

7 ESSENTIAL CAREER & JOB SEARCH STEPPING STONES



MASSIE & BUTLER
CAREER MANAGEMENT

First things first...

Relax! Yes, we know that's not easy and relaxing is probably the furthest thing away from your mind right now.

You're not working, you're a bit scared if you are honest and you need to know what to do. You've actually never been here before. We get it. We understand! Stress and tension seem to be the overriding feelings just now. Calm down, we are here to help you....

When you've relaxed a little (we know the feelings won't completely go away, that's normal!) you'll be aware yourself that you need a plan.

You need to have structure to your job search to maximise your chances.

We know from experience those jobseekers who create a plan of action are not only more likely to succeed, but taking the time to create a plan will help to reduce stress and anxiety. Resist the urge to fire off your details in a scattergun approach.

Most recruiters, at one point or another, have tried this for their candidates and it really doesn't work.

Follow our step by step plan to create the action plan that will help you focus your job search and keep you on track to re-employment.

The Plan – get started

So, what to do first? We suggest that jobseekers appreciate that this is a process. It is largely a process that recruiters go through with their candidates, apart from recommending that their candidates register with other agencies.

Our recommendation is that the first port of call is to make a list of the processes that you are going to go through to make sure you are tackling the jobs market in the most efficient way you can.

So do this right now.

Create a word document or open an A4 notebook and write down headings (2-7) as follows. In doing this you will have completed step 1:

1. Creating a Plan of Action.
2. Your CV
3. Social Media
4. Company list and Analysis of Job specifications
5. Exposure
6. Interview Preparation
7. Repeat and stay positive

The above headings including Step 1, which is actually to get to the point where you understand the process you will be embarking on, are essential in navigation of today's job market.

You need a plan and you need to follow it.

The CV creation and Social Media self presentation are inextricably linked to interview preparation and job specifications. The way in which we recommend undertaking your job search will give you a voyage of discovery of how these interrelate with each other to ensure you are delivering to potential employers, the evidence and achievement base that they are seeking, which makes you a great candidate for their role.

2. Your CV

This is the singularly most important document that follows you through your career.

Yes, you now have the ability to advertise yourself on social media and it is imperative that you undertake this well too. However, everything begins with your CV.

Your CV simply must have impact. It must convey very quickly to the reader that you possess the necessary skills set to solve the 'problems' of the potential employer who is reading it, or the recruiter who will be searching for that person to engage their client on the same basis.

Headlines are crucial together with a presentation of achievements and evidence. You need to succinctly demonstrate the 'actions' that you personally undertook to achieve the 'results' that you did and this all needs to be presented in a way to capture the attention of the audience, whoever that may be.

We suggest a deep self analysis and using the 'PAR' (Problem Action Result) technique to really draw out the evidence of what you have achieved. We have designed the PAR process following years of experience in coaching candidates to identify their skills and achievements and how to present these to maximum effect. The results are often eye opening!

Writing a CV can be a daunting task, and whilst it is achievable on a DIY basis, it would make sense to get a career management professional to help you with this important step. There are plenty of options on the market, but of course we'd recommend giving Massie & Butler a call to find out exactly what we can do and explain how much you will need to invest.... Probably a lot less than you imagine! (info@massiebutler.co.uk or 01244 917 000)

When you have your CV drafted and you are happy it is important to ensure your LinkedIn depicts the same information.

3. Social Media

Social Media is so much a part of modern life that it would be remarkably remiss not to ensure that it is being utilised to sell yourself during your job search or career transition process.

When we worked on the DWP's Professional and Executive programme over a decade ago, we were advising all to create a profile on the LinkedIn platform.

Not all had even heard of LinkedIn in 2009 and it was still a bit of a novelty. Fast forward to 2020 and it is simply the major platform for advertising one's career background, competencies and achievements.

Some people use it much better than others and we urge anyone seeking a new career opportunity to engage with the platform, which is essentially your 'digital' CV.

There is a huge amount you can do with your LinkedIn profile, including connecting with peers, friends, previous and prospective employers.

You can give and receive recommendations, join industry groups and create your own pages. You have to start somewhere though and getting your profile matching your CV is the number one objective here.

Beyond LinkedIn you can utilise Facebook, Instagram and Twitter to further accelerate your search. There will be plenty of free tutorials on YouTube if you do a few searches of your own. If you would like more dedicated support or ideas then just give us a call.

4. Company List and Analysis of Job Specifications

Many employees will be aware of who the competition is in their sector. It seems obvious and it is obvious but unless you do it you are unlikely to follow through with it, so sit down and make a list of all the employers that you think you might be able to work for, given your skills and experience.

Search through some jobs boards like Monster, Indeed, TotalJobs and CV Library and also some of the industry specific ones and see if any of them are recruiting.

You'll also find many of them advertising their jobs on LinkedIn.

Any recruiter worth their salt will tell you that they have often tailored your CV themselves in some way when they are attempting to gain an interview for you with their client.

They will also have questioned you regarding your achievement and evidence base. They usually get straight to the point and are seeking to discover whether you possess the PARs (Problem Action Result) which would make you an attractive proposition for their client.

Many CV's simply do not convey enough of this information and so the recruiter will try to delve into this evidence with you.

I'm sure many people who have dealt with a recruiter might sometimes feel they are being given the 3rd degree. Trust us, it's the really good recruiters who do this. They know they can sell you better to their clients when they have this information.

Similarly, recruiters will spend time crafting job specifications in order to attract candidates for their roles. They don't just write anything. The more detailed job specification offers you the opportunity to tailor your CV and will contain 'questions' that you must answer. You may imagine that a job specification is a little like an exam question and your CV is the answer.

Study as many job specifications as you can in the sector to which you are applying.

When we work 121 with clients we show them how the PAR exercise can provide you with a body of evidence which can be used to tailor your CV to specific job specifications.

Many employers will also advertise their jobs and so it is imperative to tailor your CV for each and every application accordingly.

Our methods will allow you to do this efficiently and increase your chances of landing an interview. Spend an hour a day analysing job specs and ensuring you are confident in the tailoring process. This work will pay dividends in your job search success.

5. Exposure

There's little point having invested in a great evidence and achievement based CV and then not gaining exposure of it.

Your CV is your marketing document, along with, of course, your LinkedIn profile. There are ways to maximise exposure of your availability and your capabilities and even to tap into the 'hidden' job market.

Jobs boards and CV databases are utilised by employers and agencies and you need to be in the know on how to use these efficiently to maximise your chances.

It is the same story with undertaking direct and speculative approaches to potential employers. You should include in your action plan to approach at least 5-10 companies per week with a direct approach.

Many jobs are never advertised and so it's a way of ensuring you are covering this hidden part of the market.

You will also need to ensure you are managing recruitment agencies efficiently and it is advisable that you develop good relationships with a select bunch specific to your sector, but not too many.

There really is a goldilocks number here and too many can sometimes be as counterproductive as too few.

Again, this needs to be incorporated into your action plan and monitored.

We know the best ways to ensure that agencies and individual recruiters are working in your best interests and how to manage them to stay in their thoughts, which could be crucial to your chances.

6. Interview Preparation

Interviews in 2020 and going into 2021 are perhaps a very different experience from how they have been with the necessary increased use of video technology.

Who hasn't become familiar with Zoom calls over the last few months?

At time of writing the vaccine is offering the hope that we can return to a kind of normal in the not too distant future, but for now, it is likely that, at some point you may well face the prospect of an interview through your pc or laptop.

What never changes is the need to impress upon your interviewer your ability to solve their 'problems' and demonstrate that you are a candidate who can deliver in the role to which you are being interviewed for.

At Massie & Butler we are acutely aware of how interview preparation begins with the CV writing process which in turn begins with undertaking self analysis through the PAR process.

Obtaining the very best achievements and being able to present these both on the CV and at interview, is key to demonstrating your relevance for the role and ensuring that when the time comes, in the heat of the interview situation, whether that be face to face or on a zoom call, you have prepared fully to be able to deliver the information with serene confidence.

Interview preparation is inextricably linked to your CV creation and it is vital that you understand how these work together to give you the very best chances of success in competition with other candidates.

Of course, half the battle is gaining the interviews, the other half is delivering in the interview, but we are confident that with thorough preparation and following the process, you will be able to deliver with confidence.

Someone once said (we can't remember who right now!) that when you commence the interview you already have the job, you now have an hour to talk yourself out of it!

In other words, to be sitting there being interviewed, you have already ticked many boxes, you have already climbed past lots of competition, you now have it in your power to be that candidate that the employer has identified within your CV or from the recommendation from their recruiter, or from a LinkedIn referral, to land the role.

Thorough preparation, which starts with the CV creation and process of self analysis, combined with the job specification analysis (PAR) and tailoring towards this role, means you'll give yourself the best shot at success.

Make sure you ***Nail it!***

7 Repeat and Stay Positive

You have been interviewed and unfortunately you didn't land the job, but it was close.

You've applied for many roles, you've tailored your CV but still no interviews.

Both scenarios can get you down.

To gain the interview in the first place is a success. You were nearly there and made it to the last three. Stay positive.

So, you haven't had an interview yet? Well, it is a difficult jobs market currently but keep going.

Recruiters can tell you time and again of candidates who keep plugging away, keep in their thoughts. They are the ones who succeed and there is always an element of playing the numbers game.

Go through your PARs again, search again on job specifications. New ones may be there now and every lead is another chance.

Drop an email to your agents – let them know you are still here.

You **MUST** play the numbers game. Refresh your CV on the CV databases as this brings it back to the top of the list.

Perhaps start looking at job specifications outside your field and try to identify some skills sets that you have which may be transferable.

Take a break! Don't beat yourself up.

Go for a long walk and breathe in the fresh air and refocus.

So there you have it.

7 Essential Stepping Stones that can get you from where you are to where you want to be.

It has worked for countless people and it will work for you.

If you would like to find out about how any of our career management services can accelerate your search even faster then give Neil or Adam a call or drop them a line.

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Good Luck!

Neil & Adam

