

The First 4 Minutes

Understanding the Selection
& Interview Process

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INTRODUCTION

Introduction:

“Love not what you are but what you may become.”

Miguel de Cervantes (1547 – 1616)

Spanish Author

How many times have you heard the phrase, first impressions count?

First impressions are important, and whilst they can sometimes be wrong, people do judge others by what they see and hear, and you and I are no different. Within the first couple of minutes of meeting someone for the first time, we will have made a judgement as to social status, where someone lives and how they were educated. We will have made up our minds as to whether or not we are going to “like” them, and whether or not we would want to spend any further time with them.

The interesting point is you do not consciously make those judgements, but you make them all the same. And just as we are judging others, so others are judging us. So if first impressions count, are you making the best impression that you can?

Whilst it may be easy to make a good impression in a face-to-face situation, there are some instances whereby the only chance that you have is by leveraging yourself through a third party, format or medium. That can include employment agencies, your personal network (a friend of a friend is looking for someone who can ...), electronic communications such as websites or words that you convey on paper. This first part of this book will primarily focus on written communication.

Every single piece of written correspondence that you send out, says something about you. Whilst you may expect people to not “judge a book by its cover” people do, and this is even more important to consider when you are applying for a new job or position. If your application contains spelling and grammatical errors and does not fit with the required “look” of what the organisation expects, then the words that you use are not important.

Did you know that it takes an average of 4 minutes to read an application in total? Therefore you have just 4 minutes to convince the person reading your application that you really are the best person for the job. If you cannot persuade the employer on paper that you are the best person for the job, then you will not be doing it in person.

We offer practical suggestions to make your application stand out (for all the right reasons). We give you advice on how to create a new CV and how to answer selection criteria. You will learn how to use the information given by the employer to your advantage.



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In the second part of this book we take you inside the interview process. How to prepare for an interview, and we give you examples of the types of interview that you may have to face, along with the types of questions that you may have to answer. Plus we offer you advice on how to answer those all-important questions.

The final section of the book takes a look at the selection and interview process from the employer's perspective. We give you inside knowledge that can really give you an advantage in today's job market.



Opportunities in disguise:

“Be not afraid of growing slowly. Be afraid of standing still.”

Chinese Proverb

Have you:

- Been out of the workforce for a while?
- Just been retrenched?
- Been told that your services are no longer required? Or
- Decided to look for new challenges because your current position lacks opportunities to move up the corporate ladder?

Whatever the reason you are looking for work, “job hunting” can be quite daunting. Especially if you haven’t had much experience in the process, or your experience is a little out of date. This can be a very important time as it gives you the opportunity to find out important elements about yourself and what you want to do.

- When was the last time you sat down and worked out what you were actually good at?
- When was the last time you had an in-depth look at your CV?
- When was the last time you searched the papers and the job boards and said to yourself “I can do that”

Chances are that if you have filled your days with work – paid or otherwise, looked after homes and children then you may not have had the time to sit down and work out what you really want to do with your life.

Do you need to work? Do you need additional money? How much? Do you need additional challenges? What sort? Who would you like to work for? Where would you like to work? What hours would you like to work? It is by answering these sorts of questions that will determine whether you just want a job that will pay the bills, or whether you will begin to manage your career.

You can achieve a higher level of satisfaction with yourself and your chosen career if you take the time to decide what it is you want to do. The time you spend “working” constitutes a large chunk of your life. So it is important to spend that time doing something you enjoy rather than something you feel you have to do.

You can also be **paid for your potential**. Research the current job market to see what sort of compensation is on offer for the position you want. Then you can determine if you need to undertake any additional form of professional development in order to reach that level. And if you decide to “go it alone” you can use this information as a way of working out what sort of hourly rate you should be charging your clients.



The emotional side of career transitions:

“Set your sights high, the higher the better. Expect the most wonderful things to happen, not in the future but right now. Realise that nothing is too good. Allow absolutely nothing to hamper you or hold you up in any way.”

Eileen Caddy

Co-founder of The Findhorn Foundation, Scotland

It's not easy being out of work.

You may think that people will judge you if you tell them that you have been retrenched or worse still “sacked”. There may be some people who will tell you that you are “stupid” to even think about giving up work because you want to look for something better. You may have doubts about your skills and abilities and take the first thing that is offered to you – just in case you don't get offered anything else.

First of all, it is important to remain positive about where you are and what you are doing (or not as the case may be). You may feel anger, sadness, and resentment or be joyously happy at the prospect of finding new opportunities. It depends whether you look at this period of time as an opportunity or not.

Do not take rejection letters personally. Whilst they may cause you to feel down and depressed, the reasons why you didn't receive an invitation to the interview may be nothing to do with you. It may have been a company re-shuffle, or an internal candidate was in line for the job all along. You need to accept that rejection is part of any job search and another letter for the pile is just another chance to work on your marketing strategy and application a bit more. Unemployed does not mean unemployable.

Do not keep your job status a secret. Let people know that you are on the look out for new job opportunities. The people you tell may not be able to offer you any form of work, but they might know of someone who can. These same people may also be able to offer you advice and guidance on what they did when they were faced with the same situation. Anyone who tells you that they have never been out of work is either extremely lucky, or they have been in the same job since they left school. Of course they could also be stretching the truth just a little. Everyone has strategies they used to find work. Make a note of what they did and didn't do, and then try and apply those strategies to your situation. Don't assume that because they work in a different discipline to you, that their strategies cannot work.

Try not to criticize your previous employer, and the people you worked with. Always write your application in a positive manner. This may be hard, especially if they “asked you to leave”. But remember that you may end up working with these same people at some point again the future. It may also raise important questions about how well you deal with difficult situations if you cannot find something positive to say about your time with a particular organisation.



INTRODUCTION

Be busy AND productive. It is easy to fill your day with things that do not get you anywhere. Remember looking for a job is your job when you are out of work.

