

# DDH RECRUITMENT

## CV WRITING HINTS & TIPS

Before you sit down to write your CV it is important to remember that it is an advertisement for future employers. Whilst it will not necessarily guarantee you a role it will certainly help to secure an interview.

### Content

Include your personal details, work experience, skills and achievements and education details. List your employment history in reverse date order, ensuring your most recent is first. List your education in reverse order putting your university results before your school results. Don't waste space with school addresses and unnecessary information. Keep hobbies and interests to a minimum. If you can include references do – however if you don't wish to put them on your CV it is possible to say references available on request.

### Avoid Lengthy Paragraphs

Most recruitment agencies will make a decision about a CV within 30 seconds so it is important to avoid a wordy CV – you should ensure that you communicate clearly and concisely the information you wish to convey. Bullet points can be used to minimise word usage. Ideally it should be no more than two pages long and should consist of black writing on white paper. Try to avoid using unusual fonts and borders, stick to simple professional styles. The use of bold and italics can also make important information stand out on the page.

The most important elements of a CV are:

- Appearance
- Document length
- Accuracy of information
- Spelling
- Grammar
- Detailed work history
- *And don't forget your contact details!*

### Achievements

Instead of just listing your responsibilities and re-writing your job description try to include things you have achieved for the company since you have been there – make sure you can back these up with facts and figures. Put down any skills you may have for example driving licence/languages/computer skills. Also any recent training that may be relevant to the role.

### Work History

Don't leave gaps in your work history; ensure that all of your dates are accurate. It is important not to lie on your CV as many employers will find out via references or contacts within the industry. If it doesn't hinder you getting the job in the first place it will certainly not help you in the future if your employer finds out that you lied.

### Language

Be positive in your CV. Don't say anything negative about any of your previous employers. Use action verbs such as 'developed', 'managed' and 'achieved'. Show evidence of your leadership skills by portraying your actions and decisiveness. Finally ensure that you read through your CV thoroughly. Check for any spelling or grammatical errors. All of the details you provide will be a basis for the interview so it is vital that it is accurate – be prepared to answer questions such as reasons for leaving your previous positions. Remember your CV alone won't get you the job; it is only the first step. The rest is up to you.

## **Sending your CV**

Sending your CV by email is by far the best method as it allows recruiters to “import” your details into their database. Do not post your CV unless specifically asked to do so.

## **Cover Letter Hints & Tips**

Now you have spent all that time creating the perfect CV it is important that you create a strong covering letter to go with it. A good covering letter can differentiate your CV from many others. A cover letter introduces you and your CV and is your first chance to make a good impression on your potential future employer.

### **Layout**

Your letter should be neatly and clearly presented with no grammatical or spelling errors. Again avoid unusual fonts, stick to simple professional types.

### **Structure**

Your letter should be brief and to the point. Avoid repetition of what has been covered within your CV. With a covering letter it is acceptable to write in the first person.

### **Personalise**

Your letter should be addressed to the relevant contact, often you will be given the name of the contact within the job advert, however if you are not sure who to address it to try to find out. Avoid addressing your letter to Sir or Madam wherever possible.

### **Detail**

If you are replying to an advert, make sure you include the job title, reference number and where and when you saw it. Briefly outline your current circumstances and why you are looking to move. Include details of your recent role, including any qualifications and professional or academic training that is relevant. Do some Research on the company and ensure that you highlight in your letter why you would be interested in them as a potential employer. Emphasize any transferable skills that you believe would be beneficial to the employer and how you could contribute to the organisation.

### **Close**

Express your interest in meeting with the recruiter. Make it clear that you would like the opportunity to discuss your suitability further at interview stage and that you look forward to their response.

Things to remember:

- Do not hand-write a covering letter
- Do not photocopy or mass produce the same letter
- Include the specific information the job advert asked for

## **Preparing For Interview - Research & Preparation**

The number one reason for an unsuccessful job interview is lack of preparation. Success comes from preparing thoroughly, researching the company and knowing what to expect in the interview process. The interview is a prime opportunity for you to sell yourself to the interviewer, focusing on your strengths and the skills you can bring to a position. The more you prepare the more confident you will feel. You only have one chance to make a good impression. There are many sources of company and industry information. You can gather information from the company website, press articles and trade journals. The larger the company, the more likely you will be able to get a sense of their financial position. If they are publicly traded, look up their stock information and check out a few charts. Most financial sites will also offer easy summaries and a general financial analysis. Is the company booming or do they need new blood and an innovative boost? Speak to your consultant – they will know some of the best places to look and may even have some of the information themselves.

## **Key Preparation Points:**

### **Company History**

Try to find how long the company has been established and who owns the company. Are they part of a group or independent? How did the company evolve and how has it developed its market? Look up the company mission statement.

### **Familiarise yourself with the company's organisational structure and size**

If the company has multiple sites and additional products/services research them, where they are located, divisions, subsidiaries and brand names. Developing a deeper understanding of the environment will prepare you for a more thorough interview.

### **Investigate the market**

Find out about the company's stance in the market, who do they come up against on a regular basis? What are their strengths in comparison to their competitors? Who is their client base?

### **Research the role**

Knowing as much as you can about the role is just as important as researching the company. Why the role is available, what it will entail, who you will be reporting to? Speak to your consultant it is possible they may be able to provide you with an in-depth job specification.

### **Ensure that you have read your CV prior to the interview**

Most of the questions asked will be based on the information you have provided them with. Make sure everything on there is correct and up to date. If there are gaps in your CV or you have had a number of roles make sure you can overcome this. Be prepared to answer questions on all of your previous positions and your reasons for leaving.

## **Key Questions – What To Expect?**

No interview follows the same format; it usually depends on the position and the organisation. However there are a number of key questions that are commonly asked in an interview, particularly at first interview stage;

### **Tell Me about Yourself**

**Why are you looking for a new position?**

**What are your strengths and weaknesses?**

**What motivates you?**

**What have been your greatest achievements?** These do not always have to be work related think about your personal achievements as well

**What has been your biggest disappointment?**

**How well do you work under pressure?**

**Why do you want this job?**

**Why should I employ you?**

**What do you know about our company?**

In order to answer these questions calmly and professionally you need to prepare by:

**Thoroughly researching the employer, the market and the role**

**Understanding what skills you possess and how they can benefit the company -**

**Be prepared to give examples**

**Know what your strengths and weaknesses are and how you can overcome your weaknesses.** When identifying your weaknesses try to turn a negative into a positive and explain what measures you have taken to overcome them

## **Identify your achievements and how you achieved them**

**Look at decisions you have had to make, the thought process and the outcome from that decision**

**Consider what motivates you and why**

Whilst it is important to let the interviewer dominate the interview it is important to ask relevant questions, it should be a two-way communication. However, be careful not to ask questions on topics already covered by the interviewer

**Why is the position available?**

**Who would I be reporting to?**

**What type of training opportunities would be on offer?**

**Is there opportunity for progression within the organisation?**

**How do I compare to other candidates you have interviewed?**

**How do you see my skills and achievements fitting into your organisation?**

**Do you have any reservations – this is better to ask at the end of the first interview so if there are any reservations you have the opportunity to use your skills to overcome them there and then.**

The first interview is not a good time to ask about salary and benefits. This should be left until the second interview or until the client raises the question. If the client asks what salary you are on never answer them directly, suggest instead what you would ideally be looking for. At the end of the interview thank the interviewer for their time. If you are interested in the position tell them. Ask what the next steps are and what timescales they are working to. You should leave the interview knowing;

**Am I interested in the job?**

**Is the company interested in me?**

**What is the next stage?**

Remember to call your consultant straight after the interview. This is important as it gives us the opportunity to go back to the company to confirm your interest whilst you are still fresh in the interviewers mind. If we have your feedback when we speak to the company it demonstrates your interest and enthusiasm. The same day send a personalised letter/e-mail to the interviewer reinforcing your interest in the position and once again thanking them for their time.

## **Improve Your Interview Techniques**

### **On The Day:**

Before you leave for the interview make sure you have with you the address of where you are meeting the interviewer, a location map, the name of the person you will be meeting, their job title and a contact number in case you need to reach them. Your consultant will provide you with all of this information.

Plan your journey in advance and give yourself plenty of time to get there. If you are going to be late then make sure you contact the interviewer or speak to your consultant who will get hold of them for you.

### **Presentation:**

Presentation is a key part of any interview. You need to present yourself in the best light possible. Make sure you are dressed for the vacancy you are being interviewed for. Always wear your smartest suit and make sure your shoes are well polished. Dependent upon the company policy on dress code the consultant may advise you differently.

**Choose a conservative colour**

**Dress professionally without overdressing**

**Avoid wearing inappropriate jewellery or body piercings**

**Always feel smart and comfortable**

## **Body Language:**

Body language is defined as 'what we say without actually saying anything' – the first 30 seconds of an interview are the most important, based on how you look, eye contact and a relaxed posture.

**Practice a firm, confident handshake and look the interviewer directly in the eye, maintain this eye contact throughout the interview.**

**How you sit is also important, avoid defensive body positions such as crossing your arms or your legs they will convey to the interviewer that you are anxious.**

## **During the Interview:**

Employers are looking for enthusiasm, professionalism and confidence. Make sure you remain professional before, during and after the interview. Relax and be yourself, but don't forget that you are involved in the interview process from the moment you arrive until you leave.

**Stay focused – keep your answers short and to the point**

**Don't dominate the interviewer – never interrupt**

**Be assertive, not aggressive**

**Don't be afraid to ask for clarification**

**Don't rush your answers – take a moment to think**

**Be positive – don't say anything negative about your previous employers**

**Be honest**

## **Interview Styles**

**Please note not all of the following information will be applicable to you.**

Interviews follow many different structures and formats based on the nature of the position and the organisation. Your consultant will advise what format the interview will take and will help you to prepare accordingly.

### **Face to Face Interviews:**

The most common type of interview is a face to face interview usually consisting of a first interview, and if successful you will be required to attend a second interview. Second interviews tend to be more in-depth and you will often be interviewed by more than one person.

### **Telephone Interviews:**

Telephone Interviews can often be more difficult in terms of judging body language and facial expressions; however they are a useful tool for those who live abroad or find it difficult to co-ordinate diaries. They are a preliminary assessment for both the candidate and the company. Often a face to face interview will follow

### **Presentations:**

You may be required to give a presentation in order to demonstrate why you would be the best person for the job. They show your personal preparation skills, the ability to converse and more importantly, if you are applying for a sales vacancy, the ability to sell.

### **Competency Based Interview (Behavioural/Situational):**

Competency is a specific quality, knowledge, skill or behaviour in order to be successful in a position. Competency based interviewing is an increasingly popular tool mainly used within multi-national organisations, however is beginning to infiltrate into a number of industry sectors.

### **Verbal & Numerical Reasoning:**

Using objective assessments companies can ensure that they employ the right person to do the job. Aptitude tests measure intellectual capacity for logical thinking and can determine where a candidates skills lie as well as assessing whether their character suits the position. They can be particularly useful when used in

conjunction with another form of interviewing.

### **Assessment Centres:**

Some employers find that they can't always rely upon one method of testing to differentiate between applicants. Assessment centres are designed to test intellectual capabilities and leadership skills. They usually consist of role play, negotiation exercises, team challenges and group interviews.

### **In Tray Tests:**

In Tray tests are based on real work situations in order to demonstrate your ability to understand complex written material and how well you prioritise tasks. They indicate how well you would cope under pressure and highlight your analytical and prioritisation skills.

### **Competency Based:**

Competency is a specific quality, knowledge, skill or behaviour in order to be successful in a position. Competency based interviewing is an increasingly popular tool mainly used within multi-national organisations, however is beginning to infiltrate into a number of industry sectors.

Competency Based Interviewing can sometimes be referred to as Structured Interviewing or Evidence Based Interviewing and there are two common approaches; one is to ask a series of questions, targeted at each of the core competencies while the other involves in-depth probing questions with the interviewer actively listening for clues which provide evidence that the candidate possess the necessary skills.

The questions are behavioural based and used to assess how a candidate's past performances in work related situations can be used as a predictor of future performance in the role they are recruiting for.

Questions will take the format of open-ended questions such as 'Describe a situation which caused a problem and how you overcame this?'

You must choose answers based on real experiences and be ready to give relevant examples. Think about instances in which you feel you performed well and how you dealt with them. Once you have talked about your example, the interviewer will probably ask you further questions to get a deeper understanding of what you did so be ready to talk about your example in a lot of detail. Speak to your consultant about the competencies you are to be assessed on and they will help to prepare you accordingly for the interview.

### **Aptitude Tests (Verbal & Numerical Reasoning):**

Using objective assessments companies can ensure that they employ the right person to do the job. Aptitude tests measure intellectual capacity for logical thinking and reasoning and can determine where a candidates skills lie as well as objectively assessing whether their character suits the position. They can be particularly useful when used in conjunction with another form of interviewing. Verbal critical reasoning tests are used to find out how well you can assess verbal logic. They are usually in the form of a passage, followed by a number of statements. You have to decide if the statements are True, False or you cannot tell from the information provided.

Numerical reasoning is used to find out how well and how quickly you assess numbers and form.

The main thing to remember is to practice as much as possible, speak to your consultant who will provide you with practice papers or look on [www.shl.com](http://www.shl.com) for copies of assessment papers. These questions won't necessarily be the same as the test you take, however they are a very useful tool in getting you used to the format aptitude tests take and the types of questions they ask. When taking the tests don't rush, accuracy is more important than speed, pay attention to all instructions given and answer the questions as quickly and accurately as possible.

## **Interview Styles Hints & Tips**

### **Assessment centres:**

Some employers find that they can't always rely upon one method of testing to differentiate between applicants. Assessment centres are designed to test intellectual capabilities, decision making and leadership skills. They usually consist of role play, negotiation exercises, team challenges and group interviews. The assessment centres activities should bear some relation to the tasks required of you in the job.

This method of interview is particularly useful in enabling you to find out more about the company, how it motivates its staff and gives you the chance to meet potential colleagues.

Group exercises are set to test your teamwork ability and to assess who are leaders and who are the

followers. Groups will be provided with a brief, which they must complete within a defined time limit. In role playing exercises each candidate will be given an assigned role, to act out in a particular scenario. The scenario which will be played out will usually be related to a typical working day or a stressful, awkward situation which must be resolved.

For assessment based interviews you should dress as you would for any interview (unless told otherwise) and be positive and enthusiastic. Thorough research of the company should be done and speak to your consultant who may be able to provide you with examples of the tasks you will be expected to undertake.

### **In-Tray Tests:**

In Tray tests are based on real work situations in order to demonstrate your ability to understand complex written material and how well you prioritise tasks. They are a direct observation of individual behaviour within the context of a job relevant problem and indicate how you cope under pressure and highlight your analytical and prioritisation skills.

If you are asked to do an In Tray exercise, you may be asked to assume a particular role as an employee of a fictitious company and work through a pile of correspondence in your In Tray. These tests commonly measure Job Skills such as: ability to organise and prioritise work; analytical skills; communication with team members and customers; written communication skills; and delegation. This type of exercise can vary in terms of time limit. Try to imagine that you are at work doing the described duties, rather than completing a test.

A common example of an in tray exercise may involve placing you in a particular role within a work setting, where a crisis situation is developing. The situation requires you to take responsibility for the situation. The exercise will describe what resources are available to you and an in tray containing particular items. In tray items may range from requests to return calls to customers with specific complaints and queries, comments to be provided to your manager, reports to be completed, requests from your staff, and office social club notices. Make sure you indicate reasons for your decisions and remember employers are looking for organisational and planning skills.

### **Counter Offers**

Often when it comes to handing your notice in after you have been offered and accepted a position with another company you may be asked to stay by your current employer – this is also known as a counter offer. In this circumstance you will usually be offered –

#### **More Money**

#### **Sometimes Promotion**

#### **More Responsibility**

Whilst at the time this may seem like a good offer there are some things to think about. It can often be a daunting prospect moving to another company, however it doesn't necessarily mean that it isn't a positive thing

#### **Too Little Too Late –**

Think about why only now the company are willing to pay you more money or offer you a promotion. Surely if you are worth that much to the company they would have acknowledged that before now. Why do the company want you to stay – is it because of what they think you are worth or are there underlying reasons? Would you leaving the company jeopardise an important project, would it cost the company more to replace you than to offer you a slightly higher salary. Would it affect other members of your team causing low morale? Would workload suffer?

#### **Short-Term & Long-Term Benefits –**

Whilst in the short term a pay rise or promotion sounds good think about the long-term prospects. What would happen the next time you felt you deserved a pay rise - would you have to threaten to hand your notice in again? Also think about the reasons why you wanted to leave the company in the first place – are any of those reasons going to change long term or is it just a short term fix? Think about relations with your boss and your colleagues – would it be awkward in the office – if it came to redundancies would you be first out? 80% of candidates accepting counter offers will leave or are asked to leave within 6 – 12 months of initially handing in their notice.

Here are a few hints to keep in mind:

- Make the layout as simple as you can
- Keep it short, two pages or less is ideal
- Shout about your successes. If you've saved your company money or improved efficiency, then say so
- Use short sentences and bullet points; you can then bring the story to life at your interview
- If you use facts and figures make sure you can back them up
- Typing and spelling errors won't impress; ask someone reliable to help you read through it carefully
- List your most recent job at the top and work backwards
- Account for gaps in time. If you've been travelling or had a career break, that's fine. Just make sure you give details
- Include details of any worthwhile out of work activities like membership of a sports team or community work
- Never exaggerate the truth; claiming to be a top rower when you've only tried it once won't go down well if Steve Redgrave is on the interview panel
- Don't use humour. You may think you're the next Peter Kay but a potential employer might not agree!

There's nothing like the word 'interview' to send the calmest of us into a cold sweat or get the adrenalin pumping. Love them or loathe them, they're the primary method for employers and candidates to judge each other. You'll only get one chance to sell yourself so it's crucial you give it your best shot:

- Be prepared to talk about your skills, your experience and your achievements
- Do your research. A simple internet search will tell you about the organisation's products, services and culture
- Use us. We've got an extensive library of resources and we can give you some great last minute tips
- Think about your strengths and positive characteristics and try to get these across during the interview
- Practise makes perfect. Make sure you know your CV inside out and have researched some answers to questions you think you'll be asked
- Dress smartly and appropriately. If in doubt, ask your consultant
- Be positive about why you're leaving your current position and never speak badly of past colleagues or employers
- Turn negatives into positives. If you were sacked in the past then demonstrate that you've learned some lessons. If you were made redundant then show it has made you stronger and more flexible
- Be confident in your experience and qualifications. After all, that is what has got you into the interview room
- When it comes to talking money, express realistic expectations and remember we can negotiate on your behalf
- At the end of the interview find out what the next steps and time lines are