



VUMA! PORTAL JOB MAP¹

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¹ http://www.vuma.ac.za/drupal/?q=job_map

Section 1: Job Seeking

After graduation, a new world awaits you! You plan to find the perfect job to start your chosen career. You need to make some careful decisions before you start job seeking. For example, you need to decide where you can work, depending on available transport, what type of company or organization you want to work for, what hours you are able to work, depending on your domestic commitments and what salary you are prepared to work for. You may plan to study further, so you may prefer to work part-time or flexi-time. Alternatively, you may want to work full-time and even overtime, to earn as much as possible to pay for your studies or perhaps, to purchase a home or travel in the future.

The first step in job seeking is to find out where there are job vacancies/opportunities in your chosen area(s). These are advertised formally on a regular basis in various media but also informally through word of mouth, notices and other means. Click on next to find some useful resources to help you find that ideal job! Good luck!

Newspapers

In South Africa you will be able to access the vacancy lists of several newspapers. Try the following websites:

- www.IOLjobs.co.za
- <http://www.biz-community.com/JobsOffered/196/90.html>
- http://www.worldpress.org/newspapers/AFRICA/South_Africa.cfm

Personnel Agencies

There are many personnel agencies in South Africa, some more efficient or reliable than others. Find out what agencies are in the area where you live or near where you study. Preferably, speak to family members, friends and other students who may have consulted these agencies to ensure the service is good and that you will not be wasting your time registering with them. There are also many agencies advertised on the Internet. Here are some useful websites:

- [Dial a Student](#)
- [Jobs-at-Large](#)
- [Recruitment Agencies - South Africa](#)
- [Recruitment Direct](#)
- [Easy Info](#)
- [DAV Professional Recruitment](#)
- [Bridging the Gap](#)
- [1st Medical](#)

It is wise to register with more than one personnel agency as they may not all handle the same jobs. Some may have professional sections. Some only cater for secretarial, administrative or computer positions.

You will need to set up an introductory interview with some agencies in your area. They may require you to attend further interviews and/or to do aptitude, typing, computer literacy or language skills tests.

Using a Personnel Agency

Depending on your field of study and qualifications, you may find a shortage of positions in the South African economy. Alternatively, your professional qualifications and special skills may be in high demand in specialized companies/organizations, or because of the 'brain drain' in South Africa. You would therefore need to approach your application for positions differently, depending on which situation applies to you.

Lack of job opportunities/shortage of positions

Where there is a definite lack of job/career opportunities in the market, it is best to apply as widely as possible. You can respond to various advertisements and apply to individual companies or organizations. However, registering with one or two personnel agencies which specialize in professional careers may be a more effective way of finding your dream job.

Personnel agencies work together with industry, corporate and other sectors to offer professional positions, so they are able to offer a range of positions. You would experience the 'one-stop shop' approach, where professional consultants in the agencies would interview you, assess your job requirements and match you to available positions in your field. They would then arrange interviews for you, obtain necessary references and provide motivating reports to their clients, i.e. the companies/organizations seeking candidates. The consultants would provide feedback on interviews, and should there be the need for you to attend second interviews, they would make the necessary arrangements at your convenience. Should there be a job offer, they would liaise with you and the company/organization concerned to finalise the appointment. They would deal with all the administrative procedures and paperwork on your behalf. It takes a lot off your shoulders, especially if it is the first time you are applying for work.

Personnel agencies generally have a keen interest in every placement since they earn income from successful placements. They should therefore be dedicated to your portfolio needs and endeavour to find you the most suitable job which matches your qualifications, skills and any experience you may have had in the field, even through internships or vacation jobs in that field. The ideal is for the agency to find you the ideal job.

It is advisable to register with more than one agency, because different agencies acquire different vacancies, depending on their clientele and the area they serve. Some may be more industrial-orientated, whilst others cater more to the corporate or IT world. Expect that there may be duplication of some vacancies in these agencies.

Remember, though, that not all agencies manage portfolios of professional jobs. Some agencies focus on specific vacancies, such as administrative, financial, information technology (IT), secretarial and clerical positions, although they advertise 'professional' jobs. It would be pointless registering with such agencies. You need to ensure that the agencies you register with offer a wide range of professional or academic positions, especially relating to your chosen career. Generally, where professional portfolios are managed, the consultants

themselves have academic qualifications and are professionals in their own right. They may also have previous working experience in specific professions. .

It is good to know your 'marketability'. If you are a very marketable applicant, personnel consultants will compete against each other to place you in a suitable position. This gives you a better opportunity of finding a job and gives you the 'edge' over other applicants. If you only register with one personnel agency, though, they may take their time about finding you a position, knowing they do not have anyone else looking for a position for you. They may even file your form if nothing is available right then and not treat your application with any urgency. However, if they know that you are registered with a few agencies, they will make more effort to place you, before their competitors do.

You should be aware that there are good and not-so-good personnel agencies. It is best to find out which are the most-used agencies and hence most successful agencies in your professional field. Also find out if they have branches in other areas where you are prepared to work, if there is no position available in your area of choice.

Try to get recommendations from your institution and from people who have used agencies, before registering with them. Some agencies offer exceptional services and place applicants satisfactorily. They are dedicated to finding the ideal job for their applicants. They go the extra mile and take a keen interest in their client's work needs and aspirations. These agencies are generally recommended 'by word of mouth' through positive service experienced by others. They are reputable and accountable for their services. Satisfied applicants return to them when they require positions in the future. These are the agencies you need to register with.

Unfortunately, there are agencies that offer poor services and do not have the real needs of the applicant at heart. They lack professional interviewing skills and do not match applicants to suitable jobs. They tend to send applicants to all and sundry positions in an attempt to make any placement and to maintain office statistics and monthly figures. Sometimes they encourage applicants to accept job offers, which are not exactly what the applicants wanted. Through incorrect advice or persuasion from consultants, applicants sometimes accept an offer for fear of not getting another job. They often send applicants to several interviews, knowing that they are just taking a 'chance' rather than knowing that the applicants is suitably qualified or has the necessary skills to secure those positions. They waste applicants' time going to interviews for jobs that they are not likely to get. Their administrative management of portfolios is inefficient and communication with applicants is poor. They fail to return messages from applicants. They do not report back outcomes of interviews if the applicants are unsuccessful. They re-schedule interviews which may not always suit their clients or their applicants. When applicants have not been offered a job, they do not report back to the applicants, leaving them 'in the dark' as to whether they have the job or not. This could be detrimental to applicants who are awaiting feedback from a number of interviews in a short space of time. They may lose out on the position they want, because they are still waiting for news about another interview. Time is of the essence in these circumstances and an agency could affect your future options if they delay matters or are inefficient.

Unfortunately, as with other types of businesses, there are some agencies that are not financially-viable. They open up quickly and then close within a short period, without

notifying applicants. Applicants then have to start the whole process of registering again with another agency.

Some tips:

- Remember to do your 'homework' on personnel agencies before you register with them.
- Remember you are the applicant – the agency needs your business. Make sure you get good service!
- From the outset, make it very clear to your personnel consultants exactly what your needs and aspirations are, where and when you want to work, what type of company/organization you prefer, your salary range and the benefits you require. Always enquire about future career opportunities in those companies/organizations offering professional positions. Tell them exactly when you are available for interviews, who to contact for references, whether you have transport or not, what distance you are prepared to travel to work or in what areas you would prefer to work.
- If you do the above, there will then be no excuse for inefficient service from any personnel agency.

Key positions

There are 'key' or very specialized positions in all companies/organizations which require specific qualifications and/or experience in certain fields. Depending on your academic qualifications and specialized skills, you may be very much in demand!

You could approach a personnel agency with a professional portfolio, as above, but ideally, you should target companies/organizations where 'key' positions are available to accommodate your particular qualifications and skills.

Because of the 'brain drain', there are particular fields where there is a lack of professional skills, e.g. health sciences, actuarial science, all fields of engineering, IT specialists, etc. Find out from your Faculty, Human Resources Department and/or Professional Institute/Society which are the 'key positions' affected by the 'brain drain'. Then approach the Chief Human Resources Manager of companies/organizations specializing in those particular fields directly. You should only approach their CEO/Director, if you know him/her personally, or if you have a recommendation from your institution or professional institute/society.

Internet

There are thousands of websites offering job opportunities around the world. Here are some useful websites for employment in South Africa:

- [4 International Careers and Jobs](#) - Directory of top South African employment and job sites.
- [CAREERJET](#)
- [Career junction](#)
- [JONTI – Jobs on the Internet](#)
- [SA Government job opportunities](#)

- [Best Jobs](#)
- [Jobs.co.za](#)
- [Jobmail](#)
- [Labour Protect](#)
- [Jobs-SA](#)
- [Jobs at Large](#)
- [Global Career Company](#)
- [Happy Saffa](#)
- [P-NET](#)
- [Job Thing](#)
- [South Africa Jobs](#)
- [Careers 24](#)
- [Gumtree](#)
- [Intel](#)
- [Totally Legal](#)
- [Legal Jobs](#)
- [Rapid Info](#)
- [Prospects](#)
- [SA Careers](#)
- [The Placement Project](#)
- [Ananzi](#)
- [The Youth Portal](#)

Other Options

Billboards/Notice-Boards/Job Flyers

Have a look at notice-boards and posters on campus, job-flyers handed out to Faculties, job advertisements in notices at shopping malls or in office blocks.

Electronic mailing lists/Job alerts

You can register on various websites to receive job alerts on a regular basis. See examples at www.careerbuilder.com and " target="_blank">Telegraph.co.uk.

Information from Faculty/School

Some companies provide information on job vacancies to specific Faculties/Schools as they require very particular qualifications and skills. Ask your Faculty Officer or your lecturer for information on job opportunities in your field of study.

Internships/Practicals

If you have worked at an outside company/organization doing your internship or practicals for your course of study, you may have already made an impression on that company/organization. This may give you the 'edge' over other applicants. Approach these companies/organizations if you feel there are opportunities there for you. Remember, you can always include this experience and references from the company/organization in your CV for other applications too.

Professional associations/societies/institutes

These organizations publish journals, annual reports and newsletters. They often advertise job opportunities in their publications and on their websites."

Industrial journals

Look for career opportunities advertised in these publications.

Attend career exhibitions and industrial shows

Discuss your career aspirations with the presenters and ask them for their brochures/leaflets on different career opportunities.

Radio stations

Listen for job opportunities advertised on radio stations, or approach them directly if you want a job in broadcasting itself.

Temporary positions

If you have worked on a temporary (and satisfactory) basis for a company/organization, applying your specialized skills, you may enquire with them whether they have any permanent posts to enable you to pursue your chosen career.

By word of mouth

Information about jobs is often circulated by word of mouth. Ask friends, family, fellow-students and lecturers whether they know of any job opportunities for you. Ask them to keep a watch out for jobs for you.

Applying to specific companies

Decide on what companies are likely to offer the best career opportunities to you in your field. Approach them directly to find out what opportunities are available, currently or for the near future.

Cold-calling

This is not the ideal choice but you may happen to approach a company just when they are seeking someone with your skills/experience or qualifications. Visit the Company and ask to see the Human Resources Manager personally. If your request is denied, leave your CV with the receptionist or the HR Secretary and say that you will be phoning the HR Manager very soon. Remember to get the HR Manager's full name and contact details. Follow-up within a day or so and try to set up an interview to see him/her.

Business plan

Depending on the type of work you want to do or the business venture you want to embark on, you can draft a Business Plan. You can submit it to the Small Business Development Corporation, the Industrial Development Corporation of South Africa, or similar organizations if you want to start your own small business. Alternatively, you may submit the plan confidentially and personally to the Human Resources Manager or Projects Manager of specific companies/organizations where you feel they would be particularly interested in your business plan. Never post the Business Plan or leave it with the receptionist or anyone else. Ensure that you hand it personally to the right person and stress that it is confidential and that you would like to discuss it with him/her as soon as possible. You would need to make a prior appointment with the correct person.

Section 2: Job Advertisements

Now that you have gone through the whole exercise of Job Seeking, it is time to apply for the positions that really appeal to you. You have probably collected an assortment of advertisements, so now where do you go from here?

Two-step approach

STEP 1: Prioritize and assess job advertisements

STEP 2: Apply as soon as possible! Don't procrastinate otherwise your dream job could be snatched up by someone else!

Make a list of priorities

Start with the job that sounds the most suited to your job requirements and aspirations. Which one sounds like your dream job? Put that one at the top of the list and then prioritize the rest of the advertisements in order of preference.

Once you have a priority list of job advertisements, you need to assess each one carefully and match your educational qualifications, skills and any relevant experience (even practical internships or part-time work in the field) to the requirements of the position advertised. As a new university graduate, you will have little or no work experience, but your degree or postgraduate qualification and your career goals will be your 'selling points' to potential employers. You may have worked at some stage but then returned to university to study further. Your qualifications plus your previous working experience will be important to potential employers.

Types of Advertisements

Remember each advertisement catches your attention in a different way. No two advertisements are the same. Advertisements are written in various ways and with different messages, sometimes even hidden messages. Some are very crafty or ambiguous but the company/organization placing the advertisements knows exactly what type of person they want for the job.

Some non-existent jobs are advertised in newspapers, periodicals or through Personnel agencies just to test the market at that stage and to find out what type of applicants are available in that specific profession or field. They advertise the ideal job description in the hope of attracting the ideal person for a post that might become vacant, or which they plan to create in the near future.

Some advertisements have just a few catchy words and contact details printed on colourful flyers or posters, which are distributed as handouts or placed in conspicuous places in office blocks or shopping centres. Others may be published in different media but worded very generally, without giving much detail. These advertisements are usually targeting applicants for a number of different positions in the same company/organization. The respondents to the advertisement are likely to be given a telephonic interview first (see "Attending Interviews" (put link here) to establish what they have to offer the company/organization. It could be a new company/organization with a number of positions to fill, or an established

company/organization that is expanding and needing additional staff. It could also be for a specific project or internship for a limited period. Being more general in nature, this type of advertisement may be an invitation to applicants with relevant educational qualifications but no work experience, alternatively, years of experience but no formal qualifications. It will attract a large number of applicants, so you must ensure that your application is exactly what the potential employer is looking for.

Some advertisements may be targeting persons of a particular gender or racial group, e.g. in compliance with the Black Employment Equity Act. Remember all advertisements must conform to advertising standards and should not be discriminatory in any way. If the wording is discriminatory, whether blatant or very subtle, beware! It is telling you something about the company/organization's labour practices. It would be best to do some research about the company/organization first, or not to apply at all.

Good advertisements give clear information. They usually highlight the basic requirements of the job description and benefits offered, so that potential applicants know whether they have the necessary qualifications, skills or relevant experience to apply for it. These advertisements are worded more specifically to attract suitably qualified applicants only. If a specific degree or professional qualification is required, then only applicants meeting those requirements would be considered.

Assessing an Advertisement

You should study each advertisement and note what appeals to you. Then consider where and how the advertisement was made public. Was it in the main media, e.g. in a newspaper, journal, professional society magazine, television or radio? Was it advertised by a Personnel Agency or distributed via a flyer, poster, a casual handout or placed on the Internet? Was it placed on an office or shop window?

Consider what company/organization is advertising the position. Is it a well-known company or an obscure one that no one has heard of? Is the advertisement well written, grammatically correct and professional, or does it have poor grammar, even slang? This could tell you a lot about the company/organization as a potential employer.

Consider how much information about the job and the company is 'revealed' in the advertisement? A reputable, well-established company/organization generally includes some information about the position and how it fits in the organization. It would give the main aspects of the job description. It would give the required educational qualifications and experience for the post, as well as some details relating to the salary package and benefits. It would give contact details and the company/organization's address, alternatively, a contact number for a Personnel Agency. A less reputable company/organization is likely to give as little information as possible and may even provide misleading information or omit details to attract applicants.

Sometimes the format of the advertisement affects the way people respond. If the advertisement is too short or too long, applicants may search for other advertisements. Advertisements must catch the attention of job applicants immediately. They should give adequate information to enable a potential applicant to assess whether he/she wants to apply or not. If an advertisement sounds 'suspect' to you, the company/organization or the job

itself is probably 'suspect' too. Rather look for other job advertisements which appeal to your job needs and aspirations.

When to Respond to a Job Advertisement

Since so many people are unemployed and jobs are scarce, the sooner you respond to a job advertisement the better. If possible, this should be on the same day or within 24 hours so you get a head-start over other applicants. Remember jobs are scarce so there could be many applicants all vying for the same job. Some professions have a limited intake of professionals per year to meet market demands. Get in first! Do not delay! Even if you need to prepare a CV or other documentation, at least give the company/organization a telephone call to express your interest, or email them to say you are interested in the position or fax them, depending on the requirements or conditions set out in the advertisement. Find out how you can secure an interview as soon as possible.

Strike while the iron is hot! Have your CV ready so that you can apply as soon as possible. If the advertisement appears in the weekend newspapers, for instance, try to get to the company/organization first thing on the Monday morning with your application and CV. Do not just leave your documentation at the receptionist's desk. Ask to see the Human Resources Manager or relevant person handling this vacancy, so that you can meet him/her to deliver your application and CV personally. If he/she is busy, ask if you can wait to see him/her. Meeting the interviewer personally will give you an advantage as first impressions are very important, even before the first interview. If he/she is impressed with you at the brief introduction, you are very likely to be one of the first to be interviewed. Others who have just sent in their CVs are still just names on paper at that stage. You have the advantage that he/she has spoken to you personally and has no doubt, positively assessed you in that brief encounter.

How to Respond to Job Advertisements

Take your priority list and make a list how your qualifications, skills and work experience (if any) match each individual job. You can respond to a number of advertisements at the same time, but ensure that you respond to the specific needs of each job advertisement and not too generally. Each advertisement has specific requirements and it is no use responding and giving information that is not applicable to that particular job. What might apply to one job, may not apply to another. Your covering letter and CV may change depending on the position you are applying for.

Also, ensure you have adequate time to attend a number of interviews at different companies/organizations. Make time for interviews and be flexible with your time so you can attend the interviews that really count. If you have limited time for interviews, then do not apply for too many positions at once. Rather focus on the jobs where you really feel you have a good chance.

Make sure you apply before the closing date of the job advertisement. However, if you only come across an advertisement a day or two after the closing date and it is really something you would like to have applied for, then make enquiries to see whether you can submit a late application. First ring the company and ask to speak to the interviewer for this position. Explain that you have only just seen their advertisement but give good reasons why he/she should consider your application. You may be just the person they are looking for.

Your Application

You should then draft a covering letter and prepare your CV or update it if you already have one prepared. Remember to state in your letter which advertisement you are applying for and where you saw the advertisement or where you heard about it. If you were referred to the advertisement by a colleague or friend, mention their name, particularly if they are key people in that company/organization. If there is a job reference number or contact person's details, always include them in your letter. Always address your letter to the correct person by name. Never address your letter to "To whom it may concern", as it shows that you have not taken the trouble to find out who the correct contact person or interviewer is in the company/organization.

If you are required to complete an application form for a Personnel Agency, or a standard application form for a company/organization, make sure you write clearly and provide all relevant information as fully as possible. Only provide information that is required on the form. Be careful how you answer questions on the form. Do not include irrelevant information or too much information. Do not give a list of your hobbies or outside interests, unless it is required or particularly relevant to the job requirements. Focus on your positive attributes and what you have to offer the company/organization. Avoid being negative, evasive or too vague in your responses. Remember you are 'selling' your qualifications and skills to a company/organization that does not know you yet. What you present in your application is exactly how they will first perceive you. You want the person who reads your application and CV to be so excited about meeting you that they contact you for an interview soon afterwards!

When submitting your application, it is important for you to convey your enthusiasm for the job and the likely match between your credentials and the requirements of the job advertised. Always express your potential to fulfil the job requirements rather than focus on what you want from the company/organization or the job itself. Be interested in the company and its future goals and show how you could be part of that future.

Be positive and affirmative. Never 'oversell' or 'undersell' yourself. Be honest and professional. Never pretend or lie about your age, studies, previous experience, qualifications or other details. Never falsify documents or change information on your educational or previous work-related documents. Certify documents when necessary.

Never say nasty things about your lecturers, previous employers or colleagues or your personnel consultant(s). If you had a previous job, give a valid reason for leaving. Don't blame your boss or colleagues personally, even if they were the real reason you left. Rather state the situation than point fingers at individuals. Give the names of referees whom you know will provide positive references for you. If you know someone is likely to give you a negative reference, don't include them on the application form. If you are currently employed and do not want your employer to know you are looking for another job (for fear that you may lose your current job) then stress this on your application form. You could state that, if necessary, this person can be contacted after a job offer has been made. Remember your future employer will confirm all your information when checking references. There is nothing to stop him/her contacting your current firm if he/she really feels it necessary. If you do not have any work-related references, then ask one or two favourite lecturers or your research supervisor to provide a testimonial for the period that you were supervised at

university. If you need a character reference, ask someone in the community who knows you well, e.g. a religious leader, a mentor, your high school principal, a lecturer, a colleague in your professional association, or someone you know who is working in the company/organization where you are applying for a job.

Your covering letter should be brief, clear and structured and not more than one page in length. It should not repeat the contents of your CV. Where necessary, your letter should refer to relevant sections or aspects of your attached CV. If a CV is not required initially, state that you will submit a CV, on request.

Be sure that the grammar, spelling and general layout of your letter of application is proficient and professional. Never submit a sloppily written application or one that may cause a potential employer to question your communication or organizational skills. Be sure to read over and edit your application before submitting it. Type rather than write your letter and use a reasonable font and type-size for legibility. Make sure it is something that your interviewer wants to read. Always sign the letter and be sure your contact details are included.

First impressions are lasting! Remember your application is your first introduction to the company/organization or Personnel agency. It's your 'sales pitch' – your chance to prove that you will be an asset to that company/organization. It could determine whether you get an interview or not, so make sure you do it right the first time! The last application in the pile generally finds its way to the bin! So make sure your application is at the top of the pile!

Never apply for multiple positions in a company/organization, unless they are closely related to your career. Applying for a variety of posts may indicate to a potential employer that you are indecisive and not sure of your career goals, not dedicated to your profession, or perhaps desperate for any job. A potential employer would rather take an applicant who has shown keen interest in a particular position being advertised and who clearly will benefit the company/organization with relevant qualifications, skills and/or experience.

Submitting your Application

If the advertisement clearly states that an application should be submitted via fax or email only, then do not post it or deliver it personally. If it says that you should send your application to a post-box address, then do that. If it says you must deliver your application personally, then do not email, fax or post it. If it says that no telephone enquiries will be answered, then don't telephone them! If a particular contact person is provided, then do not contact anyone else about the position. If that person is unavailable, rather leave a message. Also, follow instructions as to whether a CV and other documentation are required to be submitted, or whether a standard application form or a basic letter is the only requirement at that stage.

Following up your Application

The company/organization has set certain conditions in the advertisement for a reason, so respect its wishes. If you do not follow their instructions, it will indicate to a potential employer that you are not able to follow basic instructions. This could lose the opportunity of an interview because of this.

You may receive written or telephonic responses from some companies/organizations, whilst others may not respond at all. If the latter, you may need to check whether they in fact received your application. If you sent it by email or fax, chances are that the recipient has not seen it yet or it is in the process of being short-listed. Wait a day or two and then telephone to find out if it has been received and ask when interviews are likely to be set up. Do not come across as 'presumptuous', 'over-keen' or 'desperate' to get the job. Just show enough enthusiasm to ensure that you will get an interview in due course. If you are told to wait a week, then do not keep phoning or 'nagging' the company/organization. This may cause them to reject your application altogether. Again, show that you can listen to instructions.

See "Attending an interview" (put link here) for information on types of interviews, best behaviour at interviews, body language, do's and don'ts at interviews, etc.

Section 3: Your Curriculum Vitae

The word 'curriculum vitae' means 'life story' in Latin. Some countries use the words 'curriculum vitae' and 'resume' interchangeably. However, in general, a CV is longer than a resume. A CV tends to be the document used for academic and professional job-seeking, whilst a resume is a less formal, shorter document.

In today's job market and with such a high unemployment rate in South Africa, people who are looking for jobs have to 'advertise' or 'sell' themselves in such a way that they get the attention of a future employer. One very important way of doing this is to have a well-written CV that makes you stand out from the competition. It is your 'marketing tool' to success. It should support your professional, academic or research objectives.

At the very least a strong, professional CV will get the attention of a future employer and open the door to the possibility of an interview.

CV Preparation

It is very important that you take time to plan and prepare your CV. Have a look at examples on the Internet and ask others for advice. If you are being assisted by a Personnel agency, your consultant will draft the CV from the details provided on your application form. If you are compiling a CV for the first time, you will need to know exactly what information to include and exclude. It is best to do a short and long short version of your CV and keep them as your 'templates'. You can then tailor them to specific job applications.

Types of CV's

There are different types of CVs, which serve different purposes for different applicants in different circumstances. There are usually three types of CVs used for job applications, namely:

Traditional CV - This CV is a chronological or reverse-chronological record of your life, which 'markets' your track record.

Skills-based CV – This CV focuses more on how you developed your skills and your achievements, rather than on the events that have made up your life. It ‘markets’ your potential.

Hybrid/Combination CV – This CV has components of both the Traditional and Skills-based CV, depending on the job being applied for.

Content and Format of a CV

The basic format and arrangement of your CV may differ from one application to another, but you should include the following headings in your CV:

- **Personal details** – include your name, physical and postal address, telephone number, email and/or fax address, home language and other information you think is relevant. You can include your age or ID number, but if you think this might affect your chances for the job (perhaps you are a little young or too old for the job), omit it. Once you attend an interview, the interviewer will have some idea of how old you are and will probably ask your age then. Never lie about your age.
- **Educational qualifications** – include Matric/Grade 12 and post-school studies at university, colleges or other tertiary institutions. If you received a distinction or cum laude degree, state this in the CV.
- **Professional certification** – include Board qualifications, e.g. Accountancy, Law.
- **Academic experience** – include mentoring, tutoring, teaching, research, international experience, internal/external examiner; editing for a scholarly journal, Head of School, etc.
- **Skills** – include technical and specialized skills related to your profession and relevant to the job you are applying for. Also, include skills such as computer literacy, a driver’s licence, competence in handling specialized equipment/machinery and fluency in other languages.
- **Work history** – Specify chronologically, or reverse-chronologically, your jobs, whether permanent or temporary, full-time or part-time, internships, research projects and fieldwork as part of your studies.
- **Special achievements/accomplishments** – include any special awards, academic distinctions, scholarships/fellowships, leadership positions, community or corporate awards, etc. This section will also show how you have developed your skills in a specific field or area of your work.
- **Professional activities and affiliations** – include membership of a professional body, office-bearing positions in academic/professional organizations, consulting; local or international committees, etc.
- **Professional development** – include conferences, workshops attended or organized within your profession.
- **Research/Scholarly Grants and activities** – include names of Grants and Funders, journal articles, conference papers, books, chapters in books, magazine articles, position papers, works awaiting publication, works in progress, etc.
- **Other activities** (only if they are specifically relevant to the position) – include activities that will enhance your position, e.g. debating, public-speaking such as Toastmasters, Life-Line counselling or community work.

- **References** – You should provide at least 2 referees with their full names, titles, positions and full contact details. Make sure they have agreed to be referees. Do not provide referees who may provide a negative reference. You may attach copies of written references from previous lecturers, research supervisors or previous employers.

If you are currently in your first job and do not want your employer to know you are seeking work elsewhere (for fear of losing your job), then provide the name of a referee who would provide a character reference, e.g. a priest, minister, university lecturer, research supervisor, someone you know in that company/organization, or the referees you provided to your current employer.

CV Presentation

There is no single way of creating or presenting a CV. There are different ways and styles but you should use one that suits you. You will find hundreds of examples on the Internet, but do not use a template that everyone else uses. Be creative and show initiative by presenting it in a 'new' or different way that will catch the eye of your potential employer.

Your CV should be typed and laser-printed on quality A4 white or cream paper and be set out in a neat, structured and logical manner. It should be 'reader-friendly'. It is preferable to use Arial or Times Roman fonts and 12-14 point size. Although it is cost-effective to print on both sides of the page, it is easier to read if it is printed on single pages. Ideally it should not be more than 3-4 pages and the pages should be numbered. You should 'tailor it' to suit the particular job you are applying for. Focus on relevant information that matches the job requirements. Use keywords from the job advertisement where possible. If you have any certificates, written references, examples of work/projects, these can be attached as annexures.

You should proof-read and check for any typing, spelling or grammatical errors. Ask someone else to proof-read it for you too. Try not to use the first person "I" too much. Ensure that you include all your previous experience. If you have had gaps in your career, you could state them if not damaging to you, e.g. overseas trip, doing a one year hobby course, au pairing, domestic commitments, etc. If you have 'job-hopped' and have had a number of jobs within a few months, it may be best to state these as temporary jobs. If you have long gaps in your job which you would rather not include, then do not use the Chronological type of CV. Rather use the Skills-Based CV which highlights your skills and professional abilities and achievements rather than every detail of your work history. This style of CV doesn't have a strict date order structure, so gaps in your career will not be so obvious in this format. However, do not fabricate or lie about anything as you may well be questioned about this in your interview. You don't want to give false information and find that your referees contradict your information. Your potential employer is also likely to use the details provided in your CV to form the basis of his/her interview questions. If you have omitted any details from your CV, be prepared to be questioned on some of them, e.g. gaps in your work history, reasons for leaving, etc.

Try to give a reasonably in-depth account of your job history and qualifications, but do not be verbose or give too much detail. Do not boast or 'go over the top' on aspects of your career. Highlight your achievements in a modest, but confident manner. Your interviewer

receives piles of CVs and does not want to read something that is too long. Concentrate on experience and achievements that will equip you for a better future.

Try using strategies that catch the interviewer's eye immediately. Don't be too stereotyped. Present the CV in a creative way, different from the standard CV that most other applicants will have submitted. Your CV must attract your potential employer's attention within a few seconds. For example, use cream coloured paper, rather than white, just so it is slightly different to other CVs in the pile. Near the top of the CV, state your main career and position objectives, as well as your unique qualifications and skills relevant to the particular job being advertised. Use keywords that 'jump out' at the reader and hold his/her attention. Use 'power words' and key words from the job advertisement or job description, so they match the requirements of the job. In other words, get the attention of the interviewer right from the start.

In a structured format, with headings and even sub-headings, prioritize and list the most relevant academic, research or other work history, achievements, etc, as per the list provided under "Content of your CV" above. 'Individualize' every CV for the job concerned.

Present your CV in such a way that your potential employer looks no further. As he/she reads your CV, he/she should already be thinking you are the best applicant for the job!

What shouldn't be in a CV

It is not necessary to give personal details about the number of children you may have or whether you are married or divorced. That will be necessary for tax purposes, etc. at a later stage if you get the job. You need not state the reason for leaving each previous job but if you feel they were positive moves, e.g. for career advancement, better career opportunities, a promotion to another division, etc., then include them. If a photo is required, make sure it is one of your best.

Current salary details should not be included. This could limit your options when you negotiate a new salary. You may, however, be asked about this in the interview or asked to provide a copy of your last pay-slip before a job offer is made.

Hobbies, sports and domestic interests need not be included, unless they are specifically relevant to the type of work you are applying for. If, for instance, you were captain of a sports team, chairperson of a debating society, president of a church council or director of a theatrical play at university, then mention them in your CV. These positions would indicate that you are a responsible person with leadership qualities and the ability to work with many people.

The Cover Letter

Your covering letter is as important as your CV. Without a covering letter, your CV could land up on anyone's desk and eventually in the bin, because the person who received it has no clue where it came from, what job it is for or who you are.

The purpose of the covering letter is to provide a clear message to a specific person in a company/organization stating exactly what type of job you are seeking or applying for.

This ensures that the attached CV arrives on the desk of the correct person who will be selecting applicants for interviews. Take the time to phone the company/organization to find out the name and title of the correct person to whom the letter should be addressed.

If you are sending a CV to a company/organization to find out if there are any jobs available, then be clear what type of work you are looking for and what you have to offer to the company/organization. Address your covering letter to the correct person in the company. Find out who deals with staff recruitment and get their names and titles. In a small company/organization, it may be the Managing Director or Personnel Officer. In a medium-sized company/organization, it may be the Divisional Manager. In a large company/organization it is likely to be the Human Resources Manager or Personnel Manager.

If you are sending a CV in response to a particular job advertisement, give the job reference number (if provided), the job title and where and when you saw the advertisement in your covering letter. Address it to the contact person provided in the advertisement. Never address your covering letter to “To Whom it May Concern” or to “The Manager”. Don’t be impersonal. Address it to the correct person by name, otherwise it is likely to end up on the wrong person’s desk and not get any attention. Remember to sign the letter and provide your contact details. Always keep copies of your covering letter, CV and annexures.

Your CV is your ‘marketing tool’. Do it properly otherwise you could jeopardize your chances of getting your dream job.

The Follow-up

If your CV is unsolicited, in other words, you are applying for a possible position in the company/organization and one which has not been advertised, it is best to hand-deliver your CV to a company/organization and if possible, meet the person responsible for staff recruitment, so he/she can put a face to your CV when it is read. However, if the conditions of a job advertisement state that you must post your CV or email it, then follow their instructions. Give the company a ring about a week to ten days later, and before the closing date, to check whether it has been received. Always ensure your application reaches the company/organization before the closing date.

Section 4: Preparing for Interviews

You have now applied for that dream job (put link to ‘Responding to Job Advertisements’ here), you have been waiting for that call. The phones rings and yes, it is an invitation to your first interview! Out of all those applications they have received, you have been selected as a possible candidate for the job!

Make sure the first ‘interview’ on the telephone is successful, so that you make a good first impression right from the start, no matter who is on the other end of the phone. It may be the personnel consultant, the receptionist, the Human Resources Manager or the interviewer himself/herself. When setting up a time for the interview, try to be as flexible as possible so that you fit in with the interviewer’s schedule. Ensure that you listen carefully and get all the details of the interview, address, venue, date, time, name of your interviewer and any other

relevant information. Find out if there is any particular documentation you need to bring with you (this would depend on whether you have sent a covering letter and CV before).

Now you need to do some preparation to make sure that interview is successful.

Interviews are the stepping stones to that great job waiting for you out there! The success of your interview determines whether you land that dream job or not! A good interview opens the door to great opportunities. A bad interview could lose you that dream job altogether. So always be prepared!

Whether it is an interview with a Personnel Consultant at an agency, or whether it is the first interview with the Human Resources Manager or the final interview with the CEO of your future company/organization, always treat each interview as if it were the most important one. Be well prepared to anticipate and answer difficult or tricky questions. Also, be prepared to ask intelligent and relevant questions at each interview.

So what do you have to do to be prepared?

When you start looking for employment, you would generally have an idea of the type of position you want and what sort of company/organization you would like to work for. You probably did some basic research on some companies/organizations before you sent them your CV. Well, you need to do some more research and preparation before that first interview!

Interview via your institution

The interview process often begins right on campus. You may get an interview well in advance of your graduation. It may be through your institution's Careers Office or your Faculty Office, or through a Graduate Recruitment Programme, a Careers Exhibition or via a personal referral from someone you know. Alternatively, it may be via a Personnel Agency or through applying directly to selected companies/organizations.

Interview by Personnel Agency

If you are first interviewed by a Personnel Consultant at an agency, you need to prepare in a slightly different way from an interview at a company/organization wanting to employ someone. This is because you do not know which companies/organizations are seeking employees and you would only find the details out at your first interview or later on in the job-seeking process. You therefore need to be in a position to tell the consultant what your requirements and aspirations are, so that he/she sends you for interviews at relevant companies/organizations. You should therefore prepare a list of questions for the consultant, as well as a list of your requirements and expectations. The consultant will make the appointment for the interview so you need to give him/her information on your availability, your contact details, etc.

Interview(s) by a Company/Organization

You could be invited to an interview as a result of your sending your CV directly to a company/organization. The company/organization would then contact you and set up an appointment. Alternatively, you would be asked to contact them. Find out exactly who you need to speak to in the company/organization to set up the interview. Explain who you are

and what vacancy you have applied for.

The fact that an interview has been arranged is the first positive step to getting that dream job! Since so many people are looking for employment, not everyone can be interviewed. Many applications are declined. Be encouraged if you have secured an interview. It is the first step in the door! Use this opportunity wisely and to your advantage.

Remember, that the company/organization may (and probably will) have several applicants for the position and may be interviewing applicants one after another. There are many highly qualified applicants who are vying for the same position. You therefore have to be one step ahead of them. You have to 'stand out in the crowd'. Remember you are 'selling' your skills and expertise to a company/organization that does not know you. You have to show them that they really 'can't do without you'! The better prepared you are, the better chance you have of getting a job offer.

Do research about the company/organization

To be fully prepared for your interview(s), you need to do some homework on the company/organization. Do some research and find out as much as you can about the company/organization. Remember there are good and bad companies, professional and unprofessional companies, so be careful. If you have any doubts about a company/organization or you don't feel comfortable about working there, remember it is your choice – no one can force you to work there. Take time to think about the pros and cons and make a good, well-researched decision.

Find out its mission, vision, corporate culture, policies and future projects. Find out what products and/or services they offer and who and where their customer-base is. If it is an international company/organization, find out where the head-office is and in what countries they operate.

You can find out information from their website, annual reports, employment literature, articles written about them in newspapers, journals or stock-exchange information. You can do a search on websites such as www.about.com. You can get information from personnel agencies, customers and vendors, people who have worked for, or are working in the company. Look for information in your campus library or the public library. Speak to alumni from your institution who may be working for or be associated with the company/organization under research. You could also find out quite a lot of information from the receptionist when you telephone to make the appointment for an interview. If you have difficulty finding out information about the company/organization, then be careful as it may be too small or not financially-viable to accommodate your career needs and future development.

Make sure you know the name of the CEO and the Head of the Section where the position is vacant. Before the interview, or at the reception desk, find out the name and title of the person who will be interviewing you and greet him/her by name. If possible, try and find out where he/she fits in the hierarchy so you will know if he can decide the outcome of the interview straight away or whether it would need to be referred to someone higher in the organizational structure for a decision to be taken.

Also look for warning signs. If an company/organization communicates poorly or handles your application inefficiently, take heed, as this could be the way it runs its business or treats its staff. If it is evasive about information or financial issues, be wary as this may indicate problems in the company/organization. If it oversells itself, or the position sounds too good to be true, ask yourself why. If you hear rumours or negative stories about the company, investigate them. If in doubt, rather postpone or cancel the interview. Rather be safe than sorry. Rather choose a company/organization which has a good reputation and strong record of good management and financial stability. Your future career options will be much better in such a company/organization.

Keep abreast of current affairs locally and internationally

Keep abreast of local and international trends and new developments in your particular profession, or in the particular business or industry related to the company/organization that will be interviewing you. Find out who their competitors are and suppliers. This will demonstrate to your interviewer that you are not only interested in his/her company/organization but that you keep abreast of broader issues affecting your profession and their industry. If the company/organization has received positive reports in the news, has made headlines (e.g. a new invention or a medical breakthrough) or received a prestigious award, then let your interviewer know and express your congratulations. Check the newspapers, business magazines/journals or Internet resources the day before to see if there have been any special developments at this company/organization worth taking note of or mentioning in the interview (e.g. have they just merged with another company/organization; have they been taken-over; have they opened a new branch or closed some branches; have they invented or discovered something new; has there been any negative publicity or media scandal, etc.)

Dress Style

Find out what the dress code is at the company/organization. If it has a formal, corporate code, or if it has a standard uniform, then dress smartly. Rather wear a smart jacket and skirt or smart slacks, than a casual outfit. If the dress code is very casual, e.g. denims and t-shirts, then dress slightly smarter for the interview. Do not over-dress. Ladies, do not wear too much jewellery or long dangling earrings, too much make-up, very 'loud' colours or outfits that would be more appropriate for evening wear. Also, do not under-dress. Do not wear too low-cut tops, off-the shoulder blouses, too short skirts, bare midriffs or outfits more appropriate for the beach. Men, do not wear sleeveless t-shirts, unbuttoned shirts, too tight or very baggy trousers or heavy leather jackets. It is not a good idea to have visible tattoos or body piercings. Ladies should have neat hairstyles. Men should be clean-shaven or have a neat beard. Long hair or a ponytail is not the ideal but be neat if your hair is long. Always be clean and well-manicured. Never try and cover up body odour with too much perfume or cologne.

First impressions are very important. If you dress inappropriately, you may just set a bad tone for the rest of the interview. Remember that rapport between you and the interviewer is established on meeting each other and this sets the tone for the rest of the interview. The

interviewer generally decides whether an applicant is suitable within the first three to five minutes of the interview. So make sure you prepare well. You won't get a second chance at it!

Location

Find out the exact location of the company/organization and in which office you will be interviewed and by whom. Consult a map or ring the receptionist for exact directions to the interview office. Don't assume the interview will be held at the head-office, for instance. It may be held at a branch office at different premises. Also, a second or third interview may also be held at a different location, so find out exactly where the interview will be held each time.

Transport

Be sure you know how you are going to get to the interview. If you do not have your own transport, then make arrangements to get a lift or use public transport. Know exactly how much time you have to get to the interview. If using public transport, check bus/taxi or train schedules and have the correct fare ready. If you are using your own transport, find out if there are parking facilities at the premises or close by. Check alternative routes in case there might be traffic congestion en route to the interview. Make sure you announce your arrival at the reception desk at least 15 minutes (not more) before the appointment time. Check bus/taxi schedules or alternative routes, if necessary, to avoid traffic congestion. If for any reason, you are seriously delayed by an accident on the highway or road closure, etc., ring the company/organization and apologise and tell them you will be there as soon as possible. At least they know that you are on your way and not keeping them waiting on purpose.

Punctuality

Arriving late for an interview, no matter what the excuse, puts you at a disadvantage right from the start. If you cannot be on time for an important interview, you will give the impression that you do not regard punctuality as important, or that you cannot manage your time properly, or possibly that you won't be able to meet deadlines. Your being late could make other applicants late too. Being 10 minutes late could mean saying goodbye to the job you really wanted. It's not worth it – set your cell phone alarm or get a good watch. Make sure you are always on time!

Duration of interview

Be prepared to set aside a few hours for an interview, as you may be asked to see other persons in the company/organization after your initial interview. Make sure you do not have urgent business or other commitments which you have to rush off to. Never ask to leave an interview in a rush to get to another interview. Make appointments on different days or a few hours apart, so that you can give all your attention to each interview. Prepare your schedule in advance so you do not have to ask to leave an interview early.

Documentation

Make sure you know what documentation to take to the interview(s). You may need different documents for different interviews. In other words, you could be asked to produce additional

information, e.g. samples of your work or projects, for a second or third interview. Find out if any documents have to be certified beforehand. Make at least 2 copies of each document.

Questions

Prepare a list of questions you can expect to be asked by your interviewer. Think of what type of questions might be answered and write down your answers. If you are nervous about answering questions, then ask a friend or parent to role-play or do a mock interview to help you answer them with confidence. Make sure you answer honestly and intelligently. Do not give vague answers or excuses as this will not impress the interviewer. Think of some very difficult questions that could be asked of you and try to write down satisfactory responses.

Remember each interview is different from the next and each interviewer has his/her own style of interviewing. Be prepared to be interviewed by friendly, relaxed persons, as well as impolite, chauvinistic or moody persons. Be prepared for trick questions and even illegal questions and know how to handle the situation. See “ Attending Interviews” ([put link here](#)).

Section 5: Attending Interviews

Congratulations! You are on your way to joining the working world!

After your hard work writing to various companies/organizations, filling out numerous application forms, compiling your CV, responding to job advertisements and following up leads, you now have the chance of an interview – the first step towards that dream job and financial independence.

In South Africa, where the employment rate is so high and so many applicants get turned away on a daily basis, you are very privileged. Take the opportunity and make the best of it!

An interview is basically an opportunity for you to ‘showcase’ your personality, qualifications, expertise and skills. It is like ‘selling’ or ‘promoting’ your best qualities and the reward is your dream job. Your interviewer will be looking for a number of qualities when interviewing, for example, confidence; communication and inter-personal skills; honesty; flexibility; a critical or analytical mind; self-motivation; positive attitude; responsible attitude towards work; knowledge and proficiency in your chosen profession; leadership and ability to work in a team. He/she may also look for other qualities, for example, sportsmanship, ability to debate, involvement in community service, cultural interests, etc.

Types of Interviews

There are various types of interviews which you should be aware of:-

Telephone interview

This may be a preliminary discussion between your interviewer and yourself to find out basic information to establish whether you are a candidate for a more formal interview later. Since it is usually in response to an application or enquiry for a position, it is not a planned interview. You receive a call and are interviewed ‘on the spot’. You do not have time to anticipate questions, so you have to listen carefully and answer intelligently. Speak clearly

and try not to repeat yourself. 'Present' yourself as best you can as this interview could determine whether you get a formal one later.

Email interview

You may have applied for an interview via email. You may receive a response via email asking you to complete an attached application form or a questionnaire asking you to provide specific information which you must then return. The email could ask you a number of questions ranging from your personal details, educational background to interests and hobbies. It is more impersonal but still a preliminary interview. The information and responses you give in your email back to the company/organization, will determine whether you are invited to a more formal interview later. It may be the interviewer's method of 'sifting' out applicants who are not suitable for the job. The way you respond to the initial email is extremely important.

Face-to-Face/One-on-One interview

This type of interview can be a follow on from both telephonic and email interviews, or in response to a direct application or an appointment arranged through a Personnel Agency. It is usually a one-on-one situation where a representative of the company/organization interviews you. It may be the Human Resources Manager, a Head of Department or even the Managing Director, depending on the seniority of the position and the size of the company/organization.

Panel/Committee interview

This type of interview usually follows a preliminary interview or one-on-one interview. To attend this type of interview, you would have been successful in the first round of interviews. Unsuccessful applicants would not proceed to a second interview. The more senior the position is, the more likelihood of having to attend a number of interviews by members of the senior management team.

If you are invited to a second panel interview, it is because your interviewer has acknowledged your potential for the position and has recommended that you be interviewed by a panel of senior managers or a selection committee, who will interview you as a group. You will be asked questions by each person, each exploring different facets of your school and student life (or previous job, if you have worked before). Some may be tasked to question you on your educational qualifications and professional background, whilst others may be tasked to establish your strengths and weaknesses. If you have worked before, they will question you on previous experiences and the reasons you left. Some may delve into past experiences to find out how you deal with people, handle difficult situations, handle stressful situations, whether you are leader or follower, etc. Some may not speak at all. Their responsibility may be to observe and study your body language, attitude, language and social skills.

Panel interviewers will be thorough in their questioning to ensure they cover all aspects to ensure that you are suitable for the post. They may focus on why you want the job and what your goals and aspirations are for the future. They may explore your involvement in previous research or projects, which may have a direct relationship to the vacant position. They would each assess you and after the interview, they would consolidate their opinions and findings

in the interview. They may even request that you come back for a third interview, perhaps to be interviewed by a senior manager, a more senior panel, or the Managing Director/CEO before a final decision is taken. Large companies/organizations generally request applicants to return for at least a second interview.

The panel/committee type interview can be quite daunting for an interviewee, especially if the interviewers are very formal and demanding in their questioning. Interviewees can feel quite threatened at times if the questions are difficult or they are posed purposely to unsettle an interviewee. This type of interview can sometimes be very 'soul-searching', as various facets of your previous career or research programme are delved into. Questions can be ambiguous or posed to 'catch you out'. To manage in such an interview, you must be extremely well-prepared and have researched the company/organization very well.

Luncheon/Dinner interview

A company/organization may want to find out what sort of person you are and how you conduct yourself on a social level, outside the work environment. As a follow-on second or third interview, it may be 'out of the ordinary' and be held away from the company/organization altogether.

You may be invited to a formal luncheon or dinner with members of the management team and their partners. The interview will be a social occasion and not a structured question and answers session. It may be just an interaction with each person at the table, discussing a variety of topics. This type of interview is focusing on your social and communication skills, your dress style and body language, your ability to deal with strangers and how you present yourself in general. It may even focus on the way you eat and drink and whether you have good table manners or not. You may not even know who the main interviewer is. At such events, the manager's wife can be a key person in the assessment. Be polite and friendly as she may be assessing your personality too. There may be more than one or two people assessing you at the table. Each one may have a different 'task' to perform at this interview. You may find you are even excluded from the conversation sometimes and this may be their way of checking how you deal with awkward situations. To see how well you cope with embarrassing situations, someone may purposely cause something to spill or fall off the table near you. Your reaction will tell them a lot about how you cope in awkward situations.

You may find that the job may hardly be mentioned at all during the evening. You may even wonder why you were invited. Remember you are on 'show'. You are being closely assessed and scrutinized against a number of key criteria set by the company/organization. You would need to meet these criteria in order to get another interview or receive a job offer. Be on your best behaviour and do not drink alcohol or smoke at the table. Do not order the most expensive item on the menu. Observe what others are ordering and try to stay within that price range or lower. If no one is ordering a starter, rather just order the main meal. If you are offered alcohol or a glass is poured for you anyway, be polite and drink it slowly so it lasts a long time. If you don't drink, politely say you would prefer a cold drink, fruit juice or water instead. Don't let anyone force you to drink either. It may be someone trying to see whether you can manage pressure from others. Always remain sober and well-behaved at such social gatherings. Do not be familiar or too personal with anyone at the table. Do not be too loud or too talkative. Give other guests at the table a chance to speak. Never discuss personal matters at such an event. You may regret it later! Always thank everyone for the evening and greet

people when you leave. Remember to be on your best behaviour always. One slip-up could cost you that dream job!

Some interviewees may find this type of interview enjoyable and relaxing, whilst others may find it awkward and uncomfortable, knowing they are 'under the spotlight' all the time. If you are invited to another interview or get a job offer after this type of interview, you know that you have impressed them and have 'passed' the test!

Sports Event/Teambuilding Interview

Similarly, you could be invited to a sports event, such as a golf-day, a horse-racing day, a day at Sun City, a teambuilding exercise, or to watch a game of cricket or other sport. Be as sociable as possible, even if you do not play or like sport. Tell them you do not play golf, for instance, but would like to try, alternatively, that you would enjoy watching it. In the case of a day at the races or at the casino, be cautious with your money. Do not bet on every race or play the tables too often. This will show that you are too free with your money. It may indicate to your potential employer that you are irresponsible with money or that you may have a gambling problem. If you are applying for a financial position in particular, the interviewer will be particularly interested in how you handle your money.

The key interviewer may not be evident at such an event, but someone in the group will have the responsibility of assessing you and observing your behaviour and how you deal with situations. On the sports-field or in a teambuilding exercise, never try to outshine or embarrass the person(s) who invited you. Never cheat or be a bad sport. Never compromise yourself either. Remember, someone will be assessing your ability to socialize, participate in a team, or show financial responsibility, to see whether you are the ideal candidate for the vacant post. Make a decision to enjoy the event in a friendly, dignified manner, knowing that this 'interview' could determine whether you get the job or not.

This type of interview can also show you what your future employers are like outside the workplace. If they drink too much, use foul language, gamble excessively, cheat at sport, flirt with other people's partners, or make you feel uncomfortable in any way, take this as a warning. Consider whether you really want to work with people like them.

Problem-solving interview

Another type of interview which is 'out of the ordinary' but can be very stressful for an interviewee is being invited to participate in a problem-solving event where your skills and tenacity are under scrutiny. The interviewer will be observing how you cope and help to resolve situations. If you have specifically stated in your CV that you have experience in a particular project or working with certain equipment, you may be put to the test to prove yourself.

Be prepared to be tested on anything that you have included in your CV.

Successive/Follow-on interviews

When a decision has been made by a company/organization and you are selected as the ideal candidate for the job, a follow-up interview is generally conducted with the interviewer, Head of Department or Managing Director, depending on the seniority of the post and the

size of the company/organization. This interview gives the company/organization the chance to offer you the job and to negotiate a salary package. It gives you the opportunity to ask any outstanding queries that you may have and to discuss the starting date, orientation and training opportunities, if not discussed previously. It is a time to clarify anything you are not sure of about the job or your future employer. Show that you want the job. Ask questions that you still need answers for but do not repeat questions that you already know the answers for.

Interview Questions

The type of questions that your interviewer will ask you will depend on the position you are applying for and what you have to offer to the company/organization. Your interviewer may also form questions based on the detail (or omissions) in your application form or CV.

Keep in mind that there are straight-forward and difficult questions, proper and improper questions, which you should be prepared for. You may also be asked questions about your future plans and aspirations, so prepare your answers beforehand. Try and anticipate typical questions you may be asked in the interview. Also get advice and tips from lecturers, your research supervisor, the Counselling Unit at your institution, a Personnel consultant or fellow students who have been for interviews.

It is always best to do proper preparation for the interview.

There are questions which are improper or not permitted in terms of the Labour Act and general personnel practices. You are not obliged to answer these but if you do, keep in mind you may be jeopardizing your position.

Do's and Dont's when Attending an Interview

DO -

- Be punctual – arrive about 15 minutes before the scheduled time
- Turn off your cellphone before you meet your interviewer
- Greet interviewer by name and correct title. Make sure you have the right pronunciation
- Refer to that name during the interview, unless he insists you use his first name
- Shake hands at beginning and end of interview (not too tight and not like a 'sloppy fish')
- Have all the necessary documentation with you (certified where necessary)
- If possible, send examples of your work/projects/research to the interviewer prior to the interview date
- Always dress neatly and smartly. Rather dress conservatively rather than too casual. See: [Preparing for Interviews](#).
- Have your list of questions ready and ask them at the appropriate times
- Always wait until you are asked to take a seat
- Wait for the interviewer to commence the interview
- Engage in 'small talk' only if the interviewer starts such a conversation
- Keep eye contact and show interest in what the interviewer is saying
- Make sure you sit upright in the chair

- Be aware of your body language - see - [Types of body language](#) and [18 ways to improve body language at](#)
- Listen attentively and respond to questions clearly and intelligently
- Show that you have researched the company/organization and have an interest in its products and services, etc.
- Show you are interested in the position and company/organization
- Show the interviewer you know something about the company, its products and services, as well as general knowledge about current affairs. See [Preparing for an Interview](#).
- Tell the interviewer what you feel you can offer to the position and company/organization.
- Find out what career development and training options are available
- Make sure you have the names and titles of all those who have interviewed you
- Collect business cards as you meet people or before you leave, if possible
- Towards the end of the interview, enquire when a decision is likely to be made and when they will get back to you
- At the end, thank the interviewer for his/her time. If you really want the job and want to 'stand out from the crowd', send a brief thank-you note afterwards.

DO NOT -

- Put doubts into your interviewer's head, e.g. don't suggest that you prefer to work alone or that you don't like delegating, or that you find admin work menial or hate computers.
- Say you only want to work half-day when the position is full-time.
- Only focus on how much money and benefits you will get.
- Appear bored or uninterested in the interview or job. Even if you realize it is not for you, be courteous as the interviewer has taken time out of his/her busy schedule to see you. In this situation, do not ask too many questions so that the time will pass quicker.
- Contradict, speak at the same time as your interviewer or interrupt him/her - wait your turn.
- Be ignorant of very topical current affairs and news of the day, particularly if it relates to the company/organization or your profession in any way.
- Be over familiar or too personal with your interviewer.
- Flirt or make your interviewer feel uncomfortable.
- Chew gum, suck sweets or eat.
- Fiddle, click a pen or tap on the desk.
- Scribble on paper or write on your hand (make sure you have a notebook with you).
- Wear offensive or provocative slogans on your clothes
- Play with your jewelery.
- Keep touching or pulling your hair, ear, nose, lips or chin.
- Stick out your tongue with a piercing.
- Pick your teeth or your nose.
- Clean/bite your nails or suck your fingers.
- Whistle, hum or burp.

- Stare, keep looking away or close your eyes.
- Take your parent into the interview (unless he/she is specifically invited in for a purpose by the interviewer).
- Pretend to cough to think how to answer a question.
- Sniff or keep blowing your nose (unless you have a bad cold).
- Swing your foot/leg.
- Lean on desk or slouch in chair.
- Twirl or rock in chair.
- Stand or walk around the office.
- Fold arms across your chest.
- Bite your lip or wriggle your nose.
- Clean or play with your spectacles or contact lenses.
- Force a smile or frown.
- Act artificially.
- Put your hands in your pocket.
- Keep repeating yourself.
- Name-drop for the sake of it.
- Swear, use slang or profanity.
- Fidget or touch items on the interviewer's desk.
- Try and read his/her documents upside down.
- Scratch your head or twirl or suck your hair.
- Smoke or drink during the interview.
- Arrive in an inebriated state for the interview.
- Smell of body odour or too much perfume/cologne.
- Give vague or untruthful questions.
- Talk too much or forget to finish your sentences.
- Remark about personal items or photographs in the office.
- Bad-mouth your previous lecturers, employer or colleagues.
- Falsify any documents.
- Be aggressive, racist or insulting.
- Be flippant or sarcastic.
- Boast or exaggerate.
- Tells lies or be evasive about your age, qualifications, experience or other details.
- Be too meek or too reserved.
- Call your interviewer by his first name (unless he insists).
- Act as if you already have the job.
- Ask too many questions about salary and benefits until you get a job offer.
- Ask silly or unrelated questions or none at all.
- Chat or do text messaging on your cellphone.
- Give more information than is required.
- Cut short the interview to go to another interview or to meet someone for lunch.
- Be over familiar with the receptionist or any other colleagues while waiting for the interview.
- Go to the restroom during the interview – go before the interview.

- Refuse to do a psychometric, personality profile or aptitude test if it is a compulsory requirement for the interview process.

Section 6: Handling a Job Offer

You have gone through the whole process of Job Seeking (put link here) and Assessing Job Advertisements (put link here). You may have received assistance from a Personnel Agency to find you your dream job. (put link here). You have prepared all necessary documentation (put link to “Preparation of CV and relevant documentation”), prepared for and attended various interviews at different levels (put link to “Preparing for Interviews” and “Attending Interviews”). You probably have a few options to choose from. You may even know exactly which one you want. The waiting is almost over!

The day arrives when you get that phone call or letter telling you that you have got the job. You have at last received a formal job offer. You are probably very excited as this is the beginning of your working career.

Before you rush to accept a position, take the time to consider the points discussed below. Some of the information you will already know from the Personnel agency, job advertisement or first interview. You could also ask the company/organization for a copy of your job description and relevant policy documents to enable you to make your decision.

Try not to ask all these questions in one go. Your future employer may get the impression you are only interested in what you can get out of the company/organization. Be wise and spread your questions out. Ask some relevant questions in your initial interview and subsequent interviews. Ask the HR manager, your future co-workers, or ask your Personnel consultant to find out more details for you. When you receive the job offer, you will engage in salary and related negotiations then or soon after they contact you, so ask for more detailed information and relevant policy documents at that stage.

Points to Consider

Job description

Has a copy of the job description been given to you? What is your assigned title? Who is your line manager and where does he fit in the company/organizational hierarchy? Do you know what all your day-to-day duties will be? Does the job description match your job requirements, level of experience (if any) and future aspirations? Will it be challenging? Will it provide scope for advancement in your career and in the company/organization?

Stability of future employer

Have you researched the company/organization? Does it offer you a stable and long-term future career? Is it financially-sound to provide you with financial security for as long as you are employed there? Are the company ethics and practices within your own values? Will your goals and aspirations be met?

Corporate Culture

Consider the company/organization culture and whether you see yourself a part of it. Can

you work for this type of company/organization? Can you work with your line manager and other colleagues whom you have met in interviews? Is the working environment conducive to good working relationships?

Working environment

Is the office/working space given to you comfortable? Is it the environment you want to spend every working day in? Will you have your own office and privacy, or will you work in an 'open-plan' environment? Depending on your profession, will you be working in a laboratory, hospital or other medical facility, on a construction site, in a library, legal, mining, geological or other professional environment, etc.? Will you be using special equipment or machinery? Is there protective clothing provided? Will you be working with outside service providers? Will you do practical work on-site or off-site? Will you be working with clients or patients? Does the job involve traveling? Will you be working with animals? If you are a smoker, what is the policy on smoking and is there a smoking room on the premises?

Working hours

Are the working hours to your satisfaction? Will you be required to work overtime at any stage, and if so, will you be adequately compensated? Do you get a tea and lunch-break or are you expected to work non-stop during the day? Are there certain periods in the year when you will be expected to work longer hours, e.g. stock-taking, year-end accounts, audits, team-building exercises, etc.?

Getting to work

Can you get to work? How far is it from your home? Do you have your own transport or will you be dependent on a lift or on public transport? If you have to work overtime, can you get there and back safely? Are there safe parking facilities on the premises or nearby? Is there a travel allowance or a company car?

Permanent or temporary appointment

Will you be employed on a contract basis or be treated as temporary staff for a certain period, or will you be on the permanent staff immediately? Is there a compulsory probation period? If so, how long and what conditions and objectives need to be met in that period? What happens after the probation period expires? If you change posts within the company/organization, do you remain on permanent staff or do you have to undergo a further probation period each time you change posts? Is there a performance management programme and regular performance appraisals?

Staff Union

Is it compulsory to join the Staff Union/Association? Is its track record positive or disruptive? Can you work in this environment? What are your rights as a union member? What will be monthly subscription fees be?

Leave benefits

What are your leave benefits? How many days' leave do you get? Are they working days or calendar days? Are there any extra leave days, e.g. does your company/organization close over year-end holidays and are these days included or excluded from your vacation leave benefits? Do you get special leave to attend conferences, workshops and training programmes? How much leave can you accumulate from one year to the next? Are you

permitted to take unpaid leave and in what circumstances? If so, will it affect your pension/provident fund and medical contributions and your service record? Are you allowed to buy-back accumulated leave? Is there some form of 'sabbatical' or 'study leave' for professionals and if so, how many days? What is the sick leave policy? Are there maternity/paternity leave benefits (if applicable)? If so, how long is the leave period? Will you receive your full salary or a portion during that period? Is there leave for compassionate reasons, moving house, studying for exams, etc.? To obtain all this information, you could ask them for a copy of their leave policy.

Future colleagues

You may have been introduced to some of your colleagues during your interview. Did you like the people you were introduced to? Was there a pleasant atmosphere in the offices you were taken into? Do you think you will be able to spend at least 8 hours every day working closely with these people? Did you sense any negativity towards you when you were introduced? Can you work with your line manager? Is there likely to be a personality clash or professional jealousy towards you? Are you prepared to work for a person of the opposite gender or from another race? If you know someone working at this company/organization, they may be able to give you some information about your future colleagues or line manager.

Work premises

Are the premises in a safe area? Are they in an industrial, city or suburban area? Are they close to highways and main arterial roads?

Safety and security

Do they have adequate security for their staff? What sort of security and safety policies do they have? Do you need a security access card? Will there be any security assistance to accompany you to your vehicle if you work late at night?

Personal calls/emergencies

What are the rules regarding personal telephone calls and emergencies? Will you be permitted to make certain private calls, and if so, will you be charged for them? What are their rules regarding domestic emergencies? Do you have to work in the time at a later stage?

Training options

Is there on-the-job training and if so, by whom? Are there appropriate and adequate in-house training programmes to assist you in carrying out your duties? What training is offered and do you or the company/organization pay for training costs? Are there opportunities to attend outside training courses, workshops and even conferences, local or international? Who would pay these costs?

Studying further

Are there any benefits to further your studies? Will you be reimbursed for job-related studies? Will you receive any additional compensation for a further qualification? Does the company/organization offer post-graduate study options?

Total Salary package

What total salary package is being offered to you? What benefits and perks are included? Is the package a true reflection of what you are worth? Is it fair in relation to the job market? Have you researched salaries in your profession to find out what a fair salary would be? Is it

comparable to what other people in similar positions are earning? Remember to be reasonably flexible, otherwise you may turn down a good job with excellent long-term prospects for the sake of a few hundred rands. If you have more than one job offer at the same time, weigh up the benefits and perks of each company/organization to see which package is more acceptable to you in the long-term.

Monthly contributions and perks

To help you negotiate a fair package with good benefits and perks, you need to find out what deductions will be made against your salary. What amounts will your employer pay towards your pension/provident fund, UIF (if applicable) and medical aid? Will they contribute towards transport, parking and other perks or will these be compulsory deductions? What will your contributions be? Are there compulsory contributions and deductions? Are there voluntary contributions, e.g. to a staff tea club, sports facilities, uniform, etc.? On what day of the month will you be paid? Is your salary paid directly into a bank account or what method of payment do they use? Depending on your salary, will you or your employer pay the unemployment insurance? Are there any benefits such as shares, debentures or investment plans offered by the company/organization? Can you benefit immediately or is there a waiting period? Is there an annual bonus? Is it a 13th cheque or will it be on a percentage basis, a cost-of-living rate or performance-based? Is there any insurance cover for staff? Is there a travel allowance, use of company transport or a company car included in the package?

Contract/Letter of Appointment

Find out how soon you will receive a written contract or letter of appointment. The job offer is official only once you have signed this document. Be sure you are satisfied with the contents of the contract or letter before signing it. If you have any queries, sort these out before signing the document, as it will be a legally binding document once you sign it. Always keep a copy for your own records.

Finally, should you accept, negotiate or decline the offer?

By carefully considering the issues above, you will be able to reach an informed decision. Sometimes you will be under pressure to give a prompt response, or you may have more than one job offer and need to make a choice. Carefully consider each point above and weigh up the pros and cons. Follow your instincts. If you feel uncomfortable about something or are hesitant in any way, ask for advice from your Research office, Counselling and Careers office, alumni, a parent, friend or Personnel consultant. If you still feel unhappy, don't accept the offer.

It is a big decision to make and you want to make the right decision. If you need more time, ask the hiring company/organization. If they really want you, they will give you more time. The ideal situation is one in which both you and your future employer are satisfied with the terms of employment.

Don't panic! If this is not the right job for you, it is not the end of the world. Other offers will come up and you may just find your dream job in a totally different company/organization.

Accepting or Declining

Accepting an offer

When you accept the offer, always inform the company/organization in writing. Your letter of acceptance should thank them and accept the job offer, subject to receipt of a written letter of appointment. Make sure the letter of appointment is on their formal letterhead and that it is signed by you and your future employer.

Declining an offer

Inform the company/organization in writing. Declining an offer may not be very well-received by the hiring company/organization. They have invested a lot of time in recruiting and interviewing you and have probably already rejected other applicants in your favour. Try not to 'burn your bridges' in case you want to work at this company in the future. If you have developed a good rapport with the company/organization, you may want to give a reason why you are declining their offer, but this is not compulsory. You need to decline the offer in a polite and professional manner and remember to thank them for the time and attention they gave you during the recruiting process.

Section 7: Starting a New Job

Congratulations! You have just joined the working world! It is an exciting place to be but can be daunting too! In such high unemployment, you are privileged to have work, so make the most of it and contribute to building the country's economy.

Your first day at your new job can be very exciting, but also filled with anticipation and even fear, not knowing what to expect from the work itself, or the staff you will be working with. It is also the realization that the days at university and student life are over and that you are starting a new chapter in your life, with different responsibilities and different goals.

Take time to prepare for your first day. Make sure you enjoy it and that it goes down in your book of memories! Consider what you need to wear and take with you and what time you need to be at your place of employment in time.

Documentation

If you have not already submitted a full CV, with supporting educational certificates, references, etc., you need to take these on your first day. Find out beforehand, whether you need any documents to be certified so that you can do this before your starting date. You may be required to complete a fresh application form for the organization/company and various related documents, so have your identity document, proof of residence, banking details and other relevant information with you. If you have worked before and have a tax reference number and/or UIF (Unemployment Insurance Fund) number, be sure to give that to your new employers.

Always read the documentation that you sign, even the very small print. Whatever you sign, you will be committing yourself to for the future. If there is something you are not sure of or you are not satisfied with in the documentation, ask for clarification first. If something has been changed or omitted, bring this to the attention of the Human Resources Department or your immediate supervisor straight away, so it can be amended before you sign. You should receive a letter of appointment soon after you start your new job. If you do not receive this

letter within the first 10 days, politely make enquiries as to where it is. When it is given to you, read it very carefully and ensure that all your negotiated benefits, training opportunities, etc. are included, before you sign it.

Depending on the agreed terms of your employment, you are likely to be asked to sign forms to join the pension or provident fund and medical aid. There may be other benefits or requirements for you to pay for, e.g. parking facilities, use of sports facilities, a tea/coffee or lunch club, uniform fee, etc. You may be asked to join the Staff Association or Trade Union. This should not be compulsory so you should have the choice as to whether you want to join or not.

Dress Style

Just as you prepared for your first interview, you need to prepare for your first day. Be sure what you wear is appropriate, clean and neat. You probably took note of what people were wearing when you attended the interview(s) for your post. You will have established whether it is a formal or casual environment. If there is a standard uniform or protective clothing (depending on your profession), find out whether it will be issued in advance or on the day you start. Also find out what their safety rules are and when you need to wear the protective clothing. If there is no uniform, you will have some idea as to whether you need to dress formally or more casually. Make sure you dress comfortably and appropriately for the type of work you will be doing. Also, wear the right type of shoes, especially if your work involves standing for long periods. .

Plan what you are going to wear for the first week of your new job, so you don't have to worry about this when you get home tired in the evenings. The first few weeks can be rather overwhelming and exhausting, so don't give yourself extra stress by not knowing what to wear each day.

Meeting Management and Colleagues

It is best to arrive early on your first day, so that you can get to meet management staff and your new colleagues. Introduce yourself to the receptionist and ask who you need to meet first and where your office is (if you have not been informed beforehand). Take the opportunity of meeting the people who will be directly supervising you or working closely with you. Try and find out their names and titles so that you address them correctly. Be polite and greet them by shaking their hands. Someone in the company/organization will show you to your office and assist you in settling in, but you may be expected to do this yourself. Ask if you are not sure what the procedure is.

Orientation

You will probably be expected to participate in an orientation programme on the first day (or soon after you start). This is an introduction to the company, its organizational structure, its benefits and services, policies and procedures. You will be introduced to relevant management and heads of sections (some of whom you may already have met in the interview or when you first arrived at your office on the first day). You will also get a chance to meet other new colleagues. You may ask questions at the programme or direct them later on to the human resources section or to your supervisor.

Settling into the Job

Your office may be a separate room or it could be in an 'open plan' environment where you will be working closely with other colleagues and perhaps sharing office resources and equipment. You will probably be given a brief tour of the workplace by one of your colleagues. Be sure that they point out where the tea-room and restrooms are. If you are a smoker, find out where the smoking area is and what the rules are about smoking on the premises. Also find out where the fax room, photocopy room and stationery office are before you are shown to your office. If you need specialized laboratory, technical or other equipment, find out where to get this.

Once you are in your office, or office space in the open plan section, you will need to find out how to use various pieces of equipment, depending on what you will need for your job. On the first day you will be given time to settle in your office and familiarize yourself with equipment and where various sections of the organization/company are, particularly those which you will be working with.

Try finding out, as soon as possible, how to use the main functions of machines like the photocopier, computer and printer, fax machine, telephone, paper shredder, laminator, and even the coffee machine, if necessary. You will then not have to keep asking other colleagues to assist you when you need to use them. Find out how the mailing system works and who is responsible for filing and posting your mail.

A colleague or mentor may be assigned to help you settle in your position during the first week, but this not always the case. You may be left to find your own way but you can always ask colleagues or your line manager if you are not sure of anything.

You should be free to arrange and decorate your office as you wish, but within the general decoration and colour scheme of the whole organization. Although you are free to place items on your wall for decorative purposes, it is advisable not to place political or other controversial posters on the wall. This may upset or even alienate other colleagues or may be unacceptable in terms of the culture of the organization. Be sensitive to other people, even if you have different views to them. If you want to express your view, there will be plenty of time to do that in tea-breaks or casual, interactive communication with colleagues. Always be responsible and consider the consequences of your actions to avoid any problems in your work environment.

Remember your first day, and even the first month, are very important, as you will be making your 'mark' in the company and first impressions are very important. Always be punctual, polite and show that you are committed to your job. Never forget to ask for help when needed, otherwise you will get into difficulties later. Always be honest and efficient so that others know that they can depend on you to get your work done properly.

Training

Generally, when a new person starts a job, the organization/company has some basic orientation and/or training procedures to help the new staff member. Take advantage of any training offered, especially training or specialized courses to enable you to do your job efficiently. If training programmes have not been made known to you, find out details from the Human Resources Office or Training Section, as the case may be. Never turn down an

offer of training that will make a difference to your work or further development. Identify your own training needs too. Ask your supervisor if you can be considered for training in specific areas to enable you to do your job efficiently. You may, of course, have to wait some months for such training, but ensure that you can register for them. Remember, it is best to do training programmes that are specific to your work. Try not to do too many courses at once, as you will still be learning the job and you do not want 'information overload' at this stage. For instance, it is no use doing the whole suite of Microsoft courses if you will only be using Word. Try doing Word beginner and advanced courses first, if this is new to you, and when necessary, learn Excel, PowerPoint and Access at a later, more appropriate time.

As you advance in your job, you will be able to register for more advanced courses or additional training applicable to your job or training that will enhance your job or even provide a 'stepping stone' to better positions in the future.

Job Hopping – Not a Good Idea

In your parents' generation, loyalty and long-service in a company/organization was the key to job satisfaction and career development. Things have changed now. People tend to change jobs and even careers every so many years. In this way, they gain more experience and earn more money. Also, with the advancement in technology, many jobs have become automated or even redundant and you have to learn new skills or even change careers to remain employable.

However, there is a difference between changing jobs to move up the 'career ladder' or changing to keep up with technological change, and 'job-hopping' for the sake of it.

If you 'job hop' too frequently, and try too many different jobs, you fail to gather proper experience and knowledge in your field. You never learn anything in great depth, which leaves you with a superficial knowledge of all the jobs you do. Potential employers may think you are unreliable or lack perseverance if you keep changing jobs. It may indicate that you cannot face challenges or that you always leave when work gets too difficult. It may also indicate that you have no clear career path or that you 'run away' from problems rather than face them.

You will not be considered for long-term projects, advancement or promotion, if your longest time at any one company is only a year or so. Your employer would not expect you to stay for very long and you would probably be overlooked for any advancement programmes or even training programmes. Those opportunities would be given to staff that are reliable, loyal and committed to a future with the company/organization.

You are also likely to be one of the first people to be considered for retrenchment if the situation ever arises in the company/organization, as staff with longer years of service would get preference over those with only a few months or a few years' service.

Remember that there are so many people looking for jobs and those who have more stable work histories and clear career goals and objectives are more likely to be employed, than those who 'hop' from one job to another. If you change jobs and careers several times in short periods of times, you will have a 'checkered' CV, which could discourage potential employers from wanting your services.

Remember ‘a rolling stone gathers no moss’! Perseverance, commitment and a responsible approach to work will open the door to better opportunities. Invest in your career and a good employer will invest in you.

Not the Job for You?

There may be circumstances that arise which make you realize that you have made the wrong decision, or that this is not the right job for you, or that you will not be able to continue working in this environment. For instance, you may have been for a number of interviews for a job and accepted the first job offer you received. You may have started at the new company/organization and may have been there for a few weeks or months, when another job opportunity comes up which is far more attractive or promising for your career.

Alternatively, you may come to realize that you do not fit into the culture of the company/organization or that you cannot get on with the people in this environment, for a number of valid reasons. You may find the labour or other practices questionable or discover the company/organization is in financial difficulty or involved in a financial scandal. You may be desperately unhappy and realize you don’t want to stay a moment longer! What do you do now?

Consider your options before resigning

Before resigning, ask yourself a few questions first. Are you being emotional and not thinking the matter over carefully? Are you too stressed and over-sensitive about certain issues? Are you not coping in the job and reluctant to ask for training or assistance? Is there a personality clash with your supervisor or colleagues? Have you thought the matter over carefully and come to the conclusion that there are valid reasons for wanting to leave?

Then consider your options. Do some very clear investigations and comparisons before making a final decision. If you want to take up another job offer, weigh up the pros and cons before you hand in your resignation. Make sure you have a formal job offer and better package at the other company/organization, before losing the current job you have.

Remember ‘a bird in the hand is worth two in the bush’. You may be giving up a good job with good future options at the current company/organization, in exchange for a little more money or more attractive short-term benefits, but the long-term benefits in that company/organization may be limited. If you really feel you want to take up the other job offer, then speak to the HR office or your immediate supervisor and explain the position. Find out whether you need to give the full notice period or whether they will allow you to go earlier. If you ‘negotiate’ this in a professional and responsible way, you may be relieved of your notice requirements earlier. On the other hand, if they really want you to stay, they may give you a counter-offer to meet the benefits of the other job offer.

If you find that you do not fit into the culture of the company, or have a personality clash with your supervisor, or do not get on with your colleagues and want to leave quickly, again, consider your options. Before rushing off to find another job, perhaps you should try harder to get on with your supervisor or colleagues or try to resolve issues (this will depend on why the problem exists and how serious it is). Alternatively, ensure that you get another job first before resigning. You do not want to leave and find that your former supervisor provides a negative reference to the next company because you were the problem, or because you never

tried hard enough to resolve matters. It may also indicate that you cannot deal with difficult situations or work in a team, or that you are lacking in communication, leadership or other skills, depending on your position in the organization/company. Always try to leave on amicable terms, if possible.

If you are not treated properly, raise the issue with the Human Resources Officer or your supervisor, depending on the circumstances. If the company/organization is failing to comply with legal requirements by the Department of Labour, the Labour laws or accepted labour practices, you should discuss this with your Human Resources Officer, alternatively, get assistance from a Labour lawyer. You have rights as an employee and these should not be infringed. Try resolving problems in a professional manner rather than causing conflict, which may affect your case, or even your future.

If the company/organization is in financial trouble or involved in a financial scandal, it is best to give in your notice as soon as possible and start looking for another job, or follow up other job offers you may have received before taking this one. One of those jobs may still be vacant and you may still be considered for employment. Give the required notice period and work diligently right until the end.

Even if it is not possible for you to stay any longer at a company and working there has become unbearable, try to ensure that you leave on amicable terms. If possible, never leave on bad terms as it may affect future references or getting a job in the future.

If a personnel agency sourced the job for you, you need to inform your consultant of your decision, as this will affect his/her income if you have left before the 'guarantee' period has expired. Your company may have to reimburse the agency with a percentage of the monies that they paid for your placement in their company/organization.

Formal resignation

Write a formal letter of resignation stating the date you wish to terminate your employment and give a brief reason for leaving, if you think it is necessary. State the number of days' notice and your last working day. If you have any outstanding leave or need to be reimbursed for any work-related expenses, state this in your letter. Thank the organization/company for having given you the job in the first instance and for relieving you of your duties. This letter needs to be hand-delivered to your immediate supervisor, alternatively, to the Human Resources manager. Do not email your letter of resignation. Make sure that the right person receives it personally.

Ensure that the tone of the letter is polite and amicable and does not prejudice your chances of ever being re-employed there again in the future (i.e. if there were no negative reasons for leaving). Always try to keep the door open. You never know what the future holds. It is good to know that you could return one day if things don't work out well at another company/organization.

No matter what the circumstances, always be professional. Do not try to settle scores or cause any problems for yourself. If you do this, you will make enemies and the company/organization may take a hard line with you, for example, they may delay your final

salary cheque or dispute outstanding leave or expenses. They may even try to blame problems on you. Remember they will be contacted to give you a reference for your next job. It is best to leave on amicable terms even if it was a negative experience. Accept it as experience and move on. Don't look back. Rather look forward to a new job and better prospects.