbook



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1. Introduction

Preparing for your Job Search

It may be difficult, but before you start your job search, it's a good idea to identify what kind of job you would really like. It may seem easier to approach the job search with the attitude that you will take anything that seems 'good' or fits your master. But this approach can be inefficient and may lead to unsatisfying career decisions. Knowing what kind of position you are targeting will help you form the most productive job search strategy, and even basic information can help you focus your search on positions that are good for you.

This workbook provides tools and resources to help you embark on a successful job search.

Making a good choice about careers to pursue depends on four things:

1. Improving your awareness and understanding of your personal traits, interests, skills and motivations (self assessment – reader 1)
2. Learning what kinds of jobs, employers, and career fields exist that fit your interests and abilities. Making a decision that combines what you want with available opportunities (job market orientation – and decision making reader 2)
3. Learning how to create a CV and covering letter that sells, and how to prepare for interviews (job seeking strategies – reader 3)

2. Job seeking strategies

2.1 Resume and cover letter

The aim of your resume and cover letter is to get invited for an interview. Also, an employer should be able to quickly see what you are capable of and what your motivation is to work within their company. An employer finds it interesting to see what your added value is for the company. Cover letter and resume are your front piece towards the company. The letter needs to stimulate the reader.

It's important that your letter stands out compared to the other letters that the company receives. In advertisements not always attention is paid to full details of what the job contains. It's useful to seek contact with the company to get more information and details. By mentioning this information in your letter you can distinguish yourself from the other candidates. Fine tune the content of your letter with the company that you're applying at. A good way to check if your letter is personal enough is to replace the company's name with another name. If you can still send of the letter it's not personal enough. Every application asks for a different letter.

The cover letter contains 3 major parts:

Attention phase (the opening)

- What job is it you're responding to?
- What source did you use?
- Which date is mentioned in the advertisement?

Interest phase (the core)

- What have you got to offer / what makes you suitable for the job?
- What knowledge, experience and qualities / skills have you got?
- What's your motivation for the job?
- What's your motivation for the company?

Complementation phase (closing off)

- try to close off actively
- try to avoid sentences that contain 'I hope' and 'I await'.

Important rules of thumb

- A standard rule is that the letter of application should be no longer than one typed letter-size page and the CV a maximum of two typed pages. Try to stick to this rule.
- Be sure to leave plenty of margin room on your letter of application. The recruiter uses this space to make notes for the job interview.
- If you are applying in response to a job advertisement, make sure to fully and correctly address your letter. Many people make the mistake of sending their letter to the wrong addressee.
- Make sure that there are no grammatical or spelling errors in your letter; these are signs of carelessness.

- Be brief and to the point; use short, unambiguous sentences.
- Avoid jargon and clichés.
- Write active sentences.
- Maintain a business-like tone in the letter; avoid casual language.
- Provide as much information as possible and do not be too modest; you have to sell yourself.
- Leave the recruiter wanting to know more.
- Write positively about yourself.
- Be realistic about your potential; do not make claims that you cannot keep.

The letter of application and accompanying CV form a whole. This means that the letter must not repeat things in the CV but provide extra information! Do not just write about what you have done, explain how you did it. The CV is a personal profile: 'What have you accomplished up until now?'

Make sure your activities/accomplishments are well arranged and listed chronologically; it is best to start with the most recent activity. And it is important not to have any 'holes' in your CV. So if, for instance, you were travelling for a year or followed another line of study at some point, you should mention this. Otherwise, the recruiter will wonder about what you were doing in that 'missing' time period. It is also important to list any sideline activities in your CV since this can set you apart from other applicants competing for the same job.

Content of the curriculum vitae

personal information, education, work experience, managerial activities or sideline activities, knowledge of languages (only if relevant), knowledge of software (only if relevant), courses taken, hobbies/interests

A final note: never send the originals of official documents!

Example of Resume / CV

Curriculum Vitae

Personal

Name:
Address:
Postal code:
City:
Country:
Telephone number:
E-mail address:
Date of birth:
Place of birth:
Nationality:
Driving License:

Availability (open application):

Education

- 2000-present **PhD at**Leiden University, The Netherlands
Thesis title:
Short description of situation, task / role, actions and result (STAR)
- 1997-2000.1 **Master of Science in**Name of the school, place, country
Thesis title:
Short description of situation, task / role, actions and result (STAR)
- 1993-1997 **Bachelor of Science in**Name of the school, place, country
Thesis title:
Short description of situation, task / role, actions and result (STAR)
- 1986-1993 **University Preparatory Education.** Name of the school, place, country

Work Experience

Date **Function Company,** place
Tasks (STAR)

Date **Function Company,** place
Tasks (STAR)

Extra Curricular Activities

Date	Function, Company, place
	Tasks (STAR)

Skills

Computer/Software

-
-

Languages

- XXX native language
- English fluent in speaking and writing

Leisure Activities

References

Available upon request

Example of cover letter lay out

Your name
Your address

Company name
For the attention of...
Company address

Place, date

Subject: (open) application / vacancy

Dear ...,

1st paragraph: opening, reason why you are applying, source and date

2nd paragraph: suitability for the job, your match with the job requirements (experience, characteristics, qualities and skills)

3rd paragraph: motivation for the position and motivation for the company

4th paragraph: ending, try to do this actively and with an open letter try to leave the initiative for further contact on your side

'Sincerely yours,'

(Signature)

Your name

Enclosure: CV / resume

2.2 The job interview

The job interview consists of three parts:

a) Initial phase

The main objective as the interview starts is to make contact. The recruiter will often try to make you feel at ease, perhaps by asking if you were able to find the place easily. At this stage, he/she will also usually provide more details about the position that is open and the organisation itself. Listen actively; this might entail nodding with understanding, looking the recruiter in the eyes and/or asking questions. This is also the point at which the application procedure will be explained.

b) Central phase = the actual interview

This is the part of the meeting that most applicants consider as the actual interview. At this stage, the recruiter will ask you questions to determine whether you would fit in the organisation and be able to carry out the job function properly. But this is also the time for you to decide whether you would really like this job and working for this organisation. You can expect, at this point, to be asked a lot of questions about your capabilities and talents/qualities, your work experience and what you have accomplished through your efforts. It is all about what you can do, what you can achieve and what you would like to do. This requires self-knowledge. You have to know what you want to accomplish in the future. Try to apply the STAR method. Your CV will be frequently referred to during this period.

c) Concluding phase of the interview

By the end of the interview, you should have some idea about the atmosphere within the organisation and what the position entails. And the recruiter should have an idea of whether or not he/she wants to select you as a candidate for the position. Now is the time to ask questions – such as when you might expect to hear from them – and this is when any follow-up appointments are made.

The most difficult thing about a job interview is determining whether you would fit in with the organisation and like working there. It is practically impossible for either you or the recruiter to decide such things in one or two interviews. ‘Can you adapt to the company culture? Do you want to?’ One thing you can do is research the company to learn about its business culture. You can do this by visiting Web sites, talking to intermediaries, reading magazine articles and, if possible, talking to people who already work for the company.

Nonverbal communication

This is important during a job interview. When you are excited or enthusiastic about something, you should smile. Look your interviewer(s) in the eye. Watch your posture and clothes. Dress in a manner that fits the company culture but also leaves you feeling comfortable.

Assignment: job interview

Job interviews will be practised in sub-groups of 3 people. Each interview round will consist of 5 minutes preparation time, an 8-minute interview and 7 minutes for feedback. You will take turns acting as the applicant, the recruiter and the observer.

After the interview, the applicant will comment on how he/she thinks the interview went, then the recruiter will give some feedback and, finally, the observer will comment. The feedback must refer to definite behavioural traits. These are things that the applicant can change. It is important for the recruiter and observer to comment on positive points as well as on the points that need work. The observer should try to point out to the applicant two strengths and two weaknesses.

If your letter of application and CV work like they should, then the recruiter will invite you for an interview (= second stage in presenting yourself). Many recruiters base their questions on the STAR method. So you can prepare for the interview by using that same method to test your qualities yourself.

STAR stands for:

S = Situation

T = Task

A = Action

R = Result

Take an example of a time when you encountered some kind of problem. What was your task in this situation? What did you do to solve the problem? What was the outcome of your efforts? If you go through your entire CV using this method, you will be very well prepared for the job interview.

Questions you can expect to be asked in a job interview

Capabilities/work experience

What kind of work experience do you have?

We are looking for applicants with several years of experience. How do you plan to compensate for your lack of experience?

What do you think you would find most difficult about performing this job?

What are you good at?

What functions did you perform when you were a student assistant or during your internship or while you were on the student council?

Do you work well under deadlines?

Can you give me an example?

What kind of responsibility have you been given in the course of your work activities?

Can you describe how you work under pressure?

What has been your greatest success up until now? Why?

Motivation/ambition

Why do you want to work for our company?

Have you applied elsewhere?

Where do you see yourself, in terms of your career, in 5 years?

What do you think you would dislike about this job?
Can you explain to me exactly how you became interested in our company?
What appeals to you about this job?
What kinds of values are important to you when it comes to work?
(for open applications) What kind of position are you looking for?
Are you prepared to travel?
Are you prepared to move?

Personality/self-image

Tell me something about yourself.
What are your strengths?
Can you give me an example?
What are your weaknesses?
How do you deal with them?
What kind of role do you assume when working in a team?
Do you work well in a team?

Questions that you can ask during a job interview

Why and when did this vacancy become available?
Can you tell me something about the organization?
What are the career prospects?
What developments do you foresee for the market, the company itself and this position?
How would you qualify the company culture and management style?
What are the job functions and responsibilities?
What kind of authority does this position bring with it?
What aspects of this job are most important in your opinion?
What is the application procedure?

Good luck with your job search!

3. Student Career Service Humanities



Faculty of Humanities Careers Service

The Faculty of Humanities Careers Service provides Humanities students and alumni with professional advice and guidance in finding (international) work placements and jobs, courses in career planning and job applications, and booklets on job-hunting, job applications and cv's.

Looking for a work placement or a permanent job?

Work placement providers and employers contact the Faculty of Humanities Careers Service on a regular basis to offer their jobs and work placements. If you would like to be kept informed of all current job advertisements, you are invited to subscribe to the LinkedIn group of the Careers Service: "vacatures ontvangen via Loopbaan Service Geesteswetenschappen"

Individual advice

For individual advice, you can make an appointment with the Careers Service work placement coordinator or the career advisor. They will assist you in exploring your individual interests and abilities, and guide you towards the most appropriate work placement or job. You will receive advice on how to get on the job application and job interview track, and they can help you get in touch with alumni who are experienced in the relevant job market.

You are also encouraged to visit the information meetings on work placements and jobs, organized by the several Faculty of Humanities departments. These meetings are free of charge. For information: www.hum.leiden.edu/careerservice

Email-service

Need a professional check on your cv or covering letter? Please send your document(s) and / or questions to loopbaanservice@hum.leidenuniv.nl (subject: 'cv letter check').
Notice: please do not use email for making appointments!

Website

Please visit our website for tips and information on work placements, personal development, job market research, vacancies, a job-search toolkit (how to write a cv, covering letter etc.) and job hunting www.hum.leiden.edu/careerservice

Job application readers

On our website you can download 3 readers in the student computer rooms. Outside these rooms you can ask our secretariat loopbaanservice@hum.leidenuniv.nl for the passwords

Self assessment
Job Market Orientation & Decision Making
Job Seeking strategies

Faculty of Humanities network

The Careers Service can also help you to get in touch with Faculty of Humanities alumni and students. The Careers Service has extensive databases containing contact addresses of alumni and students from your department. After consulting the work placement coordinator or the career advisor, you may be connected with professionals or trainees, who can share valuable information about their occupations and offer practical advice on the jobs or sectors you are interested in.

During terms Mr. Tony Foster MA, a native speaker of English, offers a resume revision service. Location: PN van Eyckhof 4, room 105 b. Make an appointment by e-mail: a.a.foster@hum.leidenuniv.nl

Faculty of Humanities Careers Service (contact)

Address: P.N. van Eyckhof 4
Telephone: 071-527 2235
Web: www.hum.leiden.edu/careerservice
E-mail: loopbaanservice@hum.leidenuniv.nl
Opening hours: Monday-Thursday 9 am to 4.30 pm.

Career Adviser Mrs L. Nordlohne, MSc
Work placement Advisor Mrs B. Sumer, MA

4. Sources

- Career Development Manuel, Career Services, University of Waterloo, Canada, 2006
- Career and Personal Development Workbook, The Careers Centre, University of Birmingham, 2005
- Career Planning Workbook, Career Services, Columbia State Community College, 2006