

Just because the financial world is up the proverbial creek right now, it doesn't mean you can't go for that dream job or ask for that long-awaited promotion. Times like these call for tougher measures, and if you want to stay ahead of the career pack you got to put on your game face and come out fighting, theoretically speaking, of course. Here's how to perfect your CV, shine in an interview, get yourself noticed and score that promotion/pay rise. You can pay us back later...

IT'S ALL ABOUT NETWORKING DAHLING

Over 50% of jobs in Ireland are never advertised, so if you're just looking in the newspapers, online job boards, or talking to recruiters you will only access a piece of the jobs' pie.

"To access the "hidden market" job hunters must use proactive strategies such as networking," says Paul Mullan, founder of Measurability, a leading career and outplacement consultancy (www.measurability.ie). "This falls into a few categories; Real World Networking such as industry forums, women networking events or friends, family and old work colleagues. There's also Online Networking or Social Media Networking, where tools like Facebook and Twitter are becoming popular, although my preference is LinkedIn. Some multinationals are actually training their recruiters to use online tools to source future employees. If job seekers don't make themselves visible, they won't get hired."

THE PERFECT RESUME

How to make your CV stand out from the crowd

- *It might just look like a couple of pieces of paper, but having a great CV and, more importantly, an outstanding cover letter is the only way you're ever going to get your foot in door, so make them count.*
- Think outside the box and pay attention to detail. Instead of printing off a hundred CVs on plain white paper, make them more personal and professional by using thick, cream letterhead paper with matching envelopes. Spend a little time and money now and it could pay serious dividends when you get the job.
- *It's all about the cover letter. If you don't capture the hiring manager's attention from this first page, they may not even bother to read your CV. Tailor the tone to the type of job you're going for and, for the love of God, use spell check!*
- Register your letter. It means the recipient of your CV must sign for it. By sending it registered to the hiring manager, you're ensuring that your letter reaches the right person.
- *Why not send your CV with a little gift? It's a surefire way to make you stand out from the crowd. Do your homework and find out if the hiring manager has a favourite flower and send her a bunch. Or include a packet of biscuits or cupcake they might enjoy while reading your CV. Use your imagination, but don't go overboard – a step too far and you could come across as creepy and/or desperate.*
- When all is said and done, remember it has a lot to do with timing. You may not be right for the job today, but you could be exactly what they're looking for in a month's time. Make sure you're unforgettable for all the right reasons.

WOW IN ANY INTERVIEW

You got the interview, now get the job...

- 1 Mentally prepare yourself. Banish those niggling doubts that you probably won't get it, or that you'll be the least qualified for the job. Often, qualifications come second to an interviewee being the right fit for the company. Appear confident, even if you're bricking it.
- 2 Relax. Getting your knickers in a twist in the middle of the interview can blow your chances of getting the job (let alone cause slight discomfort). "You have to remember that the employer likes the look of your CV and thinks you can do their job, otherwise they wouldn't have called you in for an interview," says Paul Mullan.
- 3 Watch your body language. A power suit will only get you so far. How you hold yourself, shake hands and make eye contact is twice as effective as designer threads in helping you to make a really great first impression.
- 4 Be willing to negotiate. This doesn't mean you have to accept anything below minimum wage, but be flexible if asked to start on a lower pay-scale than you first expected. But, remember to get in writing that your pay will increase when things pick up. Once you're in who knows how quickly you might advance.
- 5 Speak up. At the end of most interviews, the interviewee is often asked if they have any questions, so don't let your nerves take over. Use the opportunity to ask something, even if it's; "When do you hope to make a decision?" It's also a good time to turn the tables on the interviewer and ask them if they have any advice on getting into your chosen career. Just don't ask "What time's lunch then?"