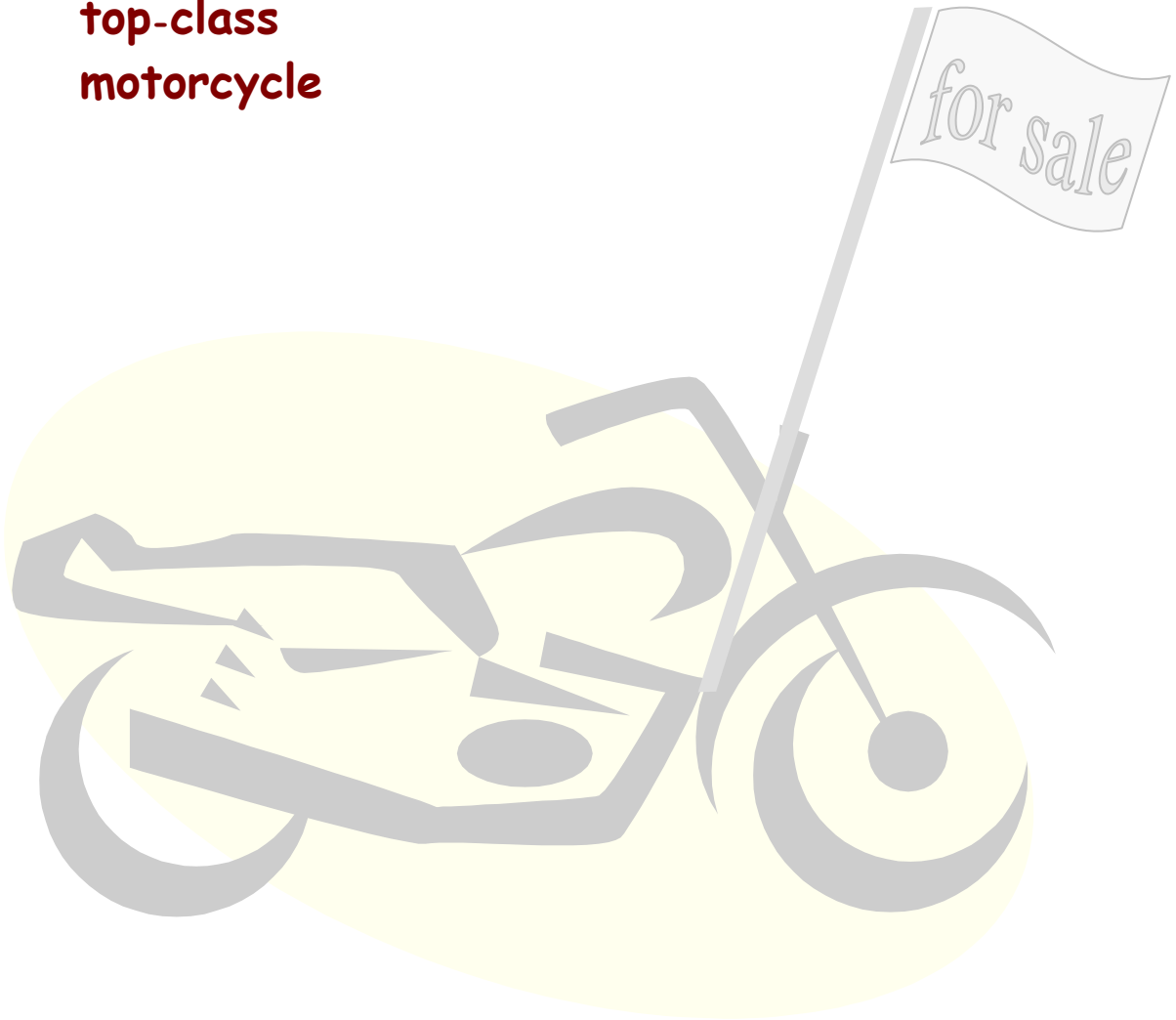


**I
am a
top-class
motorcycle**



**life after UNV:
how to "market"
yourself for
employment**

Marketing yourself for the employment market is like marketing anything else - a motorcycle, for instance.

Using parallels from the selling of a motorcycle, the reader is offered practical guidance for the key steps in the search for employment: defining one's hopes and aims, drafting a CV or résumé, developing one's marketing strategy, reviewing job advertisements, tailoring one's CV for a particular post, writing covering letters, following up on applications, attending interviews, and starting work.

2008 has been a transitional year for UNV India, during which many projects of our host agencies have come to an end, whereas others are still in the pipeline. Indeed, UN and Government of India are preparing the implementation of their new five-year plan. Consequently, many national UNV volunteers found themselves under pressure to look for a new professional opportunity. In my function of UNV Programme Officer in India, I wondered how I could support them, keeping in mind the high number of serving volunteers (240) and therefore the impossibility to provide the individual support they deserve. It is from this dilemma and my desire to prevent to a maximum a painful situation for the UNV volunteers, that arose the idea to produce this very practical and reader-friendly guide.

My sincere thanks go to the author Chris Whitehouse. Recognising the challenges UNV volunteers can face finding employment after their assignments, he has offered his services as a volunteer in the production of this booklet. Many will know him from his involvement with UNV in Asia, including more than six years serving as UNV Programme Officer in Nepal and later in Bhutan.

Chris is now based in the UK, self-employed, offering long-distance support to development professionals, consultants and academics through his website, www.miniAID.com. He is ready to offer assistance as required, helping with substance, structure, language or content of documents related to aid and development, or copy-editing and proofreading more generally. Or, indeed, offering advice on CVs! Email him at chris@miniAID.com.

I'm sure that this guide will be helpful for UNV volunteers anywhere in the world and I therefore encourage its wide dissemination.

Adeline Aubry
UNV Programme Officer - India
August 2008

Contents

Preface	iv
You are a top-class motorcycle - aren't you?	iv
Buying a Motorcycle.....	iv
Starting Out	1
Think through the eyes of the employer.....	1
Decide what kind of job you're looking for	2
Your Marketing Strategy - how to 'sell yourself' to an employer	3
Know yourself.....	4
Identify your strengths, your unique selling points.....	6
Your Brochure - the CV	6
Key Components of a CV	7
Sample CV.....	9
The Job Advertisements	11
Are you good enough for the job?.....	11
A Sample Job Advertisement	13
Packaging your Application	15
Documents to include with your application	16
Sample Covering Letter	17
Filling Application Forms.....	18
Online Applications	18
Keeping things organised.....	19
The Long Wait	21
Preparing for Interview	22
Logistics	22
Appearance.....	23
Prepare for the interview itself	23
Anticipating the Questions	24
Final preparation.....	25
At the Interview.....	26
Interview Questions.....	28
Telephone Interviews	29
After the Interview	30
Rejection:.....	30
Invitation for second interview	31
A job offer	31
And Finally	32

Preface

You are a top-class motorcycle - aren't you?

Have you ever thought of yourself as a motorcycle? Probably not! But maybe now is the time to think of yourself as one. Here you are, about to offer yourself for employment, browsing the papers or the internet for job advertisements, writing application letters, filling forms, attaching CVs, waiting excitedly for responses. You'll face many disappointments, and hopefully some excitement. You'll be invited for interviews, and perhaps second interviews. But sometimes you'll feel down; it seems nobody wants you. Only now, can you understand what it feels like to be that sad slowly-rusting motorcycle, gathering dust in a dirty showroom-window. But while the motorcycle has to rely on the skills of a sales assistant to help get it sold, you have one key advantage - you can sell yourself.

Let's look at it from a different angle. Let's imagine that *you want to buy a motorcycle*. This is exactly what the salesman has to do, when thinking about the brochures, the posters, the advertising, and the positioning of the motorcycle in the window. *To sell well, you have to understand the needs and hopes of the buyer.*

Buying a Motorcycle.

You want to buy a motorcycle. What's the first thing you do? Maybe you collect brochures from motorcycle showrooms in town. You might browse the net, quickly reading through motorcycle listings, possibly reading some reviews. You might ask around the neighbourhood, to see if anyone locally has something for sale, or knows someone who does.

So, you have collected a pile of brochures. Do you read each one right through? Probably not. You'll pick them up, look at the picture and the summary information, and you'll discard many of them immediately - this one is too expensive; you don't like the design of another. One or two brochures may be so badly written, you don't even look at them.

Soon, you'll have one pile of rejects, and a small pile of 'possibles'. You take a break. Next day, perhaps, you study the 'possibles' in more detail. If you haven't done so already, you might write down your criteria for the perfect motorcycle. What characteristics *must* your motorcycle have? And what

characteristics would you *like* it to have? You will reject some, because, hidden deep down in the brochure, you find something that fails to meet one of your criteria; for example the fuel consumption is very high. You might chat with friends, who will look through your selection, and offer their opinions. More bikes will go to the 'rejects' pile.

Now, finally you're down to four or five motorcycles. You plan to request a test-drive of one or two of them, but first, you might check the internet to see what comments others have made about each bike. You do a Google search of the brand and model, and you'll see what people have written in blogs or formal reviews. Some of the brochures may have made claims ("as recommended in 'What Motorcycle USA',") - and you might like to check their website to see really how enthusiastic they are about the bike, and what weaknesses they found in that model.

Finally, it's time for the test-drive. You make arrangements with the showroom, and soon you get the chance to meet your candidate motorcycle for the first time. It looks nice enough, it's obviously clean and shining, and the salesman highlights the key selling points of the bike. "Basically, it's a great machine," he tells you. "Very reliable, cheap to run, and you know film-star XXX used to have one?" You clarify a few issues - you are particularly anxious about the efficiency and reliability of the brakes - and then you take it out for a test-drive. You see how quickly it can accelerate uphill, and how well it can brake going downhill. How stable is it when cruising? How well does it manage with a pillion passenger? Does it turn well? Does it skid when doing an emergency stop? How easy is it to lift up onto its stand when parking?

And so it is, when employers recruit staff. They will shop around, skim through lots of applications, gradually narrowing their choice to a manageable number of 'possibles'. They'll check references, seek second opinions, and invite a handful to their own test-drive - that is to say, the interview. Are you efficient and reliable? How well will you accelerate and brake? Are you a good team-worker? How well do you cope with emergency situations?

Hopefully you will be the one to whom the employer offers the welcome of his garage.

I am a top-class motorcycle

life after UNV: how to “market” yourself for employment

Starting Out

Well, firstly, if you didn't read the 'preface' at the start of this booklet, please do so now! The most important thing to remember throughout your job-hunting is that *you are a salesman* - you're not selling motorcycles; you're selling your own skills, your own strengths, your time, your wisdom, your professionalism.

Think through the eyes of the employer

When trying to find work, it is always useful to put yourself in the shoes of an employer. Imagine what the employer will be looking for, what his or her concerns might be, about bringing in a new staff member. OK, let's start...

Mr Pradhan (the manager of a small company) realises that his business is underperforming, and he has identified areas of weakness. His customers wait too long for replies to their letters, and it takes too long for produce to be delivered to the customers. The other problem is that Mr Pradhan is so busy doing the accounts that he doesn't have the time to get out and sell his products. The answer is to get additional staff: a typist, a driver, and an accountant.

So, first of all, Mr Pradhan decides to get a typist. First, he will think through what, exactly, his typist will be doing (opening the post, drafting replies to standard enquiries, typing out dictations, handling emails, perhaps welcoming clients who come through the door, making tea and coffee for clients, etc.). Mr Pradhan will hopefully then draft a 'Terms of Reference' (TOR) for the post, listing the key responsibilities and duties of the typist. He will advertise the job in the local paper, and perhaps on the

internet as well. Most likely, he will also tell his friends and colleagues, in case they know of someone who might be suitable for the job.

Application letters start flying in. Mr Pradhan start two piles - one for the applications he might consider (the 'possibles'), and the other (bigger) pile for those that clearly are a 'waste of time'. Into the second pile go the applications that clearly fail to meet Mr Pradhan's expectations or requirements:

- o they failed to follow the instruction given in the advertisement (e.g. they didn't enclose a CV despite clear instructions to do so)*
- o they are full of spelling mistakes*
- o they are carelessly written*
- o they forgot to provide their name or contact details¹*
- o they state in the covering letter e.g. 'I don't know how to type and have never used a computer, but I am very good on the guitar'*
- o etc.*

Once the deadline for applications has passed, Mr Pradhan will then look through the 'possibles' pile, and sort them, with the best candidates at the top of the pile. Soon he will be asking them to come for interview...

The lesson from this is: if you are applying for a job, read the advert carefully, note down all the criteria stated, check that you satisfy at least most of the minimum requirements (qualifications, skills, experience, etc.), and then put yourself in the shoes of the employer, and think what else he/she will be looking for. And then sell yourself on that basis.

OK - now let's look in a little more detail about your strategy for finding yourself not just any job - but the right job.

Decide what kind of job you're looking for

It may sound obvious, but if you don't want to work in a bank, then don't apply! Your heart won't be in it, and your application won't get into the 'possibles' pile anyway. A waste of your time, and their time.

First, you need to decide what kind of post(s) you are ready to accept. Talk to friends and colleagues. Bounce ideas around. Look through newspaper adverts, circling all job-types that might interest you,

¹ This is a surprisingly common occurrence - in any application you might make for a job, double-check that you have provided full name and full (accurate) contact details.

and then look again, picking out the most exciting fields of work. Or browse the internet, allow yourself to surf around, from hyperlink to hyperlink, noting down any work areas that interest you. And again, reduce your list to the fields of work that excite you most.

If you want a motorcycle, then don't waste time looking through the classifieds for bicycles.

As you browse through the classified adverts from an old newspaper, or surf the net, think carefully about what aspects you like, and what aspects you don't. Gradually you can draw up a list of criteria for your ideal job, e.g.:

Criteria for my job (example)

- Must be within 5 miles of home
- Must be part of a team
- Must offer a monthly salary of at least Rs X,000
- Must involve computer-based work
- etc.

Preferences

- Preferably working for an NGO
- Preferably somewhere I can reach by bicycle
- Preferably with promotion potential
- Preferably with opportunities to travel abroad
- etc.

SUGGESTION: Talk to people already employed in the kinds of jobs you are considering. What do they like about their work? What do they dislike? What other jobs might they consider doing? Talking is free - or at most the cost of a cup of tea. And not only can such conversations help you to clarify in your mind what you would like to do in the future, but you are building up your network of friends who can help you get a job. Who knows? Maybe one of these people will phone you next week, telling you about a new job being offered.

Your Marketing Strategy - how to 'sell yourself' to an employer


Don't wait for the right job to be advertised before you do anything. Get ready now, for that day. Who knows, you might suddenly find out about a job, whose deadline for applications is tomorrow. So start drafting your CV and letter-format now, get your stationery ready, put some money aside so you can buy the stamps, or the bus-tickets, or whatever you may one day need in your job-search.

Before you can produce a quality 'brochure' about yourself (your CV), you need to look at yourself objectively. Get to know yourself! What skills do you have? What are your strengths and weaknesses? What are your Key Selling Points? That is to say, what makes you special? Why should an employer choose you rather than anyone else?

Over the next few paragraphs, we will look at how you can get to know yourself better, and you will realise that there are things that make you stand out from the crowd. The challenge is to identify them, and then to publicise them.

Know yourself

SELLING YOUR MOTORCYCLE



STEP 1: IDENTIFY YOUR MOTORCYCLE'S KEY SELLING POINTS
Why should someone choose your motorcycle? What's special about it? Its reliability? Its fuel efficiency? Build up a list of the motorcycle's key selling points...

To market yourself, you need to know yourself well. At this stage, your goal is simply to collect as much information about yourself as you can. Do not delete anything on your list as being irrelevant at this stage - put in everything, however wild it may seem. And remember, while some attributes might be a negative for some jobs, they might be desirable in other jobs. Think about the following:

- **Your work experience**, and what you actually did. Any achievements?
- **Other (e.g. volunteer) experiences.**
- Your **achievements at school / college / university** (not just your exam results, but anything else that you did, that perhaps your friends didn't do...)
- What **trainings** have you done?
- What **other skills** do you have? What **languages** can you speak? Can you **drive**? Can you ride a bicycle? What about your **computer skills**? And what of other skills that friends might recognise in you - e.g. do friends come to you for advice? If so, that's a very worthwhile skill you mightn't have thought to include.

-
- **Your ambitions** - what do you want in life? What drives you? What would you like to see yourself doing, in twenty years' time?
 - **Interests, hobbies, passions** - what do you enjoy doing in your spare time? And what about the extra-curricular activities you did at school, college, or in work?
 - **Characteristics** - what makes you different from other people? What are your strengths and weaknesses? If you are quiet, then say so. If extravert, say so. If arrogant, say so. There is nothing wrong with having any particular attribute - later you can think about how you can describe a particular attribute more positively (arrogance can be described as confidence; a short temper can be called passion).
 - **What else makes you special?** Think about your history, your current life, the future you hope for, your loves and hates, your characteristics... write down everything.

No doubt you will add more things to the list above, week by week, as more ideas come to mind, or as more friends chip in their thoughts. Your list will be a living document, never finished.

Don't forget to highlight the unique characteristics of your UNV assignment, where you may have been able to practise, or to acquire, a wide range of valuable skills. At this stage, it might be useful to reflect on some of the commonly held opinions shared with us by our partners, concerning the important added-values that UNV volunteers bring to UN system, Government, civil society and communities; these include the following:

- enthusiasm, passion, commitment, creativity, in addition to technical skills
- ability to build a bridge between the different stakeholders, and to make you accepted by communities/civil society, as well as by the governmental authorities
- high flexibility
- UN's human face in the field, proximity to different actors at all levels (District-State-National), but especially at the village level where there is no other UN presence
- participatory and community-based approach.

Identify your strengths, your unique selling points

SELLING YOUR MOTORCYCLE



STEP 2: KNOW YOUR MOTORBIKE

The better you know your product, the easier it is to sell. Now is the time to put the information together about your bike. Where was it made? How long is the guarantee? What are its specifications (weight, length, top-speed, etc.)? And more.

What are your key selling points? What makes you better than other people? Over a period of a week or two, build up a list of your strengths. These will include the things you do well, valuable work experience, your educational qualifications, your character, and odd things you have done in the past. Enlist help from friends or family: they know you well, and may be able to suggest points that you wouldn't have thought to mention. Just think: if you were selling a motorcycle, you would highlight, its reliability, its low fuel consumption, its low maintenance costs, and so on. **What can you highlight about *product-'you'*?**

Your Brochure - the CV

SELLING YOUR MOTORCYCLE



STEP 3: PRODUCE AN ATTRACTIVE BROCHURE

What are the Key Selling Points of the motorcycle you're selling? Its reliability? Its fuel efficiency? Or the strange noise it makes when you change from first gear to second gear? Yes, tell the truth - but not necessarily all of it!

The CV is your brochure, and it is on the basis of this that many employers will start their selection process. Remember how long you took scanning each motorcycle brochure before deciding whether or not to pick it off the shelf? Ten minutes? Five minutes? No, it was probably less than a minute. Motorcycle companies put a lot of effort into their brochures. They have to design their brochures so that, in those few seconds your eye skims over it, you will find yourself picking it from the shelf. They will hit you with their key selling points at the top, in the hope that you will at least put this motorcycle into your 'possibles' pile.

Think in the same way about your CV. Some CVs will be rejected without even being read. If the CV is scrawled untidily on the back of an envelope, or starts with your love of fishing, your CV will be thrown out. But if your CV is well ordered, presents your key selling points from the start, and these appear to relate to the requirements of the job, then you will get your CV into the 'possibles' pile! That doesn't sound like much of an achievement, but it is.

Using ideas from your 'knowing yourself' list, you can now start to enter your details into your personal brochure - or what we would normally call your CV or résumé. It is this living document that will be a key part of your application.

A good CV will be . . .

- **Attractive** (well laid out, well structured, well formatted if typed, and clearly written if by hand, easy to read and free of spelling mistakes)
- **Informative** (all the key information will be there)
- **Inspiring** (the reader will be motivated to want to meet you, and hopefully, ultimately, to have you as an employee)
- **True** (don't lie - it's not worth it!)

It is through your CV that prospective employers will get to 'know' you before they ever meet you. **First impressions are important**, so you must make sure the CV looks good, and is good. There are probably as many styles of CV as there applicants - choose for yourself a format and style that you feel comfortable with, as the layout also demonstrates something of your character, and can inspire the employer just as much as the content.

Key Components of a CV

All CVs really should contain the following information:

At the top:

- **Full name** (as appears in your ID card, passport etc.)²
- **Postal address**
- **Contact details** (if possible, always give a contact phone number and/or an email address) - make sure this information is correct! If you don't have a telephone at your residence, make arrangements with someone who does, to receive messages for you.
- Any or all of the following:³
 - **date of birth**
 - **nationality**
 - **gender**
 - **marital status**

² If you have more than one name, you will have to decide the name to provide, and be ready to provide explanations etc. in the event of interview. If certificates bear a different name than the one you use now, be ready to provide evidence that both are yours

³ Many employers would also expect to see such information. However, please note that some employers like to review CVs without being influenced by such potentially discriminatory information as age, sex, sexuality, disability, caste, class or religion, and so may have a secretary blank out such information from copies of the CV before forwarding to the selecting panel

Further down:

- **Field(s) of specialisation** - optional - when deciding how to express your 'field of specialisation', think also about the particular job you're applying for.
- **Ambition statement** - this is optional - what is your guiding aim in your life? And again, think about the job you're applying for when deciding how to word your ambition statement. It's good if they can see a link between the job you're applying for and the ambition you hold for your future.
- **Any work experience** - It's best to put this experience in reverse chronological order, so that the most recent is listed first. Give dates, places, employers, and summary details of your role and responsibilities, including your post/job title if appropriate. Remember you're writing what you actually achieved (don't just copy out your TOR for that job).
- **Educational qualifications** - again, it's best to start with the most recent or highest level qualification first, and then work downwards.
- **Key skills** - start your list with those skills relevant for the post you are applying for, e.g. languages, computer skills, driving licence, etc.
- **Any significant trainings** you have undertaken, either in the course of your work, or self-learning. Give details of where and when, and duration, and of any recognised qualification gained as a result. Please avoid listing; mention only significant trainings.

At the end (all these are optional):

- List any **publications, academic papers** you have written (but think about it: if your only publication is an article you wrote for a local paper about your love of fishing, maybe better not to include this in your CV).
- **Interests, hobbies** - you might also want to list membership and roles within clubs or societies.
- **Referees** - give names, addresses and contact details of two or three people from whom the employer can seek references. Your referees should know you well, and at least one should know you from the work. It's best to ask the referees first if they would be happy to be your referee - that way, they will be more likely to say something nice about you! Note again, that many people choose not to include referees on their CV - again, there is no obligation to include this, unless specified in the job advertisement.

A few more points about your CV:

- Make sure you put **correct information** in your CV. Any 'mistakes' will not look good for you, and remember that some employers will contact previous employers or educational establishments to check the information you give.
- Do not assume the reader will understand your **abbreviations, acronyms or local terms linked to a specific cultural context (e.g. Panchayat Raj)**. Indicate at least once that 'UNV' means 'United Nations Volunteer', for example.
- **Be aware** that any significant periods unaccounted for may raise eyebrows. If no information is given for e.g. the years 2002-2004, does that mean you were in prison? If really you were caring for a sick aunt, then say so.

-
- **Be concise.** One or two pages is fine; three is a bit long; avoid anything more than four pages, as who will read it all? Writing concisely is a skill many employers will be looking for. And don't forget, the employer wants to know what you can do, not every single little thing you have ever done! And again, let me say: avoid listing!
 - **Choose a style of CV** that reflects your personality, but think also about the job you're applying for. If you are applying for a job in advertising, you may want to use a style in your CV that demonstrates a powerful selling technique. But for a job as a filing clerk, the employer might prefer to see a concise, highly structured CV, perhaps with the information in tables. You decide your style. Ask to see CVs of friends and colleagues, and think about what you like and dislike in the samples you see. I'm not going to offer you a range of styles to choose from. Below, I present a very simple sample, for you to build on...

Sample CV

(see next page)

SHIVAKUMAR SHARMA

H-999 KATYAYANI APARTMENTS SECTOR 9 PLOT 9 DWARKA NEW DELHI 110075

PHONE (11) 12345678 • E-MAIL SSSHARMA@WHATEVER.COM

FIELD OF SPECIALISATION

Monitoring and Evaluation

EDUCATION

Sept 2000 - July 2003 Xxxxxxxx University, New Delhi, India

MA in Monitoring and Evaluation for Development

- PASSED with grade ZZZ

Aug 1996 - Dec 1998 Yyyyyyy University, Orissa, India

BA in Agriculture

- PASSED with grade VVV

WORK EXPERIENCE

Jan 2006 - May 2008 United Nations Volunteers (UNV), New Delhi, India

National UNV * (post title)*****

- *** (brief list of what you actually did, key achievements)***

Nov 2004 - Dec 2005 Name/city of previous employer

***** Job Title*****

- *** (brief list of what you actually did, key achievements)***

Mmm 19xx - Mmm 19xx Name/city of previous employer

***** Job Title*****

- *** (brief list of what you actually did, key achievements)***

SKILLS

Languages: fluent in English, Oriya, and Hindi (written and spoken)

Computer Skills: competent in MS Word, Excel and many data softwares

TRAININGS

Xxxxx Xxxxxxxx Training (UNV Delhi, June - July 2007)

Xxxxx Xxxxxxxx Training (Yyyyyy Institution, June - July 2003)

INTERESTS

Treasurer of Xxxxx Club, New Delhi

Member of Yyyyyyyyyy Yyyyyyyyyy Association

REFERENCES

References and letters of recommendation available on request.

The Job Advertisements

SELLING YOUR MOTORCYCLE



STEP 4: BE READY TO LISTEN TO YOUR CUSTOMER

Show your customer that your motorcycle meets his requirements. But if he's worried that, for instance, the engine is smaller than he was looking for, don't give up - point out that its acceleration is better than many larger engines.

Are you good enough for the job?

Before applying, read, read and read again the advertisement. You want to market yourself to the very person who has posted the advert. It is very important that you read it carefully, as the advertiser will normally have listed what they require from the applicant (in terms of work experience, qualifications etc.), and what they hope for from the applicant (e.g. ability to work independently, willingness to travel, etc.).

Your task is two-fold: to assess if you meet their minimum requirements, and to consider in what ways your skills and characteristics relate to what they hope for in their applicant.

Meeting minimum requirements - Unless you are really crazy about a particular job, don't apply for it if you don't satisfy their basic minimum requirements. If they need someone with a degree, it would be very unlikely they will give you a job on the basis of a School Leaving Certificate, never mind how passionate you are about climate change or whatever. Forget it. Don't waste the stamp. If you do decide to go ahead with an application, be honest in your covering letter about the one criterion you fail to meet, quickly followed by a persuasive explanation of why they should nevertheless consider you for the post.

Matching your attributes to the post - It's important to spend time carefully reading the text of an advertisement, and pick out the key attributes they are looking for in their ideal candidate. Write them down, each one, in a list. Then, next to each item, write down how you satisfy their wish. Then, in your covering letter, and perhaps in your CV itself, you can enhance the visibility of the strengths that you know they are looking for.

For example, if you have an ambition statement in your CV, you might be able to adjust it slightly, so that it features more prominently some of the keywords they are looking for. Or you can change the wording of what your responsibilities were in your most recent job, so that it now includes keywords that

you know will interest them. Don't start bending the truth; it's just a matter of adjusting your marketing strategy better to target this particular type of organisation. *You might see the same motorcycle advertised in a teens' magazine, and in a businessman's newspaper: same motorcycle, but different style of advert.* There's no deceit involved - it's just a matter of marketing strategy.

But can you get more information than what they gave in the advert? Almost certainly, if they provide a website address where you can get more details of the organisation, or even more importantly a Terms of Reference (TOR) for the post, you would be foolish not to look. But even if they don't provide such advice, it will help you win against the competition if you search the internet for that organisation, read up about it, its programmes and plans, and you can then refer to these in your covering letter. Now who wouldn't be impressed by that? Or if they don't have a website, why not phone them? State your name and your plan to apply for the post, and ask the receptionist for more information about the organisation or company (remember to have some questions prepared in advance). Not only might you be able to refer to some of this information in your covering letter, but who knows, maybe the receptionist will write down your name and tell the relevant staff about this extremely bright person who phoned this afternoon? You may be shortlisted before even submitting your application!

You want as much information about the job as you can possibly get. If a Terms of Reference (TOR) has not been made available, contact the company's/organisation's human resources section and ask them to provide you with a copy.

Of course, all this takes time, and that's why it's important to focus on a manageable number of applications for jobs you really do want. **It's the quality of your applications that counts - not the quantity.**

Now, it's time to get a real example . . .

A Sample Job Advertisement

Check out the real-example job advertisement⁴ reproduced on the next page. Like any reader you will read it quickly once, to decide if this is 'worth looking at' or not. Imagine that you are interested. You will have noted the location of the job, the salary and something of what the job will involve, and that was enough to get you interested.

Now you will re-read it, looking line by line, to see which of the duties you will be able to carry out with ease, and how many of the required qualifications you have to your name. You will read it a third time, a fourth time, a fifth time... keep re-reading it, making sure to get all the information, and also all the signals and hints that you may be able to discern. What do they require? What do they hope for? And finally, what is the process for application? Circle the elements that you want to highlight in your application; or make a separate list, against which you can note down evidence you have that you satisfy these requirements.

But look. They give very little information about the employer, or the location of the work. What is the name of the organisation? Where will you be based? You would do well to find out more both about the place (Koraput in Orissa), and the organisation, DPMU. A search on the internet might help; maybe they have their own website? Or why not email the address given to seek more details?

And finally, an exercise for you... Try to 'read between the lines' of this advert on the next page, to answer the following questions... Circle the word(s) or phrase(s) in the advert that indicate they are looking for a candidate with the following attributes:

1. *a willingness to take on a temporary job*
2. *teaching experience*
3. *reliability*
4. *a desire for self-improvement and/or promotion*
5. *team player*

⁴ Do NOT apply for this post; the deadline is already past, and the contact email address has therefore been hidden. This is a sample advert only.

Planning and Monitoring Specialist - DPMU

Applications are invited for the following:

Planning and Monitoring Specialist

Location: Koraput, Orissa

Duration: Initially upto December 2008

Salary: Rs. 25,000/- per month

E-mail: [REDACTED]@com

Major duties and responsibilities:

Planning and Monitoring Specialist

- Assist in preparing Annual workplans for Education, Water and Sanitation, Nutrition and Health Services etc., at District level and set clear standard for monitoring activities, fundflows, results, expenditure and timelines.
- Capacity building of personnel at the district and block levels in preparation of Annual Workplans and perspective plans.
- Appraise the plans prepared by various programmes in the district.
- Establish effective planning and monitoring systems for keeping activities on track.
- Monitor the programmes on regular intervals and prepare reports for the District
- Undertake periodic field visit to monitor and evaluate programme implementation.

Qualification and Experience:

- University degree in social Sciences or other related field
- 3-4 years progressively responsible professional work experience in social development, management, planning, monitoring and evaluation.
- Current knowledge of development issues, policies as well as social programming policies and procedures.
- Good analytical, negotiating, communication and advocacy skills.
- Computer skills, including internet navigation, and various office applications.
- Fluency in English and Oriya.

Candidates meeting the above requirements may e-mail their detailed CV with photograph before 5 June 2008 to the following email address

[REDACTED]@com

Only applications of shortlisted candidates will be acknowledged.

(Women Candidates are encouraged to apply for the above positions)

Packaging your Application

SELLING YOUR MOTORCYCLE



STEP 5: SAY A FEW WORDS AND SMILE WHEN GIVING OUT A BROCHURE

When you give a customer a copy of your brochure, smile, and offer a few encouraging words, focusing on aspects the customer is interested in. "I think you'll find this very useful," you might say, "especially page 3, where the top speeds are listed."

Often, the job advert will ask applicants to submit a CV with explanatory covering letter. Even if they only asked for a CV, *it is always better to write a covering letter*. It is this letter that introduces you to the employer. Your covering letter is, in effect, the smile that the salesman gives when he hands over a brochure, something which makes you to want to read it.

The function of the covering letter is to introduce yourself (and your CV) to the reader, and to explain why you are one of the best candidates applying for the job. Highlight the strengths you have; and if there are weaknesses, write persuasively (without begging) to explain why the lack of experience X or qualification Y is less important to the employer than the fact that you have unrequired experience XX or qualification YY. It is always useful to demonstrate that you are conversant with the mandate and work areas of the organisation you are applying to work with, so be sure to discuss this in your letter. One way to do this is to talk about it when explaining why you want to work for this organisation.

Your covering letter should be brief and positive. It should highlight the qualities you have which makes you the right person for this job. The covering letter should be individually written, and should not be more than one page long. It should actively encourage the reader to look at the enclosed CV (don't forget to enclose the CV, by the way!), and, should be well laid out, attractive to look at, with well structured paragraphs, and free of spelling or grammar mistakes.

Remember, the style of the letter will depend on the kind of job you're applying for. An accountancy firm will not welcome a "*Hi, my name's John*" informal letter. But an advertising company might not welcome too formal an approach either. So, again, try to think about what the employer is looking for, and then adjust your style and content of the letter accordingly.

Documents to include with your application

This bit is simple. **Read their advertisement, and send them what they ask for.** Normally it is recommended that you do NOT send documents they don't ask for, the only exception being a covering letter (and envelope of course!).

Some of the documentation they might ask you to submit with your application include:

- Your CV (otherwise known as personal history, or résumé)
- A completed application form
- Photocopies of certificates, reference letters, driving licence etc. (do NOT send originals)⁵
- Passport-sized photo (If they request a photo, think about which photo to send. Will they be looking for a formal photo, or a smiling relaxed one? Might a black-and-white photo look better? Or colour? Try to work out why they want the photo - is one of their criteria that you should be good-looking? Or might it just be so they can recognise you if/when you come for interview? If they didn't ask for a photo, do not send one, unless you feel your face will make the difference between job and no job!)

Be prepared: for the interview stage, they may like to see all or any of the following:

- Originals of your certificates and other documents (reference letters, driving licence, passport, etc.; possibly marriage certificate also)
- Your ID (identity card, passport, or, if you don't have these, the most formal proof you can find that bears your full name and photo)
- Samples of work you have done
- Etc.

⁵ Always assume they are asking for photocopies. In the unlikely event that they specify that they want you to enclose originals of your certificates, it is recommended that you send photocopies, with a note in your covering letter that you can bring the originals for inspection at interview.

Sample Covering Letter

Z-999, Swasthya Vihar,
Vikas Marg,
New Delhi 110 019

Tel: 07 777 7777
Email: jregmi@indianet.com

4th July 2008

Mr Ram Pradhan
Recruitment Officer
Help for the Blind in South Asia
999-Z, Old Madangir
New Delhi
110 062

Dear Mr Pradhan,

Please find enclosed my CV in application for the post of Field Officer advertised in the Delhi Times on 18th June.

Not only did my degree course in XXX equip me with the skills required for this position, but also my recently completed assignment as a United Nations Volunteer with Delhi Age Concern has enabled me to develop my skills to new heights in an NGO setting.

I have a sound understanding of, and interest in, the issues affecting the vulnerable people in India, and am keen to continue to work in this area with a reputable NGO such as Help for the Blind in South Asia. As you may see from the enclosed CV, I have the necessary computer skills, and more than the necessary language skills. You will find that I work with integrity and with passion, and I shall be very grateful for the opportunity to develop my skills yet further by working for the benefit of blind people.

Thank you for taking the time to consider this application and I look forward to hearing from you in the near future.

Yours sincerely



Jamal Regmi

Use the **address as per advert**; but if they give job-title only, why not phone up and quietly ask reception the name of e.g. the "recruitment officer"? Again, it shows you're trying! Whatever, make sure to spell the name right!!!

Your **postal address** - check that it's correct. Add **phone** and **email** contact details only if they are valid. And remember to give this info also in the CV - some employers separate letters from CVs before selecting.

Are you sure it's Mr? And be careful, also, if addressing females - are they Mrs Miss or Ms? Remember, too, that this is a formal letter. "Dear Ram" would not be appropriate

As in any letter, your first paragraph should clearly state the **reason** why you're writing.

As in any letter, your next paragraph(s) will provide the **details**. It is here you can persuade them why they should consider **you** in preference to other candidates. Specify the skills required and developed.

As in any letter, your closing paragraph should clearly state "**next steps**" - in this case, that they should contact you (you hope!)

CHECKLIST - Before sending, make double sure that:

- Your contact details are correct
- The date is correct
- Their details (name address) are correct
- The text is OK and specific to this application (and not left unedited from a previous application)
- Spelling and grammar are OK
- You have signed it
- You have photocopied this letter plus the version of the CV or application form you're enclosing.
- You have enclosed **ALL (and ONLY)** the supporting documents they require - e.g. CV, application form, photocopies of certificates, etc.

Filling Application Forms

Often, you will be asked to fill an application form. This can be useful for the employer, as they will be able to see the same information provided in the same order, and in the same level of detail. Although it can be difficult to reduce your answer to a single five-line paragraph, it is worth spending the time making concise and well thought through responses.

Make sure always to read the instructions carefully (do they require black ink, capital letters, etc etc), and read the questions carefully - try to think why they are asking the questions, and by checking against the job description, try to anticipate what answers they are looking for. And again, just as in a CV or covering letter, be very careful to ensure your spelling and grammar are OK.

If you can, fill a draft version of the form first - you may have to photocopy the form, and you fill the photocopy version as your draft.

If submitting by post, even if they don't ask for a covering letter, it is always appropriate to have one. See the previous section for advice on this.

Online Applications

Nowadays, more and more organisations are asking for applications to be made online. Some may ask that you attach your CV electronically, while others may prefer you print out their form, fill it, sign it and post it.

Even if you are to complete the application online, it is best if you print out the form, so you can draft your answers before entering them online. As always with such forms, be careful to read the instructions and the questions carefully. Save data regularly.

Check:

- Are you supposed to submit the form electronically, or fill them on the computer, print out, sign and post to them as a hard copy?
- If filling forms by hand, do they require black ink be used?


-
- If submitting the form electronically, can you print out a copy for your records when you have finished? If not, then be sure to print out each page before you press the 'submit' button, as you may wish to refer to these pages when preparing for interview.
 - If filling forms electronically, do you get the benefit of the spell-checker function? Test by entering a word you know is spelt wrong.
 - Check also what attachments, if any, you need to include with the form

When filling forms electronically, you have to be extra careful that you think before you write. It is all too easy to fall into the trap of seeing your application as little more than a glorified email, and writing less carefully than you otherwise would have done.

If the form doesn't provide a spell-check function, you must make extra sure that your spelling and grammar are of high standard. One option is to type out the answer first in e.g. Microsoft Word, using its spellchecker, and then copy and paste into the box on the form. If they don't allow you to paste text into the box, then draft the text in the box, and then try to copy and paste that into a Word document, and then note the corrections that will have to be made to the text in the form. If neither of these systems work, then really concentrate when you write!

Keeping things organised

SELLING YOUR MOTORCYCLE



STEP 6: KEEP ON TOP OF YOUR PAPERWORK
Be well organised. Keep a record of the customers you have seen, who you have sent which brochures to, etc. If a customer calls, you can impress them by 'remembering' what bike they saw, when they saw it, what brochure they received from you, etc.

There will be times when you have a number of applications pending, and it is important to keep organised. At any time, an employer might phone you, perhaps offering an interview. If you are confused by the call (perhaps you don't immediately recognise the name of the company concerned), then all your efforts in your application will be lost in the space of a few seconds. Therefore, be polite and formal whenever you answer the phone, even if you think the call will be from a close friend.

Employers might contact you for a range of purposes:

-
- To seek clarification on something you wrote in your application or CV (in such circumstances, it will be useful to be able quickly to find the letter and the version of the CV that you sent for this application).
 - To arrange timing for an interview (in which case, you need to have a diary so that you don't agree to a time when you are already engaged).
 - OR to inform you that you have not been selected for interview, etc. (in which case a polite response is to be recommended, with a suggestion they are welcome to contact you again in the event that the selected candidate is found to be unsuitable or unavailable).

Maintain a **filing system** so that you can quickly access:

- Copies of all job adverts, TORs and other info you have collected regarding posts you are applying to
- Copies of each covering letter / application form / CV specific to a post, and all correspondence, regarding your applications
- A diary / calendar in which you enter all your engagements
- Spare copies of CVs, ready to hand out or send out

Note: some people may have their own computers, and depend on these for keeping all their records and documents - but consider: what will you do if your computer breaks down, or is stolen, or if there is a long-term power failure? Make sure you have 'spare' copies of these records or documents. There is no need to print everything; it can be expensive, and is not good for the environment. Focus on the key documents. But a cheaper and more environmentally friendly way to keep records outside from your computer is to back-up your documents and records electronically. Copy your files onto CDs or memory sticks, and keep these back-up files far away from the computer, preferably in a different building. Another way to keep back-up files is to email them to yourself; this is particularly effective if your emails are stored in some computer far away in e.g. Yahoo or Hotmail

Just think how you would react if you had to watch a motorcycle salesman rummage for twenty minutes to find the right brochure for you.

The Long Wait

SELLING YOUR MOTORCYCLE



STEP 7: KEEP THE FIRES BURNING

It can be useful to follow up with a customer, to remind them about the motorcycles you have on offer. Ideally, you would have some excuse (e.g. a piece of news) to justify your taking the liberty of contact them again.

After rushing round to send off the application, checking, double-checking and triple-checking that the letter was correctly addressed, with all enclosures enclosed, etc. etc. etc. (we have all done this!)... then suddenly... S I L E N C E .

So - did they get the application? Perhaps it got lost? Or maybe they have already rejected it? Sadly, many employers fail to inform the unselected applicants; indeed, many advise candidates of their policy not to inform. But, unless the job advert specifically instructed that no telephone contact be made, **you might want to consider phoning them**, to show your enthusiasm for the job concerned. Again, put yourself in their shoes - would you welcome such a call? Would they see it as trouble from a trouble-maker, or a sign of keenness from a potentially valuable candidate? You will just have to judge.

If you decide to follow up with a call, make sure you introduce yourself clearly, that you have details at hand of the date of application and of the enclosures you submitted, and a clear idea of the question you are going to ask. The question may (or may not) be the same as the main reason you are phoning! Let's say the question you have decided to ask regards an apparent contradiction regarding interview dates (e.g. the advert said June, but on the website it says July). The main message you want to get across may be something quite different in fact. So although the question may be important (it is true you want to know the interview dates), your real motivation for phoning was to help push your application, help them see how keen you really are.

But be careful - some employers would regard phoning like this as 'trouble'. Check out their website or brochures etc., for indication of the extent to which they like to see themselves as accessible to the public.

Think about it - would you like to receive a follow-up call from a motorcycle salesman?

Preparing for Interview

SELLING YOUR MOTORCYCLE



STEP 8: PREPARING THE MOTORCYCLE FOR A TEST-DRIVE

Your customer will want to see a clean fresh shining machine, which will start first time, and can be manoeuvred easily onto the road. The customer will not be happy if you have not made your motorcycle ready for the test-drive.

So, they've seen the motorcycle brochures, and now they want to see the machine in the flesh, maybe take it for a test-drive. Well done that they have selected you as their motorcycle to try out. **Now it's your chance to show them quite how fast you can go, and how beautiful your engine sounds!**

You had the phone call, and you've got an interview arranged for 3.30 tomorrow afternoon. You remembered to ask (or have been told) whether they will be expecting you to bring supporting documentation (original of certificates, ID, etc.), and you are clear where the interview will be held (you know the address, and where inside the building you must report).

The sweating starts now! There's no reason to be nervous, of course, but it's natural to find your heart pumping double speed, and your stomach feeling empty, as the interview gets nearer! The best advice is to slow down, walk slowly, eat slowly, drink slowly. Try to relax.

Get ready for the interview, well in advance. Prepare the logistics (how you will get there and back, etc.), your appearance (what to wear, etc.), and, most importantly, prepare for the interview questions. Get help from friends and family. Your uncle can give you a lift, your sister can help you decide what to wear, and a friend might be willing to help you prepare for the interview itself.

Logistics

- *Ask yourself - if you had arranged to go for a test-drive of a motorcycle, how would you feel if you were kept waiting after the appointed time for the salesman to turn up?*
- Decide how you will reach the interview location, and arrange bus-tickets or whatever for that journey.
- Assess risks of travel delays. Aim to arrive well before scheduled interview time.
- Adjust your personal plans for that day. Maybe you'll need to take a day off work, or cancel a lunch appointment with a friend?
- Work out what you will do if e.g. a train is cancelled, or there is a national strike that day.
- Maybe you'd like to do a 'dry run', to see how long it takes to travel to the interview venue?

-
- Once you reach the office building, do you know where you will have to report? Remember, it can take 15 minutes in some buildings to find your way to the reception, and from there up to the interview waiting room.
 - The last thing you want is to arrive breathless and sweating at the interview itself - so aim to reach the interview waiting room about 10 to 15 minutes before your appointment⁶.

Appearance

- *Ask yourself: would you buy a dirty-looking motorcycle that was dripping oil?*
- Think about what the employers will be looking for, appearance-wise, for this particular job. A formal look? An informal approachable look?
- Decide now what you're going to wear, and inspect your clothes (now's a good time replace that shirt-button). If unsure what to wear, it is always better to put on something too formal. Get advice from friends and family. What looks good on you? What will you wear if it's hot? Or if it's raining? Avoid wearing anything too untraditional. Many employers are quite conservative, and may feel uncomfortable recruiting a staff member who dresses too boldly. If you buy new clothes, make sure that you can be comfortable in them. Try out your new shoes for a few days, unless you want to be struggling with blisters at the interview. Make sure your clothes are comfortable, as well as smart.
- What about your hair? Do your teeth look OK?
- In your planning for the day itself, remember to set aside time for a relaxing bath or shower.
- Practice how you're going to sit at the interview. You want to look self-assured, relaxed, but not slovenly. You will walk confidently into the room, smile and greet each of the interviewing panel, and then sit in the chair indicated. You might like to lean forward a little in your chair, demonstrating that you are alert and interested.

Prepare for the interview itself

- Re-read the advertisement, and list everything you will need to bring for the interview (e.g. ID, certificate originals, photo, examples of past work... whatever). Put all these items together in an attractive folder for you to take with you. Add a notebook and pen, in case you want to take notes during the interview itself.
- Read through the photocopies you made of your application, including covering letter, CV, application form... whatever documents you sent them. Be ready to answer questions on anything

⁶ Don't be late; but don't be too early either! If you happen to arrive too early, stroll around the shops first! Aim to arrive for interview 15 to 20 minutes before interview time.

you have written. Suggestion: bring the CV with you to the interview. They might ask questions related to your past experience, and you might want to refer to your CV.

- Read and reread the advertisement, the TOR if you were provided one, and take another look at the organisation's written material (brochures, website, etc.), so you really know the organisation well.
- Check again the info you have - what's the name of the boss? Learn the names of the people you expect to be in the interview panel.
- Remind yourself of your Key Selling Points. What makes you different from all the other candidates they'll be interviewing that day? How can you make these points known to the interview panel?
- Are there any aspects of the work that you are unclear or concerned about? Prepare questions that you might like to ask the interview panel. But don't ask about your salary or other perks of the job - those questions are better asked if they offer you a job.
- Highlight all the key words from the documentation you have about the job, and put yourself in the shoes of the boss. What kind of person do you think he/she's looking for? And what questions might they ask you? And what questions might they welcome from you? What can you ask, that will demonstrate your keen interest in the job, and/or in the organisation that will employ you?
- Give a friend a copy of all the documents you provided in your application, and all the documentation you have about the job itself. Let him/her 'interview' you. Role-play the whole interview from entering the room, to exiting. If you can, get a third person to watch, who may be able to offer advice as to how to walk in better, how better to sit, how better to respond to questions, and so on. Why not have someone video-film (or audio-record) you in this role-play, so you can play it back to yourself? Did you spend the whole time twiddling a pen between your fingers? Why were you scratching your ear so often? Why were you talking so fast? OK, now try the role-play again...

Anticipating the Questions

Again, be prepared. Read and reread the TOR and the advert for the job. If they state they are looking for someone who handles pressure well, then you can expect a question along the lines of "How do you cope with working under pressure? Can you give any examples?" and so on.

Below, a list of some of the questions you may be asked. Think how you would answer such questions. And, whenever you attend interviews, note down afterwards any questions that you hadn't anticipated, so you can be better prepared if they come up in future interviews.

As you go through this list, take a few moments now, as you read this, to think of suitable responses.

- Can you tell us why you are interested in working with our company/organisation?
- And what excites you most about this job?
- And what anxieties do you have about this job?
- In what way is your previous work experience relevant to this job?
- Are you a team player? Can you explain? Can you give us some examples of teamwork you have done?
- Let's focus on technical aspects of the work. Suppose XXX happened. What would you do?
- Let's talk about your ambitions. You mentioned in your CV that you aimed to be/do YYY. Could you tell us a bit more about that?
- Suppose a colleague did ZZZ. What would you do?

And finally...

- Well thank you for your time. Do you have any questions you would like to ask us about the work or our organisation?

Another useful exercise is to imagine that you being part of the interview panel, and will be interviewing candidates for this job. Sit down, read through the advert and the TOR, and think up what questions you would be asking, if you wanted to get the right person for the job. Then, ask yourself these same questions.

Final preparation

You have reached the venue, the interview is due in half an hour, and you are walking up to the building. What are the final preparations you should make?

-
- **Relax.** Take a stroll round the area, outside the building. Aim to enter the building **15 minutes** prior to the scheduled interview time.
 - Don't have a hurried last **cigarette** before you go in. They will welcome you more warmly if your breath is fresh.
 - **Report to the receptionist** - and be polite (the last thing you want is for the receptionist to complain about you to the boss - and who knows, maybe the receptionist has been instructed to score each candidate on their politeness!). Get directions for the waiting room, and also for the toilet.
 - If you don't want to go now, you can bet your bottom dollar you will be wanting to go one minute before interview time - so go to the **toilet**, and use the opportunity to check that your face and hair look OK, your zips and buttons are all done up, and you don't have odd bits of clothes hanging out. Look at yourself. Would you want to employ someone looking like you? Yes. And quite right too!
 - **Sit down in the waiting room.** Check you didn't leave your folder of certificates in the toilet. Smile and, if appropriate, converse with other applicants. Maybe an office staff member will be noting how friendly you are, how supportive you are to candidates who may be even more nervous than you!
 - **Switch off your mobile phone.** You don't really want your baby sister calling from home during the interview, do you?
 - If you are eating **chewing gum**, remove it.
 - You might accept a cup of tea or glass of water. But don't go for the biscuits or cakes. Crumbs will get stuck in your teeth, only to emerge when answering a question at interview!
 - When called, stand up and check your chair. Have you forgotten anything? Walk boldly into the room.

At the Interview

Remember, the aim of the interview is to allow you to show yourself in the best possible light. So enjoy the experience. You have a captive audience, all of whom are interested in what is probably your favourite subject: talking about yourself!

- **Knock loudly and confidently** at the door (if appropriate), walk in confidently, make eye contact with each of the interviewing panel, and smile.

-
- **Greet each of the panel** as they are introduced to you, and introduce yourself (or confirm your identity) with a clear voice.
 - **Sit down** as invited, put your folder of papers to one side, make sure your hands are empty of anything you might be tempted to fiddle with, lean forward, and wait for the first question.
 - **They will likely start with friendly questions**, such as, "How was your journey here?" Be positive. Don't tell them journey was awful, even if it was. And don't go into detail. A "Very easy journey, thank you," will be enough.
 - **Answer each question clearly, and audibly**, not too fast, making eye contact not only with the questioner, but all the others, and provide pauses to allow them to interrupt or ask new questions.
 - **If you aren't clear about the meaning of a question, say so.** You can explain you're a bit nervous, and could they repeat it? If it's a difficult question, that requires thought, then say so. And while saying, e.g. "Ah, that's a question I haven't been asked before... That's a difficult one...", you'll be giving your brain time to think how to answer. If really you can't think of any answer, then you can always ask them to come back to that question later, as you would like a little time to think about it. Then, when they ask the second time, you may well find it easier to answer.
 - **Remember that you are the right person for the job**, and in answering the questions, you are really only helping them to realise the truth that you know so well - that it's in their interests to select you.
 - **Keep positive.** More discussion is given below on this, but for now, just remember that they want to see a positive side of you. Rather than say you want to leave the last job because you're bored of it, better explain how, although you have got great satisfaction out of your current job, you are excited by the possibilities that this new job presents. Etc.
 - **Be yourself. Don't pretend to be superman/superwoman.** Don't brag about achievements you haven't done. Don't try to be extrovert if you're not; and there's no harm in confessing to the panel that you are feeling nervous, or whatever. They want to see the genuine 'you', not the 'you' that you think they want to see.
 - **However hungry you are, do not eat anything**, even if offered! And if you are offered tea at the interview, it's better to decline. If it arrives uninvited, leave it to go cold. When nerves come into play, the cup will clatter against the saucer, the tea will make more noise going down your throat, and some of it will try to jump out of the cup, down your front. Why take the risk?
 - **As the interview draws to a close**, if they haven't told you, then do ask when you can expect to hear the result of the interview. If you say they don't know, then ask if it would be OK if you call them, say, at the end of next week. This will confirm to them that you are indeed still interested,

and are willing to be proactive. And remember, if you did say you'd phone on a certain day, to call them.

- **Then, as you leave, thank them for their time, smile, and depart with confidence.** Even if you had an awful time, and are angry with them for asking such terrible questions, do not use this opportunity to tell them this! Keep those feelings to one side, and leave on a positive note.

Interview Questions

Before going to interview, it is useful to anticipate the questions they might ask. They will generally ask open-ended questions (as opposed to yes/no questions), to allow you to answer freely. Answer fully, but try not to babble. **And don't be frightened of silences.** An interview panel may remain silent sometimes. It may be because they want to see what more comes from your mouth (avoid the temptation of filling such silences with meaningless drivel); they may be writing notes to record your pearls of wisdom; or they may simply be trying to decide what question to ask next, and who should ask it. If a silence becomes uncomfortable, you might like to ask the panel a question.

Remember five things:

- **They want to know you better.** They will know that candidates will be nervous, and it is in their own interests to help you feel relaxed. You are not going into battle; you are going to make some new friends.
- The aim of the interview is not only for them to decide if you're the right one for the job; **it is also for you to be able to decide if this job is the right one for you.** So, feel free to ask questions, or to seek assurances about some aspect of the work that concerns you. They will take this as a positive sign that you are seriously thinking about the work involved, and that you are not so desperate that you'd take any job offered to you. Of course, be constructive and positive - but remember that even if they offer you the job, you will have to decide whether you are going to accept or not.
- **They probably don't enjoy the interview process very much either.** It gets very boring, asking the same questions to a series of interviews, for hours on end, possibly for days on end. So help them, by trying to make this interview different, memorable and enjoyable.
- **Some interview panels may be very inexperienced,** and may ask unclear, or even improper, questions. Laws and conventions vary from country to country, and the appropriateness of questions may depend on the nature of the job involved. If a question is unclear, don't be afraid to

say so. If a question embarrasses or angers you, then again, don't be afraid politely to decline to answer - in many countries it is not acceptable for you to be asked about your love life, your prospects regarding upcoming pregnancies, your sexuality, the health of your parents, and so on. It can be useful to know beforehand what discrimination policies they have, so that if they ask you a question that seems to contravene their policy, you can simply and politely express your surprise that such a question is asked, given the very impressive non-discrimination policy they have. And not answer the question.

- **Every interview is a learning experience for you.** The first will be terribly hard, the next one not quite so hard, and after several interviews, you will be more relaxed than the panel. Statistically, you are unlikely to be selected. They may be interviewing half a dozen people for one job. So expect to attend more than half a dozen interviews before you get an offer! To get maximum benefit from the experience, make sure each time, quite soon after the interview itself, to make notes about what happened, the questions you got asked, which questions you answered well, and which you had difficulty answering, and so on. And look back at these notes when you prepare for the next interview.

Telephone Interviews

Particularly where candidates may be based far from a recruiting office, telephone interviews can be held. They will normally contact you first, so that you can agree the timing for the interview. Make sure that they can reach you on a **landline phone** (more comfortable for you, easier to hear, and no worries about batteries running low on your mobile), and that you will have privacy and quiet for the interview.

Ideally, you will be in a **quiet room**, where you can have all your **papers**, your CV, the TOR, and all your other documents close to hand. You'll have a **cup of tea** nearby (on the phone, it doesn't matter if you spill it down your chest!), and you can set yourself up for the interview.

It may sound silly, but it's a good idea to **dress smartly** for the interview. Somehow, you need to remind yourself that this is a serious formal interview. If at home, make sure you will not be interrupted, switch off your **mobile phone** so you won't be disturbed, and follow the relevant guidance given above regarding the interview itself.

Be aware that the interview panel may be speaking through a speaker-phone, which can make it difficult to hear on both sides, so be extra sure to **speak clearly, and slowly**. You won't see them, but they will

most likely be taking notes. And again, don't be worried if there are **silences**. If you cannot hear them clearly, don't feel shy to ask them to repeat the question.

If it is a long-distance call, there can be a difficult **time delay**, and you can find yourselves speaking at the same time. Allow for a long delay after you finish speaking, before you hear their reply. Sometimes there might be an **echo** in the phone line. If that happens, explain, and ask them to call you again. If the problem continues, agree with the panel that while you are answering a question, you will hold the ear-piece away from you, so may not hear their interruptions.

Otherwise, a telephone interview will be very much the same as a face-to-face interview, and the guidance given in the section above will apply.

After the Interview

Hopefully you will hear from them. Most likely (statistically speaking), they will be contacting you to advise you that you have not been selected. After all, there is only one job, and there were more probably more than two of you who had been invited for interview. Or you might have impressed them so much that they will either offer you the job there and then, or will be asking you to come for a second interview.

Rejection:

It is always hard to be rejected. If you are rejected on the basis of your written application, it is not so difficult to come to terms with it. However, if you are rejected after interview, it can hurt much more. They were talking to you like friends last week, and now they are telling you to go jump. It is hard. But remind yourself that you did well to get to interview stage - 95% of the applicants probably didn't even make it to interview. They may be able to offer you some guidance as to how you could have performed better at the interview (there is no harm in politely asking), but most likely it was a closely fought competition between a handful of equally worthy candidates, and you just didn't quite make it.

Most importantly, take full advantage of the learning experience you have just had. Make notes about which aspects of the whole process you found easy, and which were difficult. Build upon this recent experience, and work out how you would approach an interview next time - and write notes to yourself about this, as you can so easily forget next time round.

Give yourself a breather - you will be exhausted after all the hard work you put in - and then set to work filling in forms, following up on applications, researching potential employers, networking with friends, colleagues and relatives so they can keep an eye open for a job for you... and carry on the good work!

Invitation for second interview

This is much better news (but makes it all the more hard if you ultimately get rejected). You will need to get clear guidance as to what they will be expecting of you for the second interview. It may be little more than a repeat of the format from last time. Or it may be a completely different kind of event - they might set you tasks, to see how well you work with others. Maybe a full-day event. Whatever, be positive, and aim to enjoy it. You've got nothing to lose, a lot you can learn from it, and who knows - there might be a job for you at the end of it all!

A job offer

Now the ball lands firmly in your court. They have offered you the job. It's now for you to think carefully, whether you actually want this job. How will you manage your travel to and from work? What about your accommodation? Will your salary be more than sufficient to cover your living costs? If you are working now, how are you going to tell them about your decision to leave? Also, what about the other job you have applied for, which you maybe like a bit more, but for which you have not yet received any feedback. You will need to do a lot of thinking. And you will have to decide. Talk to friends and family about the decision you need to make. Get their ideas.

Before accepting the new job, talk to your current boss (if you are working), and tell him that you have been offered this new job. Explain that that you weren't unhappy in the previous job (even if you were!), but that you are excited by the challenge and possibilities that this new job offers. He (or maybe your boss is a 'she') will probably try to encourage you not to accept the new job - he might offer you a higher salary, or a promotion. You will then have to decide if you want to stay on or take the new job. If you decide to take the new job, explain this in person to your boss, and then back it up with a polite resignation letter. You will probably have to complete the notice period (e.g. you may have to work for at least two weeks following your resignation), and you should do this well. Don't start slacking now; do a good handover for whoever is taking over your role. Why? *Because people know people, and you don't want to ruin your reputation as a good and diligent worker.* And who knows, if the new job doesn't work out, you might want to come back to your current employer. Or, you might soon be asking this

boss for references when you go job-hunting next time round. And of course, as a development professional, it's not only your own interest that is important. You respect the beneficiaries and will want to ensure continuity and quality of actions through a thorough handover.

And if the new employer complains that you are too slow to join them, explain to them your legal and moral responsibility to complete your service with your previous employer - and assure them that you would do the same for them, many years hence, if ever you were offered a job elsewhere.

And Finally . . .

The more effort you put into all the stages in job-hunting, the better your chances. It's not the number of applications you make that will raise your chances of success, but quality, quality, quality.

Good luck - and happy hunting!

