Career Skills

Opening Doors into the Job Market

Visit our free study skills resource at www.skills4study.com

Palgrave Study Guides

Authoring a PhD	The Postgraduate Research Handbook
Career Skills	Presentation Skills for Students
e-Learning Skills	The Principles of Writing in Psychology
Effective Communication for	Professional Writing
Arts and Humanities Students	Research Using IT
Effective Communication for	Skills for Success
Science and Technology	The Student's Guide to Writing
The Foundations of Research	The Study Skills Handbook (second edition)
The Good Supervisor	Study Skills for Speakers of English as
How to Manage your Arts, Humanities and	a Second Language
Social Science Degree	Studying the Built Environment
How to Manage your Distance and	Studying Economics
Open Learning Course	Studying History (second edition)
How to Manage your Postgraduate Course	Studying Mathematics and its Applications
How to Manage your Science and	Studying Modern Drama (second edition)
Technology Degree	Studying Physics
How to Study Foreign Languages	Studying Psychology
How to Write Better Essays	Teaching Study Skills and Supporting Learning
Making Sense of Statistics	Work Placements – a Survival Guide for Students
The Mature Student's Guide to Writing	Writing for Engineers

Palgrave Study Guides Literature

General Editors: John Peck and Martin Coyle

How to Begin Studying English Literature	How to Study Modern Poetry
(3ed)	How to Study a Novel (2ed)
How to Study a Jane Austen Novel (2ed)	How to Study a Poet (2ed)
How to Study a Charles Dickens Novel	How to Study a Renaissance Play
How to Study Chaucer (2ed)	How to Study Romantic Poetry (2ed)
How to Study an E. M. Forster Novel	How to Study a Shakespeare Play (2ed)
How to Study James Joyce	How to Study Television
How to Study Linguistics (2ed)	Practical Criticism

Career Skills

Opening Doors into the Job Market

David Littleford

John Halstead

Charles Mulraine

palgrave
macmillan

© David Littleford, John Halstead and Charles Mulraine 2004

All rights reserved. No reproduction, copy or transmission of this publication may be made without written permission.

No paragraph of this publication may be reproduced, copied or transmitted save with written permission or in accordance with the provisions of the Copyright, Designs and Patents Act 1988, or under the terms of any licence permitting limited copying issued by the Copyright Licensing Agency, 90 Tottenham Court Road, London W1T 4LP.

Any person who does any unauthorised act in relation to this publication may be liable to criminal prosecution and civil claims for damages.

The authors have asserted their rights to be identified as the authors of this work in accordance with the Copyright, Designs and Patents Act 1988.

First published 2004 by
PALGRAVE MACMILLAN
Houndmills, Basingstoke, Hampshire RG21 6XS and
175 Fifth Avenue, New York, N.Y. 10010
Companies and representatives throughout the world

PALGRAVE MACMILLAN is the global academic imprint of the Palgrave Macmillan division of St. Martin's Press, LLC and of Palgrave Macmillan Ltd. Macmillan® is a registered trademark in the United States, United Kingdom and other countries. Palgrave is a registered trademark in the European Union and other countries.

ISBN 978-1-4039-3627-1 ISBN 978-0-230-80254-4 (eBook)
DOI 10.1007/978-0-230-80254-4

This book is printed on paper suitable for recycling and made from fully managed and sustained forest sources.

A catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library.

10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1
13 12 11 10 09 08 07 06 05 04

Record sheets may be photocopied by purchasers of this book for their personal use only.

The material contained in this book is set out in good faith for general guidance and no liability can be accepted for loss or expense incurred as a result of relying in particular circumstances on statements made in this book

Career Skills

Opening Doors into the Job Market

The route map below takes you through a step-by-step process from education into employment

The way to get started is to quit talking and start doing.

Walt Disney (1901–66)

Contents

<i>List of figures</i>	x
<i>Foreword</i>	xi
<i>About this book</i>	xii
<i>About the writers</i>	xiv
<i>Preface</i>	xv
Introduction	xvii
How can I get a job – there are so few around and so many people going after them?	xviii
Step by step	xx
Step 1 Getting started	1
So do you know what you want to do?	2
Where do I start?	2
Market research	3
Customers	4
The product, promotion and sales effort	5
Step 2 Your personal sales ‘tool kit’	6
Presenting the real ‘me’ – the product	6
Catalogue your experiences to date	6
Strengths and skills ‘self-audit’	7
Your promotional material (CV and letter of application)	10
Why do I need a CV?	10
What do I put in my CV?	10
Constructing your CV	15
What should my CV look like?	15
Varying your CV	17
Use of referees	20
Your letter of application	20
Content	21
Style (layout)	24
Applications by email	24
What happens to your letter of application and CV?	24
The process	25
Telephone job applications or enquiries	25
Simple techniques to think about	26
Step 3 Searching for opportunities	27
Careers advisory services, careers fairs, etc.	27
Networking	28
Cold calling	30

Advertisements	31
Websites	32
Job search campaign – control sheet	32
Making your approach and securing an interview	32
Step 4 Your interview ‘tool kit’	35
Cultural awareness	36
Preparing for the questions	37
Ice-breaker questions	37
Detailed questions	38
Model questions	39
Closing questions	66
Learning to relax	67
Breathing techniques	67
Modulation	70
Before the interview	71
Interview rehearsals	72
Step 5 Communication tools	73
Communicating effectively	74
Written communication	75
Listening	75
Body language	76
The results of poor communication	77
Barriers to effective communication	78
Put it into practice	79
Step 6 The interview	80
Prepare for the interview	80
Disabilities	80
The day of the interview	81
How to approach the interview	81
During the interview	82
Types of interview	83
Interviewers have feelings and prejudices	84
Interviewers’ questioning techniques	84
How to handle questions that you consider to be discriminatory	86
Assessment centres – role-play, presentations and psychometric testing	87
Summary	91
A sample interviewer’s candidate assessment form	93
Interview self-assessment form	93
Telephone interviews	94
Second or short-list interviews	95
Case studies	97

Step 7	After the interview	101
	Assess your performance	101
	Review the opportunity	101
	Waiting for the outcome	101
	Accepting or rejecting the offer	102
	An unsuccessful application	103
	The next step	103
Step 8	Into the future . . .	104
	Starting work	104
	Joining the team	105
	Communication structures	106
	Conclusion	106
Appendix 1	Style notes	107
Appendix 2	Sample curriculum vitae layouts	111
Appendix 3	Sample letters of application	120
Appendix 4	Forms for photocopying	123
Index		132

List of figures

1	Websites (career choices/job search)	xix
2	Experiences catalogue form	7
3	Self-audit form	9
4	Sample layout of CV	18
5	Sample layout of letter of application	22
6	Networking control sheet	30
7	Job search campaign – control sheet	33
8	Modulation	70
9	Candidate assessment	92
10	Interview assessment form	93

Foreword

There has long been a need for a practical and easily accessible guide to the all-important transition from the world of education to the world of work. This book fills that gap. Guidance is needed, because the educational world is structured, the pathways within it are clearly signed and there are members of staff to whom to turn. Once school or college is left behind, individuals find themselves in charge of their own futures and facing a complex and largely unknown world.

There are immediate questions to be answered. What is it that I really want to do? How do I go about getting the kind of job I am looking for and what is it that is going to be expected of me, if I get it? Here is where the layout of this book is so helpful, because it deals with all these points in an orderly and sequential way. It takes job-seekers through the steps which they need to follow in order to make the most of their aims and abilities. It does so while providing realistic advice on how to approach each stage. Most usefully, it looks at all these issues from the point of view of those responsible for recruitment. Thus those who follow the book's guidance will have some idea of how to find their way to the interview stage and what to expect when they reach it.

In my view, *Career Skills: Opening Doors into the Job Market* meets the tests against which I would measure a guide of this kind. It is complete, in the sense that it covers all the necessary issues. It is universal in its approach and so it is relevant to anyone embarking on a career, whatever its nature. It is accessible, thanks to the clarity of its writing and presentation. It is also permanent. It can provide a continuing record of progress and achievement, for as long as it is kept up to date.

Perhaps its greatest strength is that, used well, it will build the confidence of its readers in themselves. Although the guidelines stress the need to be realistic about capacities and aspirations, they also emphasize the need for job-seekers not to sell themselves short. Diffidence in candidates is a more attractive trait than its opposite, but those entering employment need to be conscious of their worth and keen to show their capabilities.

The only additional point I would make is that we may stop earning, but we never stop learning! Provided we follow the advice contained in this much-needed and well-written publication, we never will.

Sir Adrian Cadbury

Chancellor, Aston University

About this book

Career Skills: Opening Doors into the Job Market is a ground-breaking interactive aid for all students leaving an academic environment and moving into or returning to the world of employment. It is created from an employer's standpoint based on the extensive experiences of both human resource and line managers.

It is a personal 'tool kit' that . . .

- builds into a record of 'where I am today';
- provides a base to measure personal improvements for tomorrow;
- helps build confidence and self-assurance;
- removes fear and barriers at interview;
- introduces relaxation techniques to ease interview nerves;
- looks at the reasons behind different questioning techniques;
- explains business attitudes and needs;
- develops the individual's database;
- completes the 'ready to work' education process;
- starts developing networking skills;
- introduces communication skills – body language, listening, etc.;
- produces better prepared candidates for interview;
- provides structure to the 'get a job' project;
- advises on the attitude changes to be faced in organizations;
- provides a new 'life skill' within the world of work.

The 'tool kit' design provides ready-to-use material for each stage of the process. It features:

- step-by-step design;
- workbook format;
- a logical sequential approach;
- detailed guidance for CV production and letter writing;
- forms and control sheets to photocopy;
- model interview questions with guidance on answers;
- explanations of what recruiters look for;
- briefing of interviewers' techniques.

The workbook format gives career tutors training materials and classroom discussion topics.

The book is equally relevant to all school, college and university leavers. It:

- assists career counselling;
- provides self-assessment opportunities;
- focuses on personal achievements;
- complements the 'work experience' initiative;
- prepares students for university interviews;
- gives resources for mock interviews;
- forms the basis for curriculum development.

Career Skills: Opening Doors into the Job Market draws together the key elements of the job-search process into a single personal workbook using a step-by-step approach. The readers are given an insight into both the world of the recruiter and the process to follow to successfully pursue their chosen career path – whether in academia, public service or commerce.

All forms and control sheets are also available for downloading from the companion website: www.careerskills.org.uk.

About the writers

David Littleford

Prior to becoming senior partner in a specialist personnel consultancy practice he was the Group Human Resource Director of the UK subsidiary of the world's largest manufacturer and service provider of lifts and escalators. He also has extensive experience at both operational and senior executive level within the HR function of a major player in the UK motor industry. He has over 30 years' practical experience of the interactions between people and business with a special aptitude for coaching, counselling and mentoring young people entering the world of employment. He acts as a consultant to a number of exciting niche-market ventures in the UK and Europe, which include the development of management best-practice guides.

John Halstead

After qualifying as a professional accountant he has held a number of senior positions within both the finance and general management operations of various key service industries for over 30 years. During this period he gained extensive experience of people management and personnel techniques, and developed a special interest in promoting mentoring programmes for newly recruited graduates. This specialist interest, together with the experience of supporting and encouraging his own three children through their early career decisions, prompted him to join forces with David Littleford in the development of this project and various management best-practice guides.

Charles Mulraine

He has been responsible for communications strategy, planning and operations in three multinational corporations in 'f.m.c.g.' (fast moving consumer goods), manufacturing and engineering, and has worked in the USA, Europe and the Far East. For many years he managed his own consultancy and one of his current interests is as communications advisor to the International Partnership Network, which promotes the exchange of information and experience between education and business in countries throughout the world.

Preface

We passionately believe that individuals, when leaving full-time education, should be better prepared to secure employment in their chosen field and to continue their personal development. This view supports those of educationalists and employers who continually look to improve the effectiveness of the transition of individuals moving from the academic world into employment.

The challenge for students is to bridge the gap between the academic environment, and the commercial realities of working life. The size of the problem depends on the extent that the individual has been prepared for the change.

Whilst educationalists and employers work hard to bridge the gap, many people are still faced with a major obstacle to overcome when they leave full-time education, at whatever level. Work experience and project-based schemes help individuals to experience the working environment but do not tackle the fundamental task of 'getting a job' after qualification. From this basic need grew the concept of a 'tool kit' – effectively a series of Steps that include techniques, disciplines, formats and guidance notes gathered together in a workbook format, designed to be used by an individual at each stage of the process.

There are many good publications on various aspects of job-search preparation, be it in CV and letter writing, researching companies, aspects of the interview, etc. However, the uniqueness of *Career Skills: Opening Doors into the Job Market* is that it provides a totally different viewpoint on the process – we have collated our experiences as employers and passed them on to applicants. We have documented the skills and processes needed by applicants to plan and prepare themselves, obtain interviews and confidently face recruiters – with prior knowledge of the selection procedures and techniques used.

This personal workbook directs the reader through a logical sequence of steps to achieve the end result. It has been written by professionals in the fields of recruitment, motivation and communication . . . enabling students to see themselves through the eyes of recruiters.

We would like to thank the following for their contributions:
Christopher J. Lea, Ann Mulraine, Dr George Sik, Jacquie Worrall and Frances Wright.

David Littleford John Halstead Charles Mulraine

Introduction

The quality of a person's life is in direct proportion to their commitment to excellence, regardless of their chosen field of endeavour.

Vince Lombardi (1913–70), US football coach

You have purchased this workbook because you are looking to capitalize on your educational achievements to date as you start on your chosen career path. You may feel excited, nervous, eager, apprehensive, confident, concerned or any other emotion you can think of. You may have already tried the job market without success, or maybe you are just starting to look for that first ‘career job’. You have spent the majority of your life so far in a series of structured academic environments with pre-determined goals and levels of reward dependent on your performance – relatively safe havens. Your only competitor was yourself, competing against the standards laid down, and not against your fellow students.

But now the ‘world of work’ is beckoning, the safety net has been removed and the competition really begins – *you* against everyone else looking for work.

The workbook has been designed for your personal use. It explains each stage of the job-search process and gives you support by providing practical and informed advice relevant to each particular task. The information and guidance we provide, combined with some determined hard work on your part, make anything possible. There is no substitute for good preparation and, when the interviews come along, you will have given yourself the best possible chance of success.

Our belief in the success of the process that we are advocating, when combined with your personal commitment, stems from extensive experience gained in working lifetimes of involvement in the recruitment world. This experience covered all aspects of the job market, from every standpoint – as applicants, recruiters and managers. We have seen what works and what doesn’t work, what techniques fail and those that succeed.

Once you have fine-tuned the process to meet your personal needs, its value will increase. The skills and techniques you will learn form the basis of a repeatable ‘life skill’ that you can call upon as you develop your career.

How can I get a job – there are so few around and so many people going after them?

As we have said, our aim is to give you as much help, support and practical guidance as possible. We want to share our experiences with you in the hope that they will be useful, interesting and thought provoking. We are not here to make career choices for you – *you* have to make them, possibly with help from parents, friends, teachers, tutors and mentors. However, we do believe that we can help you to give yourself the best chance of achieving that first step on the career ladder – the critical first job.

Our experience has been gained over many years as employers and recruiters of high-calibre personnel. All too often we have been disappointed by the lack of preparation and research by candidates who have failed to sell themselves to us as worthwhile investments for the future. Their failure has been a direct result of their lack of understanding of the employer's expectations and needs.

There is always competition amongst employers for talented personnel. Candidates who sell themselves effectively and prepare well put themselves in the driving seat.

We are sharing our knowledge with you. We will tell you what to expect, how to handle problems and how to present yourself in the best possible light.

Choosing the career that will give you sufficient opportunities to channel your enthusiasm, interest and creativity for the next phase of your adult life – and generate financial reward – has become your new priority.

You may already have had lots of advice on career selection, researched the different routes, looked at all the alternatives available, discussed your ideas with parents, friends, etc., and made your choice on where you want to go and what you want to do.

If not, there is no time like the present to make a start. Whilst we can help you along the way to achieving your goal, it would be a good idea if you had a reasonable idea of what you want. Take advantage of all the careers advisory services available – they are there to help you.

The internet is an increasingly valuable information source for identifying career paths and opportunities. Some of the more progressive universities, government (DfES) and local authorities have developed excellent websites for this purpose. They are being added to regularly, and most can be easily accessed. Use one of the better search engines to identify them (www.google.co.uk; www.yahoo.com; www.msn.co.uk; www.ask.co.uk; etc.).

We have prepared a schedule (see Figure 1 below) for you to record your preferred websites for ease of future access. A copy of the form, to photocopy, is provided in Appendix 4. A good starting point is www.connexions.gov.uk – well worth a visit.

Websites – career choices/job search*

* delete as appropriate.

List website addresses you have found which give access to good career choice information or assist with your job search (as appropriate)	Note information gained, for future reference – detail careers researched, etc. Cross-reference job searches with the job search campaign – control sheet’.

Figure 1 Websites – career choices/job search

Step by step

Each Step of the workbook takes you through a separate stage of the process, and collectively they build a comprehensive guide to getting a job. How you use the workbook is up to you, but we suggest that you first read it through and select the key areas you may wish to concentrate on. However, don't forget that the stages are consecutive and therefore link with one another.

Step 1 Getting started looks at the early stages, at the ways you can plan your job search as if it were a marketing campaign or research project.

Step 2 Your personal sales 'tool kit' helps you to carry out your personal 'self-audit', discusses CVs and letters of application, and explains their importance to the recruiter. Issues of style, content and presentation are also covered.

Step 3 Searching for opportunities looks at the different ways in which information on careers, industries and employers can be found, and looks at the 'admin' you will need to do to keep track of your job search as letters go out and replies come in.

Step 4 Your interview 'tool kit' gives you guidance in preparing yourself for the interview, including your all-important response to the 'tell me about yourself' question, and examines the work you need to do just before the interview – including practising your presentations and reviewing your answers to possible questions.

Step 5 Communication tools is linked very closely to the previous Step and goes into this vital area in more depth, explaining how to understand and appreciate the effect communication has on others.

Step 6 The interview goes into interview protocol, types of interview and interviewer, and a few 'Do's and Don'ts'. The aim is to take the fear out of the unknown.

Step 7 After the interview looks at how to handle offers and rejections, and how to choose the best offer and agree terms.

Step 8 Into the future . . . gives you a quick look at what happens next as your career starts in earnest.

Appendices

- Appendix 1** Style notes
- Appendix 2** Sample curriculum vitae layouts
- Appendix 3** Sample letters of application
- Appendix 4** Forms for photocopying

College or university applications

Whilst the workbook is intended for use in the transition from academia to employment, the guidance offered can equally be applied to applications for college or university. Reading the workbook will help students appreciate the techniques that can be used in making applications, letter writing, and preparing for and handling interviews.

The people who get on in this world are the people who get up and look for the circumstances they want, and if they cannot find them, make them.

George Bernard Shaw (1856–1950)