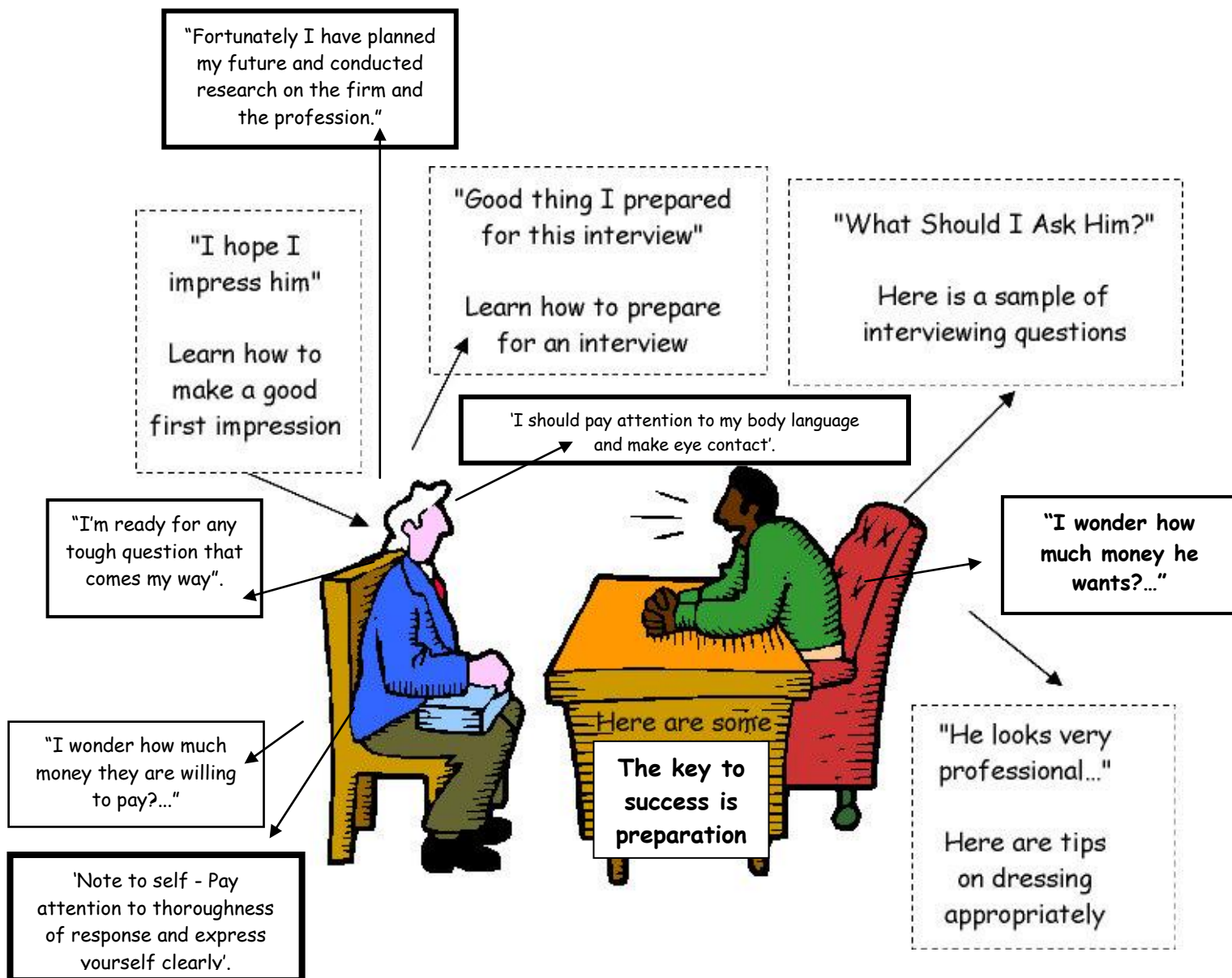


Get that Job!



INTRODUCTION

This workshop is all about being ahead of the game!

How you can get to that job a little bit faster than some other guy or girl who does not deserve or need it as much as you do. Make no mistake, there are jobs out there. There are always jobs out there. And you have as much chance of filling them as anyone else. But you do need to be a little better and a little faster off the mark than the other person.

So you may need to polish up in some of the following areas, and like we keep saying, it cuts two ways:

Any good work you do in order to get the job makes you look good to a prospective employer.

This manual will help you to learn about yourself, what skills and strengths you have, and how to develop job hunting skills.

There is no 'magic' in the job hunting process, although we all wish there were - that somehow the 'right job' will appear and we won't have to go through the many tasks that can be at the same time exciting and depressing, exhilarating and disappointing, and a lot of hard work. Realistically, however, **job hunting skills are learnable** and are the tools people must use to find and secure a job. Often the job doesn't go to the most experienced or skilled worker, but to the person who can locate employers, knows his or her skills, strengths, abilities and limitations, can communicate in written form to employers, and who interviews well.

There are many things job hunters can't control - the ups and downs of the economy, the number of job openings in a region or occupation, and the shift towards more technical job content. What you can do is to develop your job hunting skills so that you can compete effectively for available job openings and can present yourself positively to employers.

A. FIRST PLAN YOUR FUTURE, THEN PLAN YOUR JOB SEARCH

Plans are nothing, but planning is everything... You need to plan an overall long term career plan, as well as a supplementary day-to-day plan to get you where the big plan said you should be. Do you ultimately wish to become the senior partner in a law firm, a magistrate, a judge, the MD of a company, etc?

Making plans is good as it keeps you motivated and gives you a structure to operate within. If you master the combined arts of long term planning and short term problem solving, then you become a very attractive proposition to an employer. That's exactly what they want - people who think ahead and solve problems.

You are a unique individual whose needs and ambitions are yours and yours alone. Know your strengths to maximise your selection.

B. SELF-AWARENESS (IN PARTICULAR, KNOW YOUR STRENGTHS)

You are the marketing director of your skills, abilities and knowledge in the job market. Your number one objective is to close the sale as soon as possible, to the 'best' bidder. To succeed, you need to be able to present yourself - the product - to the prospective buyer in the best possible light.

Thus you must take stock of your skills, knowledge, abilities and accomplishments to set or review your goals. You must be able to compile a positive personal profile that highlights your strengths and downplays your weaknesses. Self-awareness is the most critical step towards compiling a persuasive and winning CV, towards writing a strong covering letter and preparing to be interviewed successfully. Self-awareness is your planning tool to avoid constant returns to the unemployment line.

Most South Africans do not give themselves enough credit for what they have accomplished in their personal and professional lives. As a result, we end up short-selling ourselves in the job market. This is best illustrated by how poorly we sell our educational accomplishments, our life and career experiences, our social and business contributions, especially the small ones. No accomplishment is too small. It is an accomplishment. *Your accomplishment!*

1. IDENTIFYING YOUR ACCOMPLISHMENTS

Can you identify and list your accomplishments/achievements, understand their use in self-marketing, and begin to build a sense of confidence and self-esteem? An accomplishment is anything, big or small, that you are proud of or have a sense of satisfaction about. It can be as simple as passing a test, fixing a door, or as complex as cooking the evening meal or helping to care for a younger person. People tend to overlook accomplishments that aren't very difficult to achieve or that don't receive public notice. Employers consider past success as a reliable indicator of how well a person will do in a future job. Listing your accomplishments will help you to identify skills that can be included in your CV and cover letter, and is essential to presenting yourself favourably in a job interview.

SOME ACCOMPLISHMENTS ARE:	
WORK RELATED	NON-WORK RELATED
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Good attendance at school / university • Being on time [punctuality] • Being promoted to another class every year • Solving a problem or finishing a complex problem on time • Learning new skills and procedures • Suggesting new ideas that are implemented • Volunteering for extra duties • Being picked for a team 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Learning to use power tools • Repairing something / Wiring a plug • Planting your garden • Solving a difficult problem • Organising a committee • Budgeting for spending money • Leading a youth group • Learning to sail a boat

Activity

Think about what you have done in the past that you can say, 'I'm really proud of the way I did that' or 'I had such a good feeling when I tried that'. Make lists of your accomplishments under the two headings above.

Where can you use knowledge of your accomplishment? That must be included in your letter of application and CV. You must practise speaking about these accomplishments so that they can be said confidently and without hesitation or embarrassment in an interview.

2. IDENTIFYING YOUR SKILLS

Can you identify and list your skills and determine which ones may be transferable to future job requirements? Identifying your skills and skill areas is important to job hunting, because people generally tend to think of themselves as a job title rather than a collection of abilities. The process of identifying many skills also can be a confidence-booster for a job seeker. You also develop marketable skills in leisure activities. An example of the value of leisure activities is the person who was hired for a supervisory job in a plant in which making quick decisions was a requirement. That person in leisure hours had been a referee for amateur soccer. This is also an example of how skills can be transferred from one environment into another. To be a good job hunter, you must be able to tell employers [in detail] what you can do. Remember that both paid and unpaid experience is included.

3. CHECKLIST OF STRENGTHS

Can you identify your strengths and weaknesses and their application to the job hunting process? Personal strengths are qualities that we develop as we experience life. They are influenced by parents, family and other significant people as events, problems, and experiences that shape our attitudes, including the rules we live by and how we cope. Employers, in addition to evaluating an applicant's skills and abilities, also look at personality or personal strengths. They consider such attributes as punctuality, reliability, ability to work with others, capacity to think ahead, and endurance as job strengths. Therefore, you must identify your own strengths, decide which ones would be an asset in a particular job and be able to communicate this information to the employer.

Most industrial psychologists agree that successful attorneys should possess the following qualities and skills:

QUALITIES	SKILLS
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tenacity and Commitment • Inner Locus of Control • Flexibility and Mental Agility • Integrity and Empathy • High Quality Performance • Initiating and Openness to Learning • Time Management • Extra Organizational Awareness 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Verbal Understanding and Expression • Dealing with Hostility and Conflict • Problem Diagnosis and Conceptual Reasoning • Stress Tolerance and Emotional Command • Translation of Legal Concepts • Attention to Detail

Some concrete qualities and skills (strengths) are:

Ability to Work on Your Own	Do you plan your work? Can you work by yourself?
Analytical.....	Are you a good problem solver? Do you have a logical mind?
Articulate.....	Can you express ideas easily? Are your instructions readily understood?
Competent.....	Are you able to meet deadlines? Is your work generally acceptable?
Conscientious.....	Do you believe in the phrase 'an honest day's work for a day's pay'? Can you name some unpleasant task that you have done because it had to be done else no-one else would do it? Are you punctual?
Decisive	Are you able to make clear-cut decisions under pressure? Do you stand back of them later? Have you ever had to take a firm stand and accept responsibility?
Emotionally Stable.....	Do you feel in control of yourself most of the time? Can other people count on your day-to-day mood to be agreeable. Do you ordinarily feel good will towards other people?
Leadership Ability	Do people follow your suggestions? Have you held positions of responsibility at work? At university? In clubs or community activities?
Logical	Are you able to assimilate information, analyse difficult problems, and arrive at viable solutions?
Organised	Do you keep things where they belong? Have a knack for arranging things in a logical way? Enjoy detail work? Are you an efficient planner?
Self-controlled.....	Are you slow to anger? Do you keep your head in tense situations?
Persuasive.....	Are you successful in bringing others to your point of view? In selling things and ideas?
Resourceful	Do you see what needs to be done and do it without being told? Have you ever worked your way out of a difficult situation? Etc, etc, etc.

Activity

Complete a checklist of your strengths based on the above information. Practise this statement for an interview situation. 'Two job strengths I have are and'. Get a friend to play the part of an interviewer and ask you the question, 'Why should I hire you for this job?'. Respond for approximately 40 seconds talking about your job related strengths.

4. WEAKNESSES (AND BAD HABITS)

All of us have strengths, weaknesses (and bad habits). It is important to identify job-related strengths so that we can present ourselves more positively to employers. It is also important to identify our weaknesses so that we can work and improve them and learn how to deal with them when communicating with employers. How one reacts to and addresses the weaknesses distinguishes winners from losers. Everybody has at least one that may have some negative impact on getting employment. Weaknesses can be such things as not enough experience or difficulty getting along with others, or being consistently late etc. Is there a need to list the bad habits of the 21st century...?

You want the job, so do not increase the chances of losing it by knocking yourself. Stack the cards in your favour by rather highlighting one or two areas of weaknesses specifically related to the job situation which you can improve, and as a matter of fact, that you have *already taken corrective steps toward improving*. But do not go overboard by lying to bolster your case. Be honest to yourself. This is your own self-appraisal.

Activity

Look at those items listed under strengths that you could not include in your self-awareness list. Identify those that could be considered as a weakness in your search for work or as an overall employee. Plan strategies for dealing with weaknesses, including ways to improve them or minimize their impact on getting hired. Make some notes on how you might improve or deal with these weaknesses. And, of course, remember to *but(ter) the blow...* Eg I have a low tolerance level for lazy people or I dislike it when people are late for appointments (i.e. perceived that you are not lazy or always on time...).

C. RESEARCH

Research is just a case of finding stuff out. What is one of the things employers really like? - People who can efficiently find stuff out on their own initiative. Actually, this one really holds a triple-edged benefit, because if you do manage to get an interview, the more you know about the company you want to work for, the more impressive it will look.

The main part of researching anything is keeping your eyes open. Information about your specialist subject - in this case job hunting - is all around you. Surf the web, phone a firm, etc. Occasionally you will be questioned a little more closely. 'What do you want it for?' they will say suspiciously. Possibly because they are concerned that you are a competitor trying to snoop on them, but perhaps because they have something to hide?,, You can be as honest as you want. 'I am considering a change in career/must take up articles of clerkship soon and wanted to look at everything that is available before making a decision' is fine. Or remain *incognito* - pretend to be a student researching local economic trends, etc. What you need is the inside dope.

You could also do with finding an ally within the firm who can let you know what the score is - maybe even put in a good word for you if you decide you want to work there.

1. COMPANY / FIRM RESEARCH

To succeed in your interview, you must demonstrate to the interviewer that you have done your homework. To the prospective employer it reflects your preparedness, interest, initiative and enthusiasm. The information you obtained about the company will also help you evaluate the position and the company more accurately in terms of your needs and qualifications. It also puts you in a position to better specify what you can offer the employer, and to ask intelligent questions.

2. POSITION RESEARCH

In order to address with confidence what you can offer the prospective employer, you must thoroughly understand the specifics and demands of the position for which you are applying. Your objective is to match your current and potential skills, knowledge and abilities to the job description. The information that is important to know includes the job title, immediate boss, duties and responsibilities.

You need to get to know some people. Arm yourself with information about yourself and the company. You need to brush up your networking skills.

NETWORKING

Networking just means talking to people. That's it. Talk to a lot of people and you're networking well. If you're networking to get a job, you don't even necessarily have to talk to any scary strangers in the first instance. Talk to your family and friends before you do anything else. What your contacts can do - and will probably be pleased to do - is act as an intelligence service, point you in the right direction and tip you off if they hear of anything. This is sometimes sneeringly referred to as 'nepotism'. You will hear embittered and failed job-seekers moaning 'It's not what you know, it's who you know', as if that was some kind of criminal offence.

The thing you must remember is to be nice to everyone. You never know where people might crop up again, or in what way they could be useful to you. That receptionist, for example, might be promoted to personnel officer next week. Even if she is not, there is every chance that she could have input into your future, even if it is only the Boss saying, 'What did you think of her then?'. Which is bad news if you have just been snotty to her!

DON'T	DO
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Just go asking your friends and relatives if they can get you the job. Most times they cannot and it could lead to embarrassment.• Let just anyone answer your phone during office hours - it might be a prospective employer on the other side!• Leave long-winded messages on a potential employer's answering service.• Lie to a third party about why you are trying to speak to their boss.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Keep your eyes peeled all the time for unadvertised job vacancies.• Determine if the firm you are interested in has a website. Frequent firms' websites for possible vacancies.• Use your friends and relatives to help you make contacts.• Be polite and friendly with everyone you meet. Who knows how they may be able to help you?

E. WRITING SKILLS

The very first thing that many potential employers will ever learn about you will be from your initial letter, CV or application form. If it arrives in a dog-eared, flawed with grammar, spelling and lay-out mistakes, they are not going to think much of your presentation skills. They will be forgiven for thinking that you are a sloppy individual with slapdash working practices. So getting this part right is of paramount importance. *Proof your work as if your job depends on it. It does!*

1. LETTER WRITING

The first golden rule - 'less is more'. Assume that everyone you write to is very busy. The chances are that if they have advertised a position they are going to be even busier - as a rule of thumb, any letters you do send out should fit on one A4 page. Second golden rule - never, ever write anything in your own handwriting, unless specifically asked to by a potential employer. Firms prefer to see documents that are computer-produced for two reasons. One, it demonstrates that you have a certain degree of computer literacy. Two, it's so much easier to read. Make no mistake, if five hundred applications for a job turn up and some poor sap has to wade through them all to eliminate the non-starters, the first to go to the bottom of the heap will be the handwritten ones.

At this stage you will mainly be writing speculative letters which is a similar deal to the 'cold-calling' visit or phone call. Many prospective candidate attorneys prefer this as a way of soliciting work, particularly if they're of a nervous disposition. You should be aware, however, that if you're going to go down this road, you may have to write a hell of a lot of letters, and you may not get a proportional number of replies. Do not be deterred, though - if you target your recipient carefully and write a classy letter, it can pay dividends. Remember that the object of this exercise is to get to the jobs that have not yet been advertised.

- *Everything you print* should be in black ink using an easy-to-read standard typeface.
- Spelling and grammar should be impeccable.
- You should pay particular attention to the correct spelling of names.
- Get a second opinion - ask someone to check your grammar and spelling, as well as the content of your letter.
- Always keep a hard copy of every letter in your job search file for easy reference.
- Putting 'Private and Confidential' on a letter to trick the third party into letting the boss open it, can annoy people and be counterproductive.

2. THE COVER LETTER

Write your own invitation to a job interview by crafting a winning cover letter. Where the CV communicates your accomplishments and objectives, in a personal way the cover letter gives you the opportunity to persuasively, 'personally' and directly convince the reader of your value as a prospective employee, and to persuade the reader to employ you.

The cover letter will effectively communicate your personality, interests, goals, qualifications for the job and enthusiasm. It is the first opportunity to show the prospective employer that you are a qualified professional in the job market. It forms the basis of a prospective employer's first impression of you. Demonstrate your ability to communicate effectively.

The ultimate purpose is to get the reader's attention, direct it to your CV, and evoke a desire in a prospective employer to learn more about you. Each letter you write should be specific to particular prospective employers. A cover letter is a business letter, therefore standard business letter writing rules apply: paragraphs, formal but courteous, maximum 25 words per sentence, etc. Avoid information that can turn the reader off without you having had the opportunity to interview and sell yourself in person. In no more than one concise paragraph, highlight and expand on your two or three strongest qualifications and experiences that uniquely qualify you to potentially fulfill the position requirements.

A good cover letter accomplishes five objectives - It:

- Highlights your CV.
- Emphasises how your background meets the employer's advertised requirements.
- Points out special accomplishments that are relevant to the firm.
- Asks for an interview and
- Does all this on one page.

3. THE CURRICULUM VITAE - NOT SOME KIND OF MAGIC SPELL

There is one semi-tragic irony about the CV. It revolves around the fact that it throws most serious job-seekers into panic attacks, as they fuss and fret about the perfect way to present it. What to include, what to omit, how to handle any gaps, whether or not they should include their hobbies, how long it should be and how they can get some or other present or former Member of Parliament to be a referee. However, there is research that shows that the average employer spends around 20 seconds looking at a CV, significantly less on an unsolicited effort. Sometimes as little as no time at all.

The diligently researched exploration of hidden vacancies, use of personal contacts, proper filling in of application forms and being impressive at the interview are all of much more importance. A dazzling and creative CV is not some kind of magic spell that automatically opens up hitherto locked doors to mystical new worlds of mythical employment. And provided you have followed a few basic rules, it is also highly unlikely that any consultant, guru or snake-oil salesman can improve it to the point where it absolutely guarantees you a job. So be very cautious about parting with any precious cash for a bit of fancy typing and paper clip.

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Of course you do need a CV. It helps to support any speculative letters you send in. Some employers demand to see one, and it is a damn good way of showing off what you're good at. It also adds to the complete package of you, the potential employee, as a smart, well-presented and organised prospect. So the overall impression should be of the highest standard. At a glance it should be clean, well laid out and error-free. Which means, that like your letters, it should always be typed on a computer. There is no way anyone can lay down a rule on how long your CV should be - there are too many variables - but if you are pushing into four pages, then you can start looking at ways to chop it down.

- The waffle factor must be eradicated completely, as should the temptation to make stuff up. Employers tend to check things out carefully these days before offering employment and you can be justifiably fired for lying on your CV.
- As with your letters, the spelling and grammar must be immaculate. If you can't be bothered to keep your CV error-free, what kind of standard of work can an employer expect from you?

Remember throughout that you are a fierce competitor in that famous 'ever increasingly competitive job market'. As such, you need to look for every opportunity to sell yourself and your talents. Do not be afraid to blow your own trumpet.

You would also list any languages you have - provided you really can speak them well - the status of your driving licence, or any other short courses you have completed. Do not forget to mention your newly acquired computer skills either.

Pretty much every CV should include the following information, usually in this order: Personal details, education, recent courses attended, employment history, interests and hobbies, and references. Most items are straightforward enough. Refer to the enclosed example at the back of the manual.

Let us look at some of the headings in more detail.

3.1 Personal Details

The personal details are straightforward enough. (*Please refer to the enclosed example.*)

3.2 Education

The education part is a list *in reverse chronological order* (i.e. *starting with the last qualification first*) of all academic institutions you have attended and any qualifications acquired there. If your actual grades were not all you had hoped for, then you might consider listing just the subjects that you studied and the certificates you got, as opposed to detailing any substandard grades. It is also preferably that you do not regurgitate the ±100 odd subjects in your CV, but rather request the reader to refer to an enclosed academic transcript.

3.3 Employment History / Career Biography / Work Experience

If you are in your early twenties and applying for your first job, do not be overly concerned. Employment history is perhaps one of the trickiest parts and can be the source of much anguish for job applicants (and perhaps even more for those with no employment history!).

Basically it is suppose to be a list of every job you have (and that you are not ashamed to mention in public), in *reverse chronological order* [i.e. *starting with the last job first*].

Strictly speaking a man of thirty plus would not list his work as a paper boy or student burger flipper as he would have enough career history to warrant leaving it out. If you are 22 and applying for your first job, do not worry. The prospective employer knows where you are at. They do not expect you to have an all-singing-and-dancing career history. However, it is worth putting casual and part-time jobs in the CV. It demonstrates that even as a scholar or student you were reliable and organised, or trusted with money, etc. There is also volunteering and part-time work to include.

3.4 Hobbies and Extra-Curricular Activities

This is another area that has experts debating like over-excited politicians at election time. The crux of the debate centres mainly on the argument that if you put down too many exiting but time-consuming interests, the employer will think that you do not have enough time to work. On the other hand, if you just put 'watching DSTV', they will think you are an inadequate human being with no social skills or initiative.

I would venture an opinion on this. *Only insert information that is relevant and recent.* Most employers are not going to take a decision based on your collection of long-playing records. On the other hand, they are interested to see whether you can keep 'more than one ball in the air' at the same time.

3.5 References

The final part of the document concerns references - the lovely things that a former landlady and your pastor are going to say about you that are bound to land you the job of your dreams. This is another scary area for job-seekers. If you are just starting out in the workplace, it is perfectly acceptable to use a friendly lecturer, but do not forget that you can also use anyone who has employed you on a part-time basis. And of course, if you have been doing voluntary work, then whoever runs the particular project will do just as well as a referee. It is both polite and sensible to ask them first, and also have a little bit of a chat about exactly what they might be saying about you!

Do not get too hung up about this section. A lot of employers are actually a little skeptical of glowing references. They also know that even the most snaky and underhanded of bosses would think twice about assassinating your character on paper for all posterity to see. So a reference tends to be seen as an extra precaution as opposed to being a crucial factor in deciding whether or not you are suitable for the job.

4. APPLICATION FORMS

The application form is your frontline of attack. Their whole purpose is to weed out the unsuitable before they ever get to the interview stage. So you must pay very close attention to how they look and what you include.

- Read and reread it. You need to be absolutely clear about everything they want from you, and you need to watch out for little foibles of the firm like 'do not staple sheets together' or 'do not enclose CV'.
- Next, get the thing photocopied before you even lay one mark on it. The photocopy serves two purposes: first, you can use it as a rough draft to practise on, and second, you can keep it for future reference, so that you can see exactly what you wrote before you go for the interview. Write everything in *block capitals*.

DON'T	DO
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Waffle. Keep all your job-hunting documents as short as possible.• Leave any spelling or grammatical errors in any document you send.• Put 'Refer to enclosed CV' on an application form - it will annoy the employer.• Be modest. It's okay to show off. Everyone else will.• Tell lies in a CV or application form.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Use a computer for all letters and CVs, unless specifically asked to complete something in your own handwriting.• Ring up and ask if you are not sure how to spell someone's name.• Keep copies of everything you write.• Try to change your CV so that it is angled towards each specific job.• Read application forms carefully and follow all the instructions.

Concentrate on one thing: getting invited to the interview!

F. POLISHING YOUR IMAGE

The way to get the full benefit from an interview is to show the interviewer you are prepared on the outside as well as the inside. *What they see is what they think they get!*

Unless of course you are qualified to work in a nudist camp, you are going to need some decent threads. Sorry guys, but for practically all interviews a shirt, tie and smart shoes are pretty much *de rigueur*, even today - you should really make the effort. It gives out a signal of being prepared to make an effort and many interviewers feel it shows them a degree of respect. One absolute no-no is an 'amusing' tie emblazoned with popular cartoon characters.

For women it is pretty much the same deal, except you can forget the tie. Go for smart shoes and suit in something fairly neutral. Keep the heels low and the neckline high. You know what we are trying to say here... And we know that there is a school of thought that says you should go to an interview 'dressed to knock 'em dead'. But it is better to 'keep them staying alive' and rather to be safe than sorry. Suppose the person interviewing you is a woman? Or a gay bloke? Or a sensible personnel officer with a large male staff who would like them to keep their minds totally on the task in hand?

There is no written rule on how to dress for corporate or interview success. However, through everyday observation of your surroundings, you will notice that every industry has its own unwritten rules on the appropriate dress code. The relatively conservative lawyer-look, as contrasted with the relaxed advertising industry, easily covers the range of corporate attire. As much as clothes should reflect your personal style, when going for a job interview they should reflect the style of your prospective employer. After all, they control something you want - the job!

Through skilful manipulation of dress in any particular situation, it is easy to come up with a look or style that will evoke a favourable response to your personality, needs and objects. When going for a job interview, your dress should convey, in the best light, the message that you are competent, qualified, reliable and, mostly, that you fit in. Common sense is the supreme rule of correct dress code. The industry you are going into, the profession, the specific job, the location of the company, the climate, etc., usually dictates the appropriate dress code.

- Dress to fit in with the culture of the employer. Do research.
- Be relatively conservative. Never flashy or outrageous, regardless of your style.
- Always dress for a position just a notch above the one for which you are applying.
- Always remember that you - what you can do and what you have accomplished - are the centre of attraction, not your clothes.
- Power dressing is essential.

Herewith a list of all the things we have gleaned from the experts about appearance and personal grooming at interviews. It is up to you how you dress and adorn yourself at all times, but let's hope you recognise that compromise is sometimes necessary in order to reach your goal. You know that we don't want to patronise or offend you, but:

DON'T	DO
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Let your hair obscure your eyes. You need to be able to make eye contact. It looks like you're hiding behind it. • Have a hairstyle that means you have to keep messing with it. It is distracting to the interviewer. • Forget to shave [hopefully this applies to males only!]. Stubble is trouble. Looks great on Brad Pitt or Eddie Murphy. Looks like you have not bothered to shave. • Wear too many dark clothes. It looks too gloomy. So have some <i>discreet</i> colour splashed out. Trainee undertakers or hitmen can ignore this advice. • Wear garish socks. • Brightly coloured hair is a no-no. • Big, dangly earrings are off the agenda. So is jewellery that rattles. Guys, lose the jewellery altogether. • Forget that shoes are important here, folks. Sturdy, shiny and sensible. Murphy knows why, but evidently research reveals that people do look at footwear as a test of character. • Remember that you may be walking about a bit as well, both to and from interviews and perhaps also if you are given a guided tour of the premises. Also remember - it will be expected from candidate attorneys to quickly run to the court or Master's Office - your shoes must therefore match the requirements of the job! 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Clean your teeth. And check in the mirror before you go in. Just in case breakfast is hanging around between your teeth. • Use some breath freshener or gum before you go in. But do not keep the gum for the interview. Do not take it out and stick it behind your ear either. • Keep those nails clean and short and tidy. It is another weird thing people look at as a test of character. • Bear in mind that Murphy's law dictates that it will rain on your big day. So a raincoat and umbrella are all worth considering. Keep a cloth handy to wipe your shoes before you go in. Or change to your 'interview shoes' just before you get there. • Carry a bag. But not a plastic carrier bag from Cheapo Superstores. The recommendation is a small attaché case or leather folder. Do not have two bags if you are a woman. Put everything into one smart, slim-line affair. • Leave all your other accessories and umbrella in reception before you go into the interview. You do not want to be fumbling around with stuff while you are in there. • Make sure you look okay from the back as well. You do not want the skirt-tucked-into-the-knickers thing happening to you! Watch out for the translucent. You do not want the knickers-showing-through-the-skirt-thing happening, do you? • Ditch any badges, jewellery or insignia that affiliates you with any kind of religious, political or social group. You might just arouse some prejudice in an interviewer. • Have a bath, and use deodorant. Oh, for crying out loud!? Honestly, that is one of the top ten tips in the opinion of a lot of 'recruitment experts'.

G. IT'S THE FINAL COUNTDOWN...

Preparing for an interview takes time and effort. But the time invested could be the difference between a job offer and a reject letter. Preparation is not a substitute for actual skills, but it will put those skills in favorable light every time. As you review the final checklist, remember to Rehearse! Rehearse! Rehearse! Did you...

- Conduct research to anticipate prospective employers' questions?
- Develop your skills grid?
- Write cover letter referencing prospective employers' requirements and 'selling' yourself?
- Develop a CV using broad-brush statements and action verbs?

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- Use M-A-T-T-E-R to increase your opportunity to make reasoned, applicable responses?
 - Rehearse your responses to anticipate employer questions?
 - Anticipate a list of pet questions and develop answers for them?
 - Prepared your draft follow-up letter to the employer?
 - Double check grammar, spelling, sentence structure etc. on all the above?

H. THE INTERVIEW – YOUR BIG MOMENT!

Remember that whoever is interviewing you knows that you are nervous and will take that into consideration. It is the critical time when your sales presentation will either make or break your job application. You have the right product - yourself - and a willing and able buyer - the prospective employer - otherwise you would not have been invited to be interviewed. This is now your chance to present yourself in person and to support the propositions made in the cover letter and the CV that preceded you and landed you the job interview. Your purpose at the interview with the prospective employer will not be to beg for a job, but rather to negotiate terms of the offer. Keep your goal in mind - ahead of you. Be confident and assertive. Do not be shy about your accomplishments. Make your presentation and appearance speak volumes about your qualifications for the job.

So when you walk in, for heaven's sake, help the poor lambs out. You need to show a little sympathy by letting them know you can do this job, you want to do this job, you are going to stick at it and you are the answer to their prayers.

The purpose of the interview for both parties will always be to decide whether or not to progress your application any further. That means both of you! The employer is trying to decide whether to progress your application, and you should also be assessing whether or not you would really want to work there. So, the first interview is really a little bit like a blind date - assessing whether there is a potential 'fit' between the two parties.

1. THE BALANCE OF POWER

In this situation the balance of power is actually about equal - it just does not feel like it! Given that you and the employer are both assessing each other to some extent, the balance of power is actually fairly evenly distributed. What changes the balance of power is how badly you want / need the job - how badly you want to progress to the next stage. The more you want or need the job, the more the balance of power shifts to the employer. In an interview where you feel under-confident, it can often be useful to remember that you are checking them out as well. This can make you feel a lot better and more confident. You do have some power - after all, they need someone, and you are both available and interested and also perhaps ideal for the job!

2. THE START OF THE INTERVIEW

Research claims that the first 30 seconds are when the decision is made. Although this is not quite true (I estimate it at two minutes), this is usually the time when the interviewer makes up his or her mind about you in many ways. Think about what actually happens in the first 30 seconds. In this short period of time you are likely to be:

- Knocking on a door / being escorted into the interview area
- Seeing the interviewer(s) for the first time
- Walking in
- Saying hello, shaking hands and sitting down
- Accepting or declining water, tea or coffee.

Wow! A lot goes on, doesn't it? And in this short space of time people make decisions about what they think of you. So *each of these things is important!*

3. MAKING AN ENTRANCE

Do not be too timid. A shaky tap on a door sometimes gets ignored, as people are not sure if someone was there or not - give a businesslike knock. After invited to enter, walk in, go towards the interviewer to shake hands and say hello. This shows your self-confidence.

4. SEEING THE INTERVIEWER(S) FOR THE FIRST TIME

So now you can see the monster(s) of whom you have been nervous! Look them in the eye and smile. If they look away from you, keep looking at them - and keep smiling. Say hello, and offer your hand to shake - do not wait for them to shake hands. Do make sure you shake hands sensibly. You actually need to take hold of the person's hand and shake it - once. At the same time, introduce yourself if this has not already happened. Something like 'Dorris Day, nice to meet you', with a smile. To do all this you need to have got ready, and put bags, briefcases, etc., down or have them in your

left hand to leave your right hand free.

5. GETTING SETTLED

Sit down when invited to - in a western culture it is regarded as bad-mannered if you just sit down without waiting to be asked. When the interviewer says 'take a seat', remember to say thank you. It's not just polite, it fills the silence and dialogue helps to break the ice. Get relaxed and comfortable. Fidgeting during the interview almost always creates a bad impression, so get yourself settled now.

6. REFRESHMENTS

If there is nothing visible and you are asked, the best option is probably to decline. If drinks are in the room, it is perfectly safe to say 'if you are having something I shall join you, but otherwise I am fine, thank you'. This means that there is no need for the interviewer(s) to order something specially, which can take time and make the atmosphere strained. You should avoid eating something at all costs - it is very hard to answer questions with your mouth full!

7. BREAKING THE ICE

Most interviewers have a few questions ready at the beginning to break the ice and put you at ease. Be careful how you answer them. Often asked questions are such as 'so, did you find us ok?' or 'how was the journey?' Never tell them you had any problem getting there - if you get the job, you will have to make that journey every day, remember! Beware of giving anything other than a good impression.

8. POISE

What is poise? Easy, self-possessed assurance of manner; gracious tact in coping or handling; a particular way of carrying oneself. In the initial meeting, expect the interviewer to 'break the ice' prior to beginning the formal interview. This may include the exchange of pleasantries, questions about your trip to the firm, etc. Why? To give you time to adjust to the environment and give you an opportunity to calm down. If you are like most people, you will be a little nervous. This is your time to display poise under pressure and it gives you the opportunity to collect yourself.

9. RAPPORT

Job offers are sometimes won or lost because of inadequate relationship skills. Good relationship skills can be demonstrated by establishing a positive rapport with the interviewer. To meet this goal you should make constant eye contact with all interviewers, show a friendly and cordial demeanour, express thanks for being invited to the interview and expand on areas of mutual interest *introduced by the interviewer*, such as sports, books and so on.

10. THOROUGHNESS OF RESPONSE

This involves never letting your stream of consciousness bring you to your answer naturally. Never sell yourself short with too short answers. Interviewers want to hear responses that answer every aspect of a question. Image is built through communication and a complete, concise, well thought-out answer will put you in a more favourable light. Think before you respond. Respond in detail, but never waffle.

11. NOTE YOUR SURROUNDINGS

It is easier to build a positive image and rapport if you can find common areas of interest with the interviewer. While most interviewers will not admit to biases, all have them. Upon entering the interviewer's office, note the pictures, posters, photographs or degrees on the wall. Look for signs of hobbies, favourite vacation spots, and so on. Expand on noted areas of mutual interest.

12. EXPRESS YOURSELF CLEARLY

Interviewers are impressed by those who detail their qualifications in an articulate manner. Language usage is a measure of intelligence and education. Use it to your advantage to enhance your image with the interviewer. Choose your words carefully. State your sentences clearly.

13. REFLECT ON THE GOOD AND THE NOT SO GOOD

Honest answers will enhance your image. Not every situation you have experienced was favourable. Not every performance review was outstanding. Know that you will dominate the conversation by doing approximately 80% of the talking. The interviewer has a limited amount of time to analyse whether you can do the job, so maximise that effort with detailed, but brief responses.

14. BODY LANGUAGE

The subject of body language is enough to fill a book in itself - but before you rush out and buy one, remember that there are so much information and advice on body language available that it can be very bewildering. Here are some solid hints, listed from your head downwards, which will ensure you do not go far wrong.

14.1 Head

Smile, and do not look too serious and nervous. Even a nervous smile is better than gritted teeth! Look at the interviewer(s) - eye contact is one of the most important things people notice. Nod when you agree with them. Try to maintain an interested expression when they are talking.

14.2 Upper Body

Do not lean too far back, or slouch - it looks over-casual. Do not lean forward too much either. It can look good to lean forward when making a point, but beware of appearing too forceful or eager.

14.3 Hands

It is better not to fold your arms - it signals to the vast majority of people that you are unapproachable and uncomfortable. After all, your arms create a physical barrier between you and the interviewer. Find a relaxed position for your hands - resting casually in your lap, or one hand in the other - whatever you feel comfortable with. Do not be afraid to use your hands when making a point, but beware of waving them about too much, as it can be distracting.

14.4 Lower Body

Just do what feels comfortable with your legs. Cross them or not, but do not stick them out in front of you. If you cross your legs, beware of crossing and uncrossing them several times. This only makes you look nervous, uncomfortable and fidgety.

15. ESSENTIALS TO GET ACROSS

15.1 The Interviewer's Main Concerns

- Do you really want the job? Can you make a contribution? If not, they are wasting their time and possibly losing other candidates by pursuing you.
- What is your history of success and how does it apply to the firm and its current and future plans?
- Would you fit in? If not, things might go wrong and cause more problems.
- Would you stay? If not, they will have to go through this recruitment all over again in a year or two or even months.
- Would you work hard?
- Are you stupid or an antisocial slob?
- Would you steal from them?
- Would you make them money and save them time?

So assuming that you do have the skills for the job, you need to convince the interviewer that you want it, you would fit in well and you'd stay a reasonable length of time before looking for new pastures.

Do you see how you can maximise your chances of doing well by making sure you address these concerns?

15.2 Addressing the Three Main Concerns

Basically, employers are reassured by candidates who exhibit the above things. A fairly common question is 'Where do you see yourself in five year's time?' Interviewers seem to ask this to see whether you are ambitious or not. Many candidates, not wishing to appear unambitious, say in a much senior role. Now there is nothing wrong with this answer, but it all adds to the impression the interviewers may be picking up about concern three - whether you would stay. Remember, ***always include the firm in your future career plans!***

I. ANSWERING TOUGH QUESTIONS

There are a large number of books available on answering interview questions. The purpose of this section is not to duplicate them, but to explain in general what you should try to put across in answer to some of the questions. If you know what you want to put across, you can then choose your own form of words that sounds and feels right for you, and fits your own style and personality. After all, there is nothing worse than learning words from a book and then trying to remember what to say under pressure.

You will not find many suggested answers here, but this section aims to give you a good overview of questions and what information the recruiters are looking or hoping for. This should enable you to think of your own answers.

1. GENERAL ADVICE FOR ANSWERING QUESTIONS

Listen and Understand

- Listen to the question.
- Ask for clarification if you do not understand.
- If the interviewer speaks too fast or has an accent, do not be afraid to ask them to repeat the question.

Control Your Nerves

- Remember that nerves or stress can have an effect on your voice.
- Do not speak too quickly or too slowly when answering.
- Do not ramble on - keep answers to the point and relatively brief.

Help the Interviewer(s) Out

- Always remember - not all interviewers are experts. You may have to try to give them the information they want, if they do not ask for it themselves.
- Do not take questions literally - it usually leads to one-word answers.
- Do not give yes or no answers - expand slightly without giving too long an answer.

2. QUESTION SUBJECTS

There are literally thousands of questions that you could be asked in an interview. Here are some of the main question types classified by what the interviewer is looking for.

3. BEHAVIOURAL QUESTIONS OR COMPETENCY-BASED QUESTIONS

These questions are aimed at eliciting examples of past performance. They usually ask for examples of past situations you have been in, what happened, and how you reacted or behaved. Why use competency-based interviews? Quite simply, the theory is that the best predictor of future performance is past performance. Therefore, by gathering examples of how you behaved in previous situations, the interviewer can predict how you would function in the job.

Positive Examples

- Describe a time when you achieved something even though you didn't really think you could do it.
- Describe the most difficult decision you had to make this year.
- Give me an example or two of when you have had to make a split-second decision, without time to plan or research the outcome.
- Give me a situation where you had to achieve an important goal and were in danger of not doing it.

Negative Examples

- Describe the most stressful situation you have been in.
- Give me an example of when you have missed an important deadline and what you did to rectify the situation.
- Can you give an example of a time when you've tried to achieve something but still failed?
- What is the most unpopular thing you've had to do?

4. ADVICE FOR COMPETENCY-BASED INTERVIEWS

If You Have Never Been in That Situation

- If you have never been in the situation before, say so. Never just make something up without being asked to.
- Try, 'Sorry, I have never been in that situation. I could imagine my response if you like'.
- Try, 'Sorry, I cannot remember ever being in that situation, but I did face something similar that I could discuss.'

If You Cannot Think of Anything

- Never just say, 'Sorry, I cannot think of anything.'
- Think laterally. Check your memory for social situations, school or even family examples. *But stay clear of emotional problems - you might become emotional, and thus be perceived as emotionally unstable!*
- Ask for more time. If you still cannot think of anything, ask if you can come back to the question later.

If the Example That Comes to Mind Ended in Disaster!

- If you've been asked for a negative example, fine, give it.
- If asked for a positive example, preface your example by warning that it did not end well: 'Well, this did not actually work out the way I planned, but it illustrates the point pretty well, and I did learn a lot from it. The situation was..'
- Always end with a positive. What you learnt from it, what steps you put in place to prevent reoccurrence, etc.

If You Can Think of Several Examples

- Choose the one that illustrates you in the best possible light.
- Choose the work-related one if there is one, rather than one involving, say, family or social activities.
- Choose the one most relevant to the job in question.
- Ask permission to answer the question slightly differently, if it will show you in a better light and be more relevant.

5. SERL - A RELIABLE METHOD FOR STRUCTURING ANSWERS

Structure your answers with the mnemonic SERL - situation, effect, response, and learning. But do not be too long-winded - a sentence or two on each step is plenty.

Situation

Describe the situation in enough detail so that the interviewer can see it is relevant. You do not need to say a lot or describe the incident or situation in detail.

Example

'Well, I was working as a cashier when a customer complained that I had short changed her. She claimed she gave me R500, instead she only gave me R100 - but there was no way I could prove otherwise'.

Effect

Describe the effects the situation had - on you, the company, etc.

Example

'It made me feel helpless and desponded. The Manager was upset about this incident at the pay-point. We were in danger of losing the customer's business'.

Response

Describe how you responded - what you did, what you organised, the changes you made.

Example

'I kept in mind that the customer is always right. I apologised and gave her R450. That night the balance on the till was R450 short, which I had to pay in. Almost my whole day's earnings went up in smoke! The next morning the customer came back and said that she has realised the previous night that she has made a mistake - she found the R500 note which she thought she gave to me'.

Learning

Describe what you learnt from the experience - especially important if the example was a negative one, but a good idea even in positive situations.

Example

'She called my Manager to explain that I remained at my best behaviour with her, although she was wrong. Also, it taught me a good lesson - after that I always clearly announced the sum of money I received from a customer before processing a transaction'.

Checklist - Do's and Don'ts

- Understand what competencies are.
- Give positive examples wherever possible.
- If forced to give a negative example, ensure you show what you have learned from the experience.
- Plan how to react if you cannot find an example.
- Remember the SERL model for structuring your responses.

6. MOTIVATIONAL QUESTIONS

These are questions that are trying to determine your motivation - to discover more about what drives you. By this we mean your motivation for doing this job, for this firm, your motivation for studying law, whatever. They tend to be the 'why' questions.

Examples

- Why do you want to work for this firm? *or* Why are you interested in working for us? *or* Why have you applied for this position?
- How ambitious are you? *or* Where do you see yourself in five years?
- What would you say are your greatest weaknesses?

Give positive reasons wherever possible. These are called 'pull factors' - things that motivate you *towards* them. If possible, avoid talking about 'push factors' - these are things that motivate you *away from* them [unless specifically asked]. 'Towards motivation' is more positive and likely to be more genuine and well thought out. For example:

- Say: 'I'd like to work here because you have an excellent reputation, and you can offer me an increased challenge, wider experience and opportunities to develop my career.'
- Not: 'I'd like to work here because I'm have now finished my studies, and it's time for me to complete my clerkship in order to be admitted as an attorney.'

In the above example you can see the difference between 'towards' and 'away from' motivation quite clearly. The 'towards motivation' sounds far more attractive to an employer. If asked about your motivation to work for the firm or do the job, show enthusiasm and interest in it. Show the interviewer how much research you have done. Let them know what you think you can bring to the firm. Avoid saying anything too negative. If asked about a weakness or anything that requires a negative answer, always balance it with a positive, for example:

- 'My greatest weakness would have to be deadlines, so I have a system of To Do lists which I have developed over years. I update my lists daily, to make sure tasks and deadlines are all accounted for and factored into my priorities. I've found it works for me in all my jobs, and it means I never miss a deadline any more!'

7. CHALLENGING QUESTIONS

These are questions that challenge your skills, abilities, experience and knowledge.

Examples

- Why should we hire you? Your experience seems light for this role - what do you think?
- What do you feel you have to offer this position? What can you offer us that someone else can't?
- What parts of the job do you feel you would have most trouble with?

These questions usually make most people feel on the defensive, so it is important not to react to them instinctively. Remember that this is not a personal attack, the interviewer is simply trying to home in on one area in detail. Try to turn the question round into an opportunity to shine. If you feel defensive, remember not to let these questions reduce your confidence. They chose to interview you, so you have enough relevant skills and abilities to make it worth their time interviewing you.

8. DEMONSTRATIVE QUESTIONS

These are questions which ask you to demonstrate how you do things. They are a little like behavioural or competency-based questions, but rather than being phrased as a question which asks for a specific example, they leave the question more open.

Examples

- How do you cope under stress? How do you react to criticism?
- How ambitious are you?
- How good are you at detailed work?

These are basically behavioural or competency-based questions badly phrased. For example, by 'how do you cope under stress?', the interviewer probably means 'can you give me an example of when you have coped under a lot of stress?' Because the question is phrased badly, it enables the candidates to hypothesise and make up a good answer about how well they behave under stress, without any evidence to back it up. The best idea is to answer with an example, as if this were a competency-based question.

Example: 'How do you cope under stress?'

- Answer: 'Well, the last time I faced this was when... and I responded by... and now I find that when my stress levels get very high this technique usually works. I just take a few deep breaths, and set myself a deadline to work towards, after which I take a short break to clear my head.'
- Not: 'I take some deep breaths and take a break as soon as I can.'

9. INFORMATION QUESTIONS

These questions are simply factual questions, designed to gain additional facts and data.

Examples

- What do you dislike doing?
- What magazines and newspapers do you read?
- What do you do to keep yourself up to date in your field?

Answer these questions factually, and keep it short - the interviewer may have a number of facts he or she wishes to check, so long answers mean they cannot ask all the questions they would like. In any event, this type of question really does not warrant a long answer.

At the same time avoid one- or two-word answers, such as 'nothing' or the '*The Citizen*'. Convert the answer into a short sentence.

10. QUESTION TYPES

There are several different ways of asking for the same information. Understanding the types of questions you might face can help you think on your feet and come up with good answers.

10.1 Closed Questions

Closed questions are questions that give you very little room to respond. The question is phrased in such a way as to limit your answer.

Examples

- How many students were in the team?
- How long did you work there?
- What was the average obtained in last year's studies?
- What was your job title?

How to Respond

They have asked a question that asks for a very specific piece of information. Do not therefore give them a great, long, rambling answer. Answer the question and expand if necessary to at most one or two sentences.

Example: 'What was the average obtained in last year's studies?'

Answer: 'I obtained an average of 65%.' Not: '65%.'

10.2 Yes/No Questions

These are like closed questions, but require only a yes/no answer. Inexperienced interviewers tend to use them in error.

Examples

- Do you have a degree?
- Are you good under pressure?
- Are you very ambitious?
- Do you respond well to aggressive or difficult clients?

Although all these questions can be answered with a simple yes or no, the interviewer is probably not looking for that. Iso, although a simple yes or no might be appropriate for one or two questions, if the interviewer has a number of these then answering just yes or no all the time will make you appear to be a poor communicator. Finally, giving yes or no answers does not give you any chance to shine - it means you do not offer your good qualities and examples to the interviewer.

Example: 'Are you good under pressure?'

- Answer: 'Yes, I have been under pressure recently regarding ... and I managed to keep everything in order by...'
- Not : 'Yes'.

10.3 Hypothetical Questions

These questions ask you to imagine what you would do in a given situation. They are actually very poor questioning techniques, as they allow the worst candidates to imagine how good they might be at something, and then talk about that. It means their faults are never exposed.

Examples

- Imagine you are on the phone with a client, and likely to be some time, when an angry client walks in and wants to talk to you now - even though you are on the phone. What would you do?
- What would you do if you had responsibility for that area?

How to Respond

You have two choices really. If you have been in that situation before you can use this as an example. If the example went badly, you can still use it if you like, but make it positive by saying how you would behave differently now.

Example: 'Well, that happened to me once, and how I handled it was by... Of course, now I've seen how that went, I might change my approach slightly and...'

Secondly, if you have never been in that situation before you may hypothesise - which is basically making something up! This is why these questions aren't very good - having candidates guess how they might react isn't a very good predictor of how they might behave in the job. If you face this sort of question, make your guess relevant to the job - forcing the interviewer to actually picture you doing the job.

Example: 'I've never been in this situation, but assuming I was successful and working for you, I think I'd handle it like this...'

10.4 Funnel Questions

These are also called probing questions. They are not actually one question, but a sequence of them, where the interviewer probes more and more deeply into something by a series of questions.

Examples

- 'What IT experience have you had? What software packages? How often have you used them? To what level?'
- 'You say you like organising events. What sort of events have you organised? What was the largest? Who else helped organise it? So were you in charge? What specifically was your involvement?'

They attempt to pin you down, and this can make you feel very uncomfortable, even cornered and intimidated. If you do have any areas on your CV or application that have been embellished in any way, they may be exposed by this line of questioning. Be aware of these questions and how they are likely to make you feel. This may make it a little easier for you to stay positive and focused and not feel intimidated.

11. WHAZZA MATTER YOU, HEY?

Remember, every interview question has a purpose. Your best chance at a solid response comes from preparation and your ability to display certain characteristics associated with each type of question in the M-A-T-T-E-R anagram, which gives the prospective employers the answers that they are looking for!

Motivation	Provide examples of the internal satisfaction you get from teamwork / solo work / seeing a task through to completion.
Ambition	Mention examples of past upward mobility, a willingness to relocate for a good opportunity, or desire to learn new tasks and skills.
Technical	Demonstrate a working knowledge of your area(s) of expertise and how you maintain currency in your chosen field, including continuing education, professional memberships, etc.
Theoretical	Show a rational thought process that flows logically from start to finish and incorporate a positive attitude.
Energy	Be interested and enthusiastic, not only regarding the specific topic, but also in terms of how you can be a part of furthering the concepts being discussed.
Relationships	Let the interviewer(s) see your concern for past and present relationships and your willingness to always be a part of the solution and not the problem. Downplay conflicts as 'business, not personal', and as constructive and pro-active.

A key to a successful interview is to reflect on your own style, needs and requirements in advance, so you that you will be prepared to answer the questions that M-A-T-T-E-R. Your ability to relate these personal elements to the interviewer(s) is of supreme importance. The interviewer(s) must see and hear them in order to give you proper

consideration. Start preparing for the interview with the M-A-T-T-E-R grid.

12. WHAZZA M-A-T-T-E-R? GRID

M-A-T-T-E-R	Examples	Your experience
Motivation	Challenging work, new tasks, working with people	What motivates you? 1. 2. 3.
Ambition and goals	Steady advancement, increased responsibility, complete LLB/Master's degree	What are your aspirations? 1. 2. 3.
Technical skills	Certifications, degrees, honours, recognitions, special training	What skills and credentials do you bring to the position? 1. 2. 3.
Theoretical	Unique situations and/or experiences	Describe situations where you succeeded or failed in past jobs/studies and how you gained from the experience. 1. 2. 3.
Energy	Active displays of energy and enthusiasm	How will you demonstrate enthusiasm? 1. 2. 3.
Relationships	Well-liked by co-workers, served on committees, active in community service	What situations can you describe to demonstrate professional relationships? 1. 2. 3.

13. THE 'POSITIVE TWIST' APPROACH

All questions should be answered in a positive manner wherever possible. Even when the reality of a situation may have been less than positive, you should try to find positive aspects and emphasize those. Never lie, but downplay negative disagreements. For example, if you generally disagreed with everything your supervisor said or did, you should not say 'I am just glad to get away from her. She was completely clueless about how to run a restaurant.' Instead you should consider: 'My supervisor and I did not always agree on every issue nor did we totally agree on the direction the department should take each and every time. However, after voicing my opinion, if she decided to go in a certain direction, I would always work towards the success of that direction.'

Turning negatives into positive experiences will always enhance your image. This type of response does three things:

- It solidifies your role as a team player.
- It shows that you are willing to implement ideas different from your own.
- It demonstrates a willingness on your part to actively, yet diplomatically disagree on direction.

It is a good rule to always look for and state the positive in any situation.

J. INTERVIEWING THE INTERVIEWER(S)

At the end of the interview the interviewers usually ask whether you have any questions. This is a somewhat sticky area for many interviewees, as they are not sure what to say.

Remember, the interview is a two-way process. The interviewer(s) has questions to ask you regarding your qualifications and suitability for the position, and you have questions to ask the firm regarding personal development prospects and your cultural fit with the company. The interviewer and interviewee should both receive and provide information. Interviewing the interviewer will prepare you to ask intelligent questions, and impress the interviewer with your interest and curiosity. It is your final chance to make an evaluation of the job, the company, your prospective team, and their fit with your career plans, needs and aspirations.

The best questions to ask are those that give the interviewer(s) an opportunity to describe the firm, the position, or other circumstances that lead to success in the position. They will also help you to understand what you are getting yourself into and whether you feel this is the job for you. Asking questions demonstrates interest on your part, so do

not be shy. However, you should limit your questions to two to three. This is your time to find out about the firm, not to conduct another interview.

1. PREPARE, PREPARE, PREPARE!

Prepare in advance. Have one or two *short* questions ready, so that when you are asked if you have any you can appear both intelligent and interested by asking something. You do not have to use the ones you have prepared - if something better occurs during the interview, ask that instead. But if you are short of ideas, showing an interest in the organisation and its plans for the future is a great idea. If you want to look like a fool, ask questions that have already been covered or answered.

2. QUESTIONS TO AVOID - GENERAL

Avoid questions that make it appear that you are concerned about joining them. So do not ask about possible takeovers, the risk of redundancy or potential closure. Try also to avoid questions that make it appear as if you have reservations - so do not ask questions such as:

- 'Would I have to be involved in...?'
- 'Is it a problem if ...?'
- 'How important is it that I...?'

3. QUESTIONS TO AVOID - PAY AND FRINGE BENEFITS

You can expect a question such as 'How much money do you want?', or a variation on this theme such as 'Are you happy with the advertised salary?' You do not really want to be discussing the money just yet, you want to be absolutely sure you have hooked them first. It could put them off if you start banging on about how much you need and expect.

- Do not ask about pay or benefits unless the interviewers raise the subject of a job offer.
- Avoid specific questions about terms and conditions and salary until the appropriate stage - which is usually not the first interview. Many interviewers want to make up their mind first, and then worry about the potential deal later.
- Asking about money at a too early stage makes you seem money-oriented, which a lot of people [*especially attorneys!*] dislike! An applicant who asks questions about money issues before an offer is made, appears to be interested only in money and not in doing the job.

If you must ask questions about pay, fringe benefits, or promotions, combine the question with a statement that shows your interest in the job and organisation: 'I applied for this position because I felt your firm could use someone with my skills and abilities', and follow up this statement with the following possibilities:

- 'Could you tell me if the firm offers opportunities for candidate attorneys who show they can work well to be appointed as professional assistants?' (Do not include questions relating to possibilities of becoming an associate or partner in the firm - remember, at this stage, you are seeking clerkship and possible employment after completion of your articles of clerkship! - as these questions might be perceived as being presumptuous/arrogant/pushy/threatening).
- 'Would you mind telling me the pay **range** for candidate attorneys at this firm/the firm has in mind for this job?'. ★
- 'I am sure that I shall prove to you that I am worth whatever salary you can afford to pay me.'
- 'I really want this job, and I do not think that I would be prepared to let the issue of money stand in the way.'
- 'I have a good idea of what I need to live on, and I'd hope that it would match that requirement, but I think you will find me flexible when it comes to actually discussing the terms and conditions.'
- 'I expect that you would pay me a salary that commensurate with my qualification(s) and abilities (and experience, if applicable, taking into account my responsibilities here).'

Please feel free to make your own additions to this list. [*★ Probably the best question and answer (??)*]

4. SAFE QUESTIONS

- 'Assuming I get the job, how big a team would I be working with? The interviewer starts to imagine you in their team. This is a very good move on your part, as imagining important events is something we do all the time. Make yourself part of their imagined picture, and they are most likely to feel you're the right person for the job.
- 'What would you say should be my number one priority if I am offered this job?' Again, this question forces the interviewer to picture you actually doing the job.
- 'What happens next?' It helps to know how long you are likely to wait before hearing anything. Be warned, it is best to leave this question to the very end, and be very casual about it.
- 'How would you describe the overall structure of the firm?'

-
- 'What is the structure of the department where I will work?'
 - 'What is the predominant management style of the firm?'
 - 'What are the most important objectives facing the department where I will work?'
 - 'What interpersonal skills are required to be successful in this position?'
 - 'What other departments will I work in, if any?'

Please feel free to make your own additions to this list. *[To avoid being presumptuous, remember to always add 'should I be the successful applicant' or 'assuming I get the job' to your questions!]*.

5. NEVER EVER!

- Say you have no questions, if you can possibly avoid it. But **do not** ask questions on topics which already have been explained to you or which already have been brought to your attention.
- Ask whether you have got the job.
- Ask how the interviewer feels about the interview or your application.
- Fall down on your knees and beg to be appointed!

K. END OF THE INTERVIEW

Once the interview is over, you have to get out gracefully.

The process of getting up, gathering your possessions, shaking hands, opening the door and getting away can be a very jumbled and clumsy period. It can even be easy to undo a good interview by saying something through nerves and relief. Candidates have been known to say 'well, I'm glad that's over' or 'I can relax now', even 'I hope you find the right person for the job!' It is surprising how some people react!

Getting out is just as important as making an entrance. Stand up, gather your things, smile, lean over or walk over and shake hands, and head for the door. When you shake hands, it is good to simply say 'it was nice meeting you'. Avoid 'thank you for your time' or 'I hope to see or hear from you soon' - keep it simple, to leave a good lasting impression. Do not apologise on the way out - remember that the last thing you say makes an impression, so do not leave the interviewers with the impression that you feel guilty for wasting their time! Do not forget to say thanks and goodbye to the receptionist, or anyone else you should be grateful to.

L. AFTER THE INTERVIEW

On the day you were interviewed, unless your interview was uninvited, chances are you were not the only candidate for the job on offer. If you were interviewed in the middle lot, chances are the interviewer probably forgot about you already, remembering the first and last interviews better. Most interviewees are under the impression that after the interview the ball is now squarely in the interviewer's court. Not quite! **You can influence the decision** that the interviewers make by your actions after the interview.

The following day, after you had a good think about the preceding day's events, you'd be well advised to fire off a letter to whoever interviewed you. It should not be a long one, it should just thank them for seeing you, perhaps reaffirm that you are really keen on the job, and finally you should take the opportunity to clean up that little mess you made. Resist the temptation to give a complete action replay of the entire interview. Just take the one most important thing you feel you would like to clarify. Something in line with the example herewith. The faster your letter goes the better.

Aside from the rare good manners you have shown, and the initiative in clearing up your mess, the point is that they may not have made a decision yet. Even if the letter does not swing it your way, it shows that you are potentially one hell of an employee!

If you are a proper job hunter, as opposed to one who waits for jobs to turn up, you know you will have plenty to do while you wait for their reply. There are more opportunities to track down, firms to research, letters to write, contacts to be made and interviews to attend. If you do nothing but sit there waiting for the envelope to drop onto the mat informing you that you have got the job, how are you going to feel if it says you have not?

The other news that the envelope might bring could leave you in a little bit of a no man's land. It could say that you have been invited back for a second interview. Now you are in a heightened state of ambivalence. On the one hand it means that you were good enough for serious consideration. On the other, you have to go through the whole rotten process all over again. Well, at least you have a good idea of what you are up against now. And it cannot hurt to get on the phone and start probing those contacts again. If at all possible, you need to find out exactly what they are looking for and how you can improve yourself to ensure that you stroll off with the honours.

M. YOU'RE NOT A FAILURE

Ouch! Let's face it, when that 'Dear Johnny' drops on the mat, you are going to feel pretty lousy anyway, no matter how many other irons you have in the fire. But if you pinned all your hopes on this one, then it is going to be even harder to pick yourself up, dust yourself down and get back in the saddle. Look, we never led you down the garden path here. We made it clear early on that it was going to be tough. That this manual would not guarantee you the gig and there was every chance you would fail the first few times. So do not get too distressed. Kick the cat again, have a big long sulk, and then try to get it into perspective. Sure, it's bad news, but it is not the end of the road.

First of all, it may not be your fault. You might even have been the best candidate, given the most impressive interview and had the finest credentials. But someone else could have been earmarked for the position from the word go. And it is a sad thing to have to say, but maybe they just did not like you. Research has been done that suggests a lot of employers make up their mind about a candidate within seconds of them walking through the door. You just cannot legislate for blinkered thinking of that caliber.

Secondly, this may not be the end of your chances with that employer. If you really have put as much effort into your job seeking as it needs, then you must have been pretty impressive. Which means that the next time an opportunity comes up, they may automatically reach for your phone number.

A lot of employers will offer you feedback on how you performed as a matter of course - if they do not, then try to get some. By doing that you demonstrate how keen you still are, and you may well get to learn something vital about yourself that will stand you in good stead when it comes to applying for the next job.

Of course, what we are all hoping for is that when the envelope plops onto the mat (or on your Blackberry screen!), you open it and it confirms that you have indeed got the job. What a rush that will be! The end of the trail and the start of a whole new life. We knew they wanted you, and you were so cool and impressive that you made them realise it. Congratulations! Do your best for your new employer. Become a trusted team player who is willing to go the extra mile. Study your job description to know exactly what is expected of you. Remember, at office functions you do not need to be the life of the party. Decision makers keep an eye on the social behaviour of their employees. Always adhere to the profession's ethics and code of conduct. Do not get involved or be drawn into firm politics.

Your career is in your hands - make the most of it!

EXAMPLE OF A COVER LETTER

Physical Address: No. 15, Aardklop Flats, 453 Schoeman Street, Arcadia, Pretoria, 0001 ■ Mobile: 083-469-9112 ■ E-mail: Doris.Day@gmail.com

Dorris Day

Identity Number: 981115 0047 08 0

3 February 2012

**MRS LADY GAGA: HR MANAGER
JACK PARROW & ASSOCIATES
PO BOX 4567
0001 JOHANNESBURG**

Dear Mrs Gaga

APPLICATION FOR ARTICLES OF CLERKSHIP AS FROM JANUARY 2013

As a final year law student at the Faculty of Law, University of Pretoria, I am writing to express my interest in articles of clerkship at your firm for 2013/14. Although I was born and bred in the KZN Province, I am desirous to serve my clerkship in the Gauteng region.

I had the opportunity to work in a law firm during the 2011 June/July recess. This experience exposed me to a diverse set of legal issues ranging from unfair dismissals to criminal cases which provided me with the opportunity to witness the critical role that attorneys play in ensuring justice for all parties in need of representation. Most importantly, this externship furthered my desire to dedicate my legal career to addressing the systematic barriers preventing millions of South Africa from accessing legal protections and remedies.

You may note that I have acquired excellent communication and organisational skills through my experience as a leader and debater in school, and tutoring during my tertiary studies. I am capable to liaise and communicate clearly, effectively, confidently and concisely, both verbally and in writing. My working experience has provided me with a platform to further develop the essential skills required in a legal practice, such as to integrate well and to foster positive and harmonious relationships with colleagues. In short - my academic, personal and professional experience has solidified my commitment to the legal profession and, in particular, to the attorneys' profession. I pay attention to detail while still managing the workload and priorities effectively. I believe that I could make a valuable contribution in your reputed firm by applying the same skills.

I have not yet determined the area of law in which I will practice; I do however have an avid interest in litigation. I am confident that serving clerkship as a candidate attorney will expose me to the various fields of law, in a practical manner, and would also grants me the opportunity to become familiar with the litigation process.

I would appreciate the opportunity to contribute to the profession and your firm, while learning from the specialist practitioners within the firm.

Enclosed please find my *Curriculum Vitae* and academic transcript. Please let me know if you require any further clarification.

I look forward to hearing from you. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Yours faithfully

Dorris Day (Ms)

EXAMPLE OF A CURRICULUM VITAE

No 15, Aardklop Flats, 453 Schoeman Street, Pretoria, 0001 ° Mobile: 083 469 9112 ° Email: Doris.Day@gmail.com

Curriculum Vitae of

Dorris Day

Identity Number: 981115 0047 08 0

Tertiary Education

LLB Degree, Faculty of Law, University of Pretoria
(2009 to current)

Academic Achievements

- Obtained five distinctions to date
- Obtained an average of 70% or higher in nine modules to date
- Please refer to the enclosed academic transcripts for modules and marks obtained.

Faculty Involvement

- Participated in the 2011 Faculty Festival.

Community Engagement

- Member of Faculty's student body EPAHR (Educating Prisoners About Human Rights)
- Participated in various community outreaches in and around Pretoria (2011).

Secondary Education

Matric, Margate High School, KZN
(2004 to 2008)

Academic Achievements

- Obtained four distinctions in Matriculation Examination (Afrikaans, Zulu, Biology and Business Economics)
- Passed with Merit (all subjects on Higher Grade)
- Received honors for academics (2006 to 2008)
- Trophy for best achievement in Zulu (2005 to 2008)
- Please refer to the enclosed Matric Certificate for subjects and marks obtained.

Leadership Roles

- Prefect (2008)
- Editor-in-Chief of School's Newspaper, "Margies" (2007)
- Captain of the u/16 Hockey A team (2005).

Cultural Achievements

- Trophy for top cultural student (2008)
- Trophy for top Zulu student (2008)
- Honors for Debate (2006 to 2007).

Sport

- Hockey (2004 to 2008)
- Swimming (2004 to 2008).

Experience

Vacation work, Lawsaco Attorneys, Conveyancers and Notaries, Polokwane
(Two weeks during June 2011)

Duties and Skills acquired

- Reviewing large volumes of complex information in an efficient and effective manner
- Evaluating arguments
- The ability to sort large volumes of files, data and other information
- Attending and participating in consultations with clients
- Insight in practice management
- Insight to the functioning of a law firm.

Sales Lady, Pzazz Boutique, Hatfield, Pretoria

Part-time employment during University recesses (December holidays since 2009 to current)

Duties

- Entrusted with cash and responsible for cashing up at the end of the day
- Responsible for client liaison and service
- Assisted the owner with marketing endeavours
- Supervised the shop in the absence of the owner
- Assisted clients during fitting sessions.

Skills acquired

- Business management skills
- Marketing skills
- Effective interpersonal communication skills.

Cashier, Check-Checkers, Margate

Weekend employment (2007 to 2008)

Duties

- Entrusted with cash and responsible for cashing up at the end of the day
- Responsible for accurate processing of purchases.

Skills acquired

- Precise and accurate functioning in accordance with franchise policies and procedures
- Endurance and resilience (worked 12 hour shifts)
- Effective client liaison skills.

Personal Detail

- Nationality South African
- Driver's License Code 08, own vehicle
- Marital Status Single
- Health Excellent.

Language Proficiency

- English (Read, Write and Speak - Excellent)
- Afrikaans and Zulu (Read, Write and Speak - Average).

Technical Skills

- Computer literate.

Interests and Extra-Mural Activities

- Playing chess and tenpin bowling
- Swimming (participated in the Midmar Mile from 2007 to current)
- Reading: newspapers and magazines
- Watching crime investigation programmes on television.

References

- Prof Dawie Dawids, Department Mercantile Law, Faculty of Law, University of Pretoria
E-mail address: Dawie.Dawids@up.ac.za / Landline: +27 12 420-2255
- Mrs Petro Pieterse, Department Jurisprudence, Faculty of Law, University of Pretoria
E-mail address: Petro.Pieterse@up.ac.za / Landline: +27 12 420-5522
- Mrs Cecile de Beer, Owner of Pzazz Boutique, Hatfield, Pretoria
E-mail address: Cecile.DeBeer@yahoo.com / Landline: +27 12 349-2928

Supporting Documentation

- Academic transcript, University of Pretoria
- Matric Certificate, Department of Higher Education
- Testimonial: Principal, Margate High School
- Other supporting documentation available on request.

EXAMPLE OF A FOLLOW-UP LETTER

No 15, Aardklop Flats, 453 Schoeman Street, Pretoria, 0001 ° Mobile: 083 469 9112 ° Email: Doris.Day@gmail.com

Dorris Day

Identity Number: 981115 0047 08 0

25 February 2012

MRS LADY GAGA: HR MANAGER
JACK PARROW & ASSOCIATES
PO BOX 4567
0001 JOHANNESBURG

Dear Mrs Gaga

APPLICATION FOR ARTICLES OF CLERKSHIP AS FROM JANUARY 2013

I would like to thank you and the partners for your time and the information shared with me during my interview on Friday, 13 February 2012. I was very impressed by my first visit to Jack Parrow & Associates.

The information gained regarding the firm and the position reinforced my interest in the position of Candidate Attorney. I am confident that my experience and education have adequately prepared me to immediately competently fill this position.

As promised, enclosed please find a copy of my Article, *Sound Suggestions to Speed Up Gender Equality in the Workplace*, which was publicised in the November 2011 Monthly Newsletter of the South African Labour Institute.

Please do not hesitate to contact me if there is any additional information required.

I look forward to hearing from you soon.

Yours sincerely

Dorris Day (Ms)

Note from the Editor – Curriculum Vitae made easy

How to access a template on Word to assist you with the professional creation of your CV:

Open a **Blank page** > **File** > Drop down to **New** > See **templates** on the right hand side of the screen

Here you have two options: You may either access:

- **Templates on Office Online** (a plethora of examples (also of cover letters and follow-up letters) and therefore recommended); or
- **On my computer** as described above.

Do play around with fonts and styles, but keep in mind that you are applying for a position in a traditionally conservative profession.

Get that Job!

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

- CONQUER THE JOB MARKET, 5 STEPS TO WIN THE JOB YOU WANT, T IKALAFENG, W WATERMAN PUBLICATIONS
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- HANDLING TOUGH JOB INTERVIEWS, JULIE-ANN AMOS, HOW TO BOOKS
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**COMPILED BY
ELZET GELDENHUYS-HURTER
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**● SEARCHING FOR ARTICLES OF CLERKSHIP
(Contact person: DIANNE ANGELOPULO)**

● SCHOOLS FOR LEGAL PRACTICE

● FIVE-WEEK COURSES

● CONVEYANCING AND NOTARIAL PRACTICE COURSES

● MANDATORY PRACTICE MANAGEMENT TRAINING

● SEMINARS

● SECRETARIAL CONVEYANCING COURSES, ETC.

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