



Career Resources from Bright and Associates The Factory Podcast

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Putting together an outstanding CV: the science, the art and the practise

1. The resume is just as important as the interview. We've recently got recruiters to rate a candidate's resume and then showed them a 1 hour video of the subsequent interview and got them to rate the candidate from that too. The recruiter's impressions of the candidate gleaned from reading the resume corresponded with their final recruitment decision as well as their impressions gleaned from the interview.
2. The resume is the first point of contact between you and the employer in many cases. First impressions count.
3. The resume is the only time in the recruitment process where you have total control over what information is presented and how it is presented.
4. Make your resume a marketing tool that sells you! When you show someone around your garden you point out the beautiful flowers, and water features – you don't dwell on the dog's droppings and the compost heap! In the same way on your resume you emphasise your achievements rather than just your duties. (We found that resumes that emphasise achievements were more likely to be short-listed than resumes that emphasised job duties).
5. Create a perfect fit with the job on offer. Write your resume to emphasise how you meet all the qualities and requirements of the job. If the ad asks for a dynamic person with good communication skills – write several sentences under headings "Dynamic" and "Great Communicator" that a) state you have the quality, and b) provides a snappy example of you using the quality at work.
6. Layout:
 - a. White paper only – we have shown that coloured paper resumes are less likely to be short-listed
 - b. Avoid any gimmicks – resumes in unconventional fonts in using way out graphics, clip art and so on, will reduce your chances of being short-listed – when we presented a wacky resume and a



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conventional resume with identical contents to recruiters, the wacky one created an impression of a less suitable candidate.

7. Contents: Contact details, education and training, job history.
8. What to leave out: date of birth, gender, marital status, children, religion, illnesses/disabilities, sexual persuasion, memberships of political organizations, hobbies (unless directly relevant to the job), reasons for leaving jobs, salary.
9. Length. School leavers 1 – 2 pages maximum, graduates and most employees 2 – 3 pages, senior management/experienced employees can go up to 5 pages, but the 2 – 3 page guideline is a good goal. Academics: 10 or more pages is not uncommon depending on the number of publications, grants and teaching details you include.
10. Spilling mistakes. We found even one spelling mistake or typo can reduce your chance of being shortlisted by 50%
11. Cover letter. Limit to one page, ensure you include contact details, exact details of the position you are applying for including reference number and where you saw it advertised. Next paragraph state in 1 – 2 sentences why you would be the perfect fit. Last paragraph state your willingness to be interviewed at their convenience. Final sentence express that you look forward to meeting the person or “you” in the near future.

Interviews

12. take your mind off the interview and go and do something else which is interesting and engaging.
13. Say to yourself ‘*Why am I getting worried about this, why does it matter if I do stutter in the interview, what is the worst thing that can happen to me, well I won't get the job*’
14. It is worth bearing in mind, that the person sitting on the other side of the desk interviewing you is human as well believe it or not. Prick them with a pin and they will bleed.
15. The night before the interview try and have as calm a night as possible. Go back through your résumé, flick through the material, go to a film, watch television. Just have a relaxed evening, don't get too tensed up and have an early night and not too much alcohol. I would suggest that you avoid eating food with lots of spice or garlic in it. You

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don't want to go to the interview the following day smelling heavily of alcohol or garlic, because that can be off-putting. Get a good solid meal and a good night's sleep.

16. take down accurate records of the time, date, and venue of the interview – so you know exactly where you are going and when
17. If there are clashes and you are already being interviewed that day for another job, you will need to consider rearranging the interview. The thing to do here is to consider which of the two interviews is the most important to you. Which job you really most want or which job is the one that you really feel you are most likely to get and then rearrange the least preferred interview for another day. You can be very polite about that and I would suggest that you don't say that you are being interviewed elsewhere, but make another excuse such as you are unable to leave work that day if you are working, or perhaps a white lie *'for personal reasons you are unable to attend on that day, but you would be more than happy to attend on any other day that they may care to choose'*.
18. Pull out from your work file the copy of the job advertisement and the résumé and cover letter that you sent. Study those closely and try to remember as many of the points that you made about yourself as possible.
19. Any information that you found out about the company that you stored in your job file you should go through now.
20. Now is the time to make sure that you have your suitable attire for an interview. Whether that happens to be a suit or just a smart pair of trousers, a shirt, and some shoes that are well polished and look smart and match with the accessories.
21. Avoid strong cologne
22. Avoid garish make up
23. Ensure your hair is well cut, clean and dry
24. The minute you walk through the door of the building on the day of the interview your interview has started. In fact, the minute you have a telephone conversation with the recruiter or the recruiter's secretary the interview has started.
25. Never make the mistake of patronising or underestimating the administrative staff in an office.
26. you need to have a copy of the résumé with you at the interview, but you need to know your résumé well
27. the cardinal rule in the interview is keep your cool. It is not the time to start arguing.



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28. If you are sure of yourself and you know where you want to go and what you want out of the job, then you should ask questions. Not asking questions at interview when invited to do so, gives the impression you are not interested in the position, or that you have not prepared properly
29. Take your time to respond to questions
30. If you do not understand a question ask for clarification
31. Do not always accept the interviewer's premise. i.e. "So you left Bloggs and Co. pretty quickly, where did you work next?" Why accept the interviewer's premise that you left quickly? This is a typical trap, instead reply "Well I was at Bloggs and Co for a year, so I was there a reasonable amount of time, and in that time, the company restructured which removed any chances of progression in my specialist field..."
32. Emphasise positives during interviews – do not dwell on negative experiences such as sackings, work disputes, long periods out of the work force. If you have had such problems in the past and the interviewer tries to get you to explain such events, you can try cutting this short by saying, "I am really most interested in how I can best develop my career now and in the future, and I am positive I can make an excellent contribution..."
33. Panel interviews (where two or more people interview you at the same time) are fairer for you, so do not be intimidated, they are less likely to be biased by factors such as personal rapport, race, gender and other irrelevant issues.

Employment Tests

34. Ask in advance how long the test session lasts.
35. Try to have a restful sleep the night before.
36. Take a spare pen and pencil with you.
37. (Stationery should be supplied, but you should bring your own in case the tester doesn't, or the pen runs out)
38. Go to the loo just before you go into the test room.
39. (Don't forget to wash your hands!)
40. Now you're ready to face the test, you can take plenty of steps to prepare yourself to do well. Once you're inside the test room, follow these simple tips:
41. Read the test instructions very carefully.



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42. Check all the options first before deciding multiple-choice answers.
43. Answer personality questions as honestly as possible.
44. Go back and check that you've answered all the questions before you finish.
45. Don't have a late night before testing day.
46. Remember to bring your reading glasses
47. Don't drink alcohol before sitting a psychological test.
48. Don't take medication that can make you drowsy. (If you have to take medication, inform the tester in writing before you sit the test.)
49. Don't be late arriving at the venue.
50. Don't plump for the first choice answer without checking the other options first.
51. Don't worry if you haven't answered all the questions in the time available. This is not unusual.
52. Even if you approach a test in a positive manner, you may find that a number of the questions in personality tests appear to be either quite strange or irrelevant. In the next sections, you have a chance to try your hand at typical aptitude tests and explore how you can best handle the process of being tested.
53. Personality and aptitude tests can work to your advantage. The trick is to understand why you're being tested, to test the tester with questions of your own and to know enough about the tests to feel in control of the process.
54. Personality testing is so complex, the experts find it difficult to agree on what works and what doesn't. However, the theory called the Big Five has managed to gain a relatively high degree of support among personality test specialists.
55. The Big Five theory is based on the fact that five broad areas of personality exist and that each of these areas reflect many different facets of personality. These five areas are:
 56. **Agreeableness:** Trust, compliance and modesty are signs of agreeableness. As the label suggests, agreeableness is about how well you get along with your fellow humans!



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57. **Conscientiousness:** Competence, achievement and self-discipline are qualities of conscientious people. The words 'I can resist anything but temptation' do not make a conscientious response!
58. **Extroversion:** Warmth, assertiveness and excitement-seeking are examples of extrovert behaviour. Broadly speaking, being an extrovert is about enjoying getting on with other people.
59. **Neuroticism:** Anxiety, depression and self-consciousness are examples of behaviours that may fall under this heading. Neuroticism is the degree to which you're relaxed and self-accepting (low neuroticism) or nervous, fidgety and self-critical (high neuroticism).
60. **Openness to experience:** Fantasy, ideas and values can fall into this category. Creatures of habit who like everything just so and have the 'this is how it has always been done' attitude aren't open to experience!
61. Personality tests can make people feel angry, but you can avoid this emotion by asking the recruiter or tester the following questions:
 62. How can a few questions be enough to indicate to an employer how well I'll do the job?
 63. How do these questions have anything to do with employment?
 64. Why should I share such personal information with an employer?
65. Despite what you may hear to the contrary, the truth is that personality tests do give an excellent indication of a candidate's performance levels. A large amount of research has gone into this subject and documented independent evidence of the highest quality shows clearly that well-constructed personality tests are a useful tool in the candidate-selection process.
66. A well-constructed and well-conducted test has the following features:
 67. The test contains at least 20 questions and generally many more (personality tests can contain up to 500 questions). Generally the more



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questions a test contains, the more likely the test can yield a reliable result.

68. The test includes clear instructions and you're tested in quiet surroundings where nobody else can see your responses.
69. After you finish answering the questions, the people conducting the test are happy to answer your queries and agree to provide you with appropriate feedback.
70. The people administering the test are able to produce evidence that your performance on the test is to be measured against an appropriate comparison group and that the test is administered according to the test manual.
71. The people administering the test can produce verifiable evidence that the test relates to performance in similar sorts of jobs.
72. If you encounter references to left- and right-brain abilities or handwriting analysis, be afraid. Be very afraid. Psychological tests have a bad name because of shonky practitioners who use unscientific, fad-like tests. Don't hesitate to decline any test that makes you feel uncomfortable.
73. Generally if a recruiter includes a personality test, he or she also includes an aptitude test. Unlike personality tests, aptitude tests are normally timed, which has become a controversial issue in the recruiting industry. One of the key international publishers of aptitude tests argues that recruiters shouldn't be looking for people who can make snap decisions, but rather people who are prepared to mull over a problem and reach a reasoned answer. Despite this reasoning, the majority of recruiters still time aptitude tests.
74. Numerical reasoning tests assess your ability to manipulate numbers, spotting patterns and progressions.

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About Jim

Professor Jim Bright is a Professional Member of the AACC. He is the past National Chairperson of the Australian Psychological Society College of



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Organisational Psychologists (COP) and past chairperson of the Sydney Section of COP. His Company Bright and Associates provide a variety of career-related services to organizations and individuals including training, career development and management, and stress management. Through the Vocational Capacity Centre, he writes medico-legal reports in relation to compensation matters. Jim also teaches and researches Career Development at the Australian Catholic University. He has over 210 books, journal articles, tests, and presentations. He is a regular keynote presenter and media commentator, with extensive media credits in Newspapers, radio, and television within Australia and internationally. Jim is the author of nine books on careers: -Resumes that get shortlisted (Allen and Unwin, 2000, 2005), Brilliant CV (Pearson, 2001, 2005, 2007), Amazing Resumes (Jist, 2005), Should I stay or should I go? (Pearson, 2003), Job Hunting for Dummies (Wiley, 2001), Stress, myth, theory and research (Pearson, 2001), Getting a brilliant job: the student's guide (Allen and Unwin, 2005); Land that job in Australia: the skilled migrants guide (Tribus Lingua, 2006) and StressSmart (Bright and Associates, 2003, 2006). He currently writes the Ladder, a career development column for the Sydney Morning Herald.

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