

Looking for work

**CV, cover letter
and
some practical suggestions**



Dr. Daniel Valtakari

Introduction

As part of my daily job I have encountered numerous individuals from different parts of the world. One thing they all had in common was the need to find a job. These days, that can be a challenge for anyone, let alone for somebody coming from a different country and with a different cultural background.

Now I am sharing my experience with some ideas and suggestions I have collected along the way. I don't claim to have the best ideas, but I have received feedback from many of the people participating and discussing with me on how to find an open position and how to get the job. I hope this will help you as well.

... and if you feel you have some better ideas, don't be shy, share them. There are a lot of people everywhere who would appreciate further ideas and guidance.

No guide and no advice will create more jobs. However, you should be better prepared than the competition. It's like a race and you are competing with others, not knowing their numbers nor skills. Show the future employer that you can offer more, and that you are better fit for the position at hand. If possible, even show that you can offer more than they bargained for.

Most of all, trust yourself and your skills. You are good and you are motivated. And reading this guide should prove to you that you really want to find that job that is maybe at this very moment waiting for you. Go and grab it!

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I wish to thank my daughter Isabelle Valtakari for her contribution, suggestions and proof reading. Thank you!

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Where are the jobs?

Most of the job opportunities never become truly public, meaning that jobs are usually found through networks, private and public.

→ About 80% of job opportunities are found this way.

This means you need to:

1. Keep yourself updated about opportunities, not only open vacancies.
2. Check all kind of employers, not only the obvious ones.
3. Let your networks know that you are looking for a job and what competencies you can offer.
4. Check out job fairs, different kind of media and homepages.

Whether you are looking for new job opportunities or not, it is always good to keep an eye on the job market. You will be better aware of your own position on the job market, your salary and your chances to advance in your career. Sometimes companies restructure and this may lead to a situation where you are forced to go looking for a new job. With a positive attitude and well-kept networks, you can constantly follow what happens on the job market and where your skills might be needed.

Also, some job opportunities don't even exist before you bring the matter up by approaching potential future employers and marketing your skills and the added value that you can offer them. To do this you need, again, to know very well your own skills, the business environment where different companies operate and what the current needs are.

Where jobs and competencies meet

Big employers need all sorts of competencies. Don't restrict yourself!

1. Economists may find jobs in tech companies...
2. Engineers may find jobs in healthcare...

Always check what kind of competencies you may offer an employer. Be prepared when you write and send your applications as well as when you go to the interview. Be proactive and lead the discussion in a direction that opens an opportunity for you to show your competencies.

→ Have faith in yourself!

A good way to prepare is to make a *skills paper* (described in a later chapter). It is easier and more fruitful to look for job opportunities with the help of the skills paper. We often tend to have a too narrow view on what and where we could work. The truth is, that most of our competencies, both studied and acquired, at work or outside work, can be offered to many different employers. Once we recognise and know the full scope of our skills and potentials, we can broaden the search for employers.

Networks

Make sure you create and support your own networks. They are a vital instrument in finding new job opportunities.

1. Professional networks at your working place.
2. Including your colleagues during the coffee and lunch breaks.
3. Including project partners and business partners.
4. Private networks.
5. Friends and neighbours, including native people.
6. Hobbies and schools.
7. LinkedIn and other social media.

Be active and work to maintain and grow these.

Professional networks at your working place are not something self-evident. You need to be active and participate in a constructive way. Join the others for lunch breaks and coffee. If your colleagues go for afterwork activities, then join those activities as well. You need not go every time but frequently enough to be part of the group. When you show initiative, like contributing with ideas or helping to organise something you will be considered a person to whom others will mention opportunities. Remember that you will be judged, and you need to “earn” the right to receive job info, i.e. your colleagues need to be sure you will not put them in a bad spot if they share something with you. See also next chapter.

Private networks are equally important and offer a different set of opportunities. Further, you are probably not competing about new jobs with people in your private networks compared to those in your professional networks. The same rules apply here, too. Be active, participate and show others that you are a person worthy of the information they can share with you.

Hobbies and schools offer great networking opportunities. This goes both your own hobbies and, if you have children, also for their hobbies. Again, the active one gains the most. They are in the core of all events and give a strong positive impression about themselves. Just don't overdo it. Leave some space for others as well.

Your activity is your reference. To gain from all your networks you must live up to the expectations. It is a great challenge to convince people in your networks that you are something else than the person they know from your daily life. When people consider you to be a *good guy*, they will most probably share with you any good news without you asking.

Coffee breaks, lunch breaks and networking

In many places employees typically enjoy coffee and lunch breaks together. This is an informal way of discussing work related issues, do small talk about non-work matters and get to know each other. It is especially important to join native people during these breaks and tune into the native mindset and scheme (coffee and lunch time, etc.). This is particularly important if you wish to:

1. Get a reference from your supervisor or colleagues.
2. Get info about job opportunities.
3. Advance your career (even when you don't plan to change jobs).

In addition to benefit from your networks while looking for new job opportunities you will also gain some good references to add to your applications.

It is always important to know, especially when you ask for references, that you will be judged over a long period of time. It's not only about how you manage your actual work. It's is sometimes even more about what kind of an employee and colleague you are. You need to consider this from day one when you enter a new working place. It doesn't really matter if you are looking for new job opportunities or you want to advance in your career. You will be equally judged and there is not much room for explanations. People believe what they see.

Join everything that you can. Go for lunch or coffee together with your colleagues. Join the others for afterwork at least every now and then. Be active and helpful. Make sure you are noted in a good way. Again, don't overdo it. That's not good and will not help you.

Things to consider – as a future applicant

As an applicant for a new position you will be judged at least by your reliability, among other things. Please note that this is an impression that you build over the time and a sudden change could only be for the worse. Consider and remember the following in your daily (working) life.

1. Be reliable
 - Deliver what you have promised
 - If you cannot deliver, be frank and say it
2. Be on time and observe timetables
 - If you cannot, then at least give a heads up
 - You are being evaluated already during your current occupation
 - This affects the references you may need
 - This has an impact on your next job application
3. Be clear with what you can, what you want and what can offer
 - Honesty is a virtue

When you need and ask for a reference (for example) the person giving the reference will consider all that's mentioned above and may in some cases even ask to decline. People can be polite and good colleagues and managers, but when it comes to putting one's name on the line then matters may change.

All of the above mentioned also applies to when you want to advance your career. So, one way or the other, you benefit from this advice.

Looking for job opportunities – where?

When you are looking for job opportunities you should consider the different options there are. In some cases, you may find a specific job offer and in other cases you need to create an opening by yourself.

You may find jobs according to the following:

Open vacancies/positions – the traditional approach

Some jobs are still advertised in the traditional way. Maybe newspaper advertisements have gone on-line, but you can still find a description with a deadline for a particular job. If you see such an opportunity then don't hesitate, just act.

Open job search – personal activity is required

Most of the job opportunities, approximately 80%, will never be openly advertised. It is up to your personal activity and your personal networks, how well you will find these and how successfully you will apply. A great deal of preparative work is required and a systematic approach is needed. However, once you learn the knots, it will be easier, and you will become more successful.

Jobs through different networks

Colleagues

A good source for information about news job opportunities are your colleagues at your current or previous working places. Be an active colleague, talk with others and don't hesitate to let others know if you are open for new challenges, especially to colleagues from previous working places. Keep in mind, though, that it's not always good to let people at your current working place know that you want to leave. It depends on the situation and circumstances. Make a careful evaluation. But you can always listen and catch some interesting information.

LinkedIn, social media and similar

You should be active on your different social media platforms and let your networks know that you are open for new opportunities. Also, stay connected with people who have recently changed their own jobs. They may have news for you. Maybe there is a vacancy since they left, or their new employer may go for additional recruitments.

Friends and family

This is a most underestimated group. However, by just talking and being open about what you want and what you aim for can lead to new opportunities. Especially friends should talk also about job and career matters and support each other. Go for this and don't be shy. That's what friends are for.

Recruitment companies

This is a bit trickier. Usually it is the recruitment companies and consultants that approach possible candidates. If your networks are OK and you have been actively communicating your skills and abilities, then there is a fair chance you might be approached. It is also a good reason to stay updated and have your CV and other documentation in order and ready for use.

CV databases and job portals

Different CV databases and job portals used to be a great hit some years ago. Those may still be useful, but don't rely solely on them. It's a more passive way of getting things done. Still a good back up in the long run.

Job fairs and marketing events

When you are actively looking for a new job then you should also visit different job fairs and marketing events. They don't even need to for the purpose of offering new jobs or recruiting new employees. Still, you would find the same people there and hear about what's new and see for yourself if there's a chance of making some useful connections. You have to be well prepared, bring along necessary documentation and just approach the companies. Today's

smartphones are great for doing quick research on the internet before approaching the people at the stand, for example.

Necessary skills

Find out what kind of skills that are required for the job you are applying for:

1. Open position – read carefully and list the skills that you recognize to be required.
2. Open job application – try to identify the skills that you believe you can offer.
3. Don't be satisfied with the apparent

→ Find out additional skills of value that you have and that the employer has not presented or perhaps not considered.

Open position

An open position is a position that an employer announces and that has a job description. It is pretty much straight forward. You check whether you match the requirements and try to figure out from the wish list of the description what are the key skills required and what are "bonus skills". Read carefully and list the skills that you recognize to be required. Remember that you can, and actually should, add some of your own skills and competencies, and in your application explain how this adds value to the future employer and the performance in the job.

Open job application

With an open job application, you approach a potential employer even when they haven't announced any open position. In this case you make yourself really familiar with the company, its business and competition and try to identify the skills that you believe you can offer. Since the initiative comes from your side you must also be prepared to sell yourself to the company. It's not easy, but you should not give up.

Don't be satisfied with the apparent

Whatever the position you are applying for, an open position or an open job application, make some solid background work. Check everything you can about the workplace and compare to your skills document (described in a later chapter). There is always more than meets the eye. It's up to you how well you will be prepared and how good an impression you will make.

Who gets the job in many cases?

When you compete with other people for the same job, be aware that in many cases:

1. The more suitable specialist is preferred to the best one. This means you need to impress with teamworking and social skills along with the professional skills.
2. The better-known person is preferred to a stranger. When you have connections and networks the future employer has a better idea of who you are. An unknown person is considered a risk in some cases.
3. Any extra skills and abilities even outside the required field are assets. This proves you are a truly active person and that you have an interest in a broad variety of things.

→ A good impression is worth gold.

In some cases, especially when there is a shortage of good professionals, an employer may grab the first good choice that comes their way and recruit another person than you. You need to act on time, to prove that you are the right choice and convince them to hire you.

An additional reality is that in most cases it's not the best professional that is recruited and hired. It's the most suitable. Always think in terms of added value for the employer. If you have on the one hand a perfectly skilled specialist that has no ability to work with a team and then on the other hand you have a good enough specialist that has good teamworking skills you can see that the latter will get the job. This should encourage you, because no matter how good you are you can always add an extra length by proving you are also the right team player for the job. Then you bring more added value than competing applicants.

Applying for a job – best practises

Looking for a job, really looking for it, is not a random game. You need to take it seriously and proceed in a structured manner to succeed:

1. Start looking for just one job/employer at the time – focus on this
2. Check what the employer is doing (business area, need of skills, etc.)
3. Learn as much as possible about the company and its business environment
4. Check chat forums and social media to learn about the soft side
5. Draw up a profile where you match the employer and yourself
6. Decide on key elements that you can offer should you be recruited

Begin by conducting a search of potential job offers and employers. Go on until you find one and once you have found it, proceed with the next steps described here. A common mistake is to start collecting several different job opportunities with the intention to later come back to these and write the applications. The serious downside is that you lose focus, miss the effective time window for sending your application and the applications don't air the determination and dedication that is needed for a successful approach.

Once you have found the one employer/job that you want to focus on start checking for the background of the employer. This includes, among other things, the business area of the employer, what kind of skills they need and the competition.

The next step is to learn as much as possible about the company and the business environment that it is operating in. How is the company performing, why so, how is the competition doing and why? If you are to work in this company, you need to know all this. Also, when you are invited to an interview you must know all of this or you will fail to show that you are well prepared and seriously looking for an employment there. Most of this information is available on open webpages, homepages and news forums.

In addition to the above-mentioned sources you should look into chat forums and social media. The idea is to gather information that is not official but gives an insight into many working places. You may, again, learn what the employees comment and what they find to be important, alternative approaches and then compare these to the official info you have collected. The purpose is not to stand against a future employer but rather to have a *second opinion* type of information so that you have stronger foundation for the interview.

When you have collected all the available information you start matching the employer and yourself. The *skills document* (explained in a later chapter) is of great help in this process.

You can also draw a plan (on the first hand for yourself) to describe what added value you can bring should you be the person they chose. For this part you need to identify key elements to

put emphasis on. Key elements can be found from job descriptions and through the previous steps described in this chapter. You can also prepare a *working plan* (described in a later chapter) to have at least as notes while preparing your cover letter and application and for support at the interview.

Applying for work is work

As the header states, applying for work is something that has to be taken seriously and you must give it your full attention. There is a balance, as a rule of thumb, between how much effort is needed and when you start overdoing it. One working day is enough for one job/application. You need to do a good job, not a perfect one. The following example about how to set up your job application day works well in most cases.

My application preparation day looks as follows:

- a. 9-12 – Looking up info about just one possible employer (see previous chapter)
- b. 12-13 – Have a break and relax
- c. 13-16 – Restructure your CV and write your cover letter from scratch

→ Send your application with documents and collect everything in a designated folder (one folder per application) on your computer and print 4 separate hard copies to bring along if you are invited to an interview (one for you and the rest to be distributed those who make the interview). Don't leave this to the last minute!

→ In some cases, the jobs are given before all applicants have applied or been interviewed. Make sure you are on time. Read more about being on time in the chapter about the interview and timing later on.

Documents and papers for the application

To make an application you usually need at least a *CV* (1) and a *cover letter* (4) and perhaps some documents stating your educational background (the last ones are not discussed here). In addition to these you should consider a *skills paper* (2) and a *working plan & suggestions* document (3).

1. CV
2. Skills paper
3. Working plan and suggestions
4. Cover letter & job application

These are needed for a comprehensive job application and make it possible to include the relevant things in each one of the documents (as described in previous chapters).

The numbering corresponds to the order in which they should be prepared you in order to maximize the outcome.

You should not underestimate the importance of making proper work on all these documents. The next chapters include advice and examples. A personal appearance is good, but again, don't overplay it.

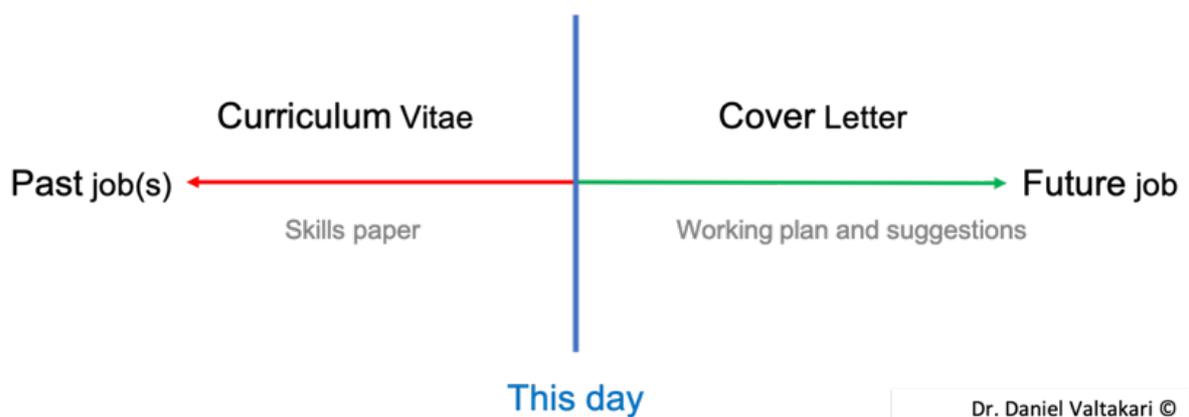
In many cases, especially when there are a lot of applicant, the application of one applicant (including all documents) gets the attention of the employer for only a minute or so. Make sure all your documents have an attractive and professional appearance and once reading has started, they invite to finish reading. All the information must be easily found and comprehensive. For this reason, links, hints and insinuations are not useful. You may add them, but make sure the same info is directly available in the documents.

One way to test if your application documents, CV and cover letter, are good is to give them to a friend for one minute (60 seconds) and then ask the friend to tell about the contents. You will find out what made an impression (and decide if this is really any useful info) and what you should improve.

Curriculum Vitae and Cover Letter

The CV is all about the past and the cover letter is all about the future. Make sure you don't confuse these.

It is not too hard to write a CV; however, it may be a true challenge to write a cover letter that isn't a CV.



You may, of course, make a reference to your past when you write your cover letter. This should, though, be done just in the context of explaining why and what you have to offer in the future.

On the next pages you can see descriptions both for a CV and a cover letter.

The internet is full of examples for both of those. Programs like MS Word has very nice templates. Just pick one that you like or design your own. Remember, that the most important qualities are that the CV and cover letter are easy to read, comprehensive and give a positive impression about you as an applicant.

Playing around with visual effects and inserting information in places where it is difficult to find, or grasp will not do you a favour. Keep it simple. An exception might be those jobs where you need to prove a special talent, like an artistic one.

Curriculum Vitae – CV

You can be confident that your past will not change. The CV includes:

1. Name and contact details
2. Education
3. Language skills
4. Competencies and work experience
5. Career so far
6. Additional skills
7. Hobbies

→ The CV should be no more than two pages long.

When you write about your past make sure you use comprehensive and easy to read complete sentences. Make sure your grammar and spelling are correct. You are not preparing a power point so the language should be good and invite the reader to really read through your entire CV. Make two CV versions:

1. A long one that includes absolutely everything
2. A short one that is fine-tuned each time for the specific that job you are applying for

In the long version (1.) of your CV you collect everything from your past whether it is irrelevant or important for a particular job. It is more important that you don't forget anything that might be important when you prepare a CV for a particular job. For that you need a short version of your CV.

The short version is made by deleting all unnecessary info from the long version and by compressing less relevant info that is still good/important enough to be included. The final CV should not be longer than two pages. Exemptions are made for special cases like academic CV's and those of architects.

If you have had an academic career and are pursuing a job outside academia, you can collect some activities, like detailed teaching and research projects, in a separate attachment. This will make the CV easy to grasp and you can still offer more details about your past.

The attachment describing your academic achievements and work should likewise be written in a good and readable manner. A list of courses or projects as such is not informative and might actually give the wrong impression about you. Architects can produce a narrative when preparing their folders.

Curriculum Vitae - example

John Doe
1st Avenue
FIN-00120 Dollby
Email: John.Doe@gmail.com
Tel: +358 47 332211
LinkedIn:
ResearchGate:

Curriculum Vitae

Full name: Doe, John Junior
Place&date of birth: Albertville, Canada, May 29, 1969
Marital status: Married, three children (-91, - 94 and -98)

Education: Ph.D. in Industrial Engineering, Orlonville University of Technology, 1995.
MSc., in Chemical Engineering, Faculty of Natural Science and Technology, University of Main, 1990.

Competencies: Chemical engineering, strategic planning and financial analyses, business and quality management, R&D and technology management.

Language skills: English, French, Swedish, Japanese, Hindi, (Finnish)

Career:

2018/8- Aalto University School of Science, Department of Chemical Engineering, post doc researching in novel materials.

2009/9-2013/11 Environmental Investment Ltd. as senior research manager responsible for B-2-B relations and new customers processes.

2002/4-2009/8 Garbage & Recyclables Ltd. as senior researcher in R&D responsible for new recovery processes.

1995/2-2002/2 Pollution Solution Ltd. as researcher in R&D for new product concepts and key account manager in the water pollution division with focus on customer service development.

ICT skills:

Office programs	Advanced
Matlab	Advanced
C++	Intermediate
Corel Draw	Intermediate

Further Education: Human Resources, management, 2 years Industrial

Management, management, 2 years eMBA

Hobbies: History and evolution of mankind and theoretical astronomy.

Cover letter – structure

When you write the cover letter you need to remember a few things:

- The purpose of the cover letter is to get you to an interview.
- The cover letter is not a repetition of the CV.
- Cover letter cannot be copied, and you need to write a unique letter for each application.

One way is to construct the cover letter according to the following:

1. **Paragraph**
Opening and brief description about the purpose of your application.
2. **Paragraph**
Establish a link between you past experience and your future with the new employer.
3. **Paragraph**
Describe what you can offer your new employer.
4. **Paragraph**
End the letter assuring that you are the right person and that you are awaiting further contact.

1. When you write the opening, you should make a connection between you as an applicant, your ambitions and the reason for applying to this particular company or for this open vacancy. You may want to live in this area, work in a particular business etc. Make sure this paragraph is short and concise.
2. Establish a link between you past experience and your future with the new employer. Remember again, that the cover letter is not a CV. The emphasis is on the future and the past just supports this. Make sure you have done your homework about the future employer and have a very good knowledge in what they are doing, their business environment and needs.
3. Describe what you can offer your new employer and how you will do this. This is the chapter where you sell your skillset and offer to do something for the future employer.
4. Close or wrap up the cover letter in a nice way. Keep it short.

Paragraphs 2. and 3. are the most important. Keep in mind that the future employer has a need and you are the one to fulfil this need. The cover letter is not about you and what the company can offer you, instead it is about what you can do for and offer to the future employer. Many good candidates miss their opportunity because of failure to comply and you have a chance to score by doing this better than the other candidates.

Open Application: **Name of company or employer**

Dear Ms **Name**,

1.

Please allow me to express my interest in working for your Company by means of an open application. I am about to remain permanently in Finland for family reasons and I am looking for a job opportunity with an international scope in a field related to my experiences.

2.

I have been living and working in Finland for some years now. I am currently leading a research project at **University** with a focus on sustainable environmental processes. The work I do is closely related to the sustainable development in the countries where supply chains of European companies are located. Development funding has a crucial role in this process. I am convinced that my experience is of value to an organisation such as yours. I can, in addition, also work with the marketing of environmental technology and give customers support and training.

3.

The set of skills I bring includes managing projects and teams, targeted communication to specialists and technicians and product support as well as marketing. I can lead my own projects and know the challenges of customers and reporting very well - which makes me a good adviser to others in the organisation working with the processes. I am an excellent trouble-shooter, finding and implementing solutions whenever obstacles arise, especially when working with project partners of different cultural and language backgrounds. I am also prepared to work on any other positions you find my skills to fit.

4.

Living and working in Finland for more than five years, I am used to work here, and my family has found its home here. My main working languages are English, French and German. I can manage with Finnish at least during the coffee breaks and lunch hour discussions.

I would be happy to answer any further questions and provide personal references.

Kind regards,

Signature

Name

Address

Contact details

Application for the position of Senior Adviser

Dear Sir **Name**,

1.

I am about to remain permanently in Finland for family reasons and I am looking for a job opportunity with an international scope in a field related to my experiences.

2.

I have been living and working in Finland for some years now. I am currently leading a research project at **University** with a focus on sustainable environmental processes. The work I do is closely related to the sustainable development in the countries where supply chains of European companies are located. Development funding has a crucial role in this process. I am convinced that my experience is of value to an organisation such as yours. I can, in addition, also work with the marketing of environmental technology and give customers support and training.

3.

The set of skills I bring includes managing projects and teams, targeted communication to specialists and technicians and product support as well as marketing. I can lead my own projects and know the challenges of customers and reporting very well - which makes me a good adviser to others in the organisation working with the processes. I am an excellent trouble-shooter, finding and implementing solutions whenever obstacles arise, especially when working with project partners of different cultural and language backgrounds. My experience with research at the **University** gives good grounds for further product and process development both with our own teams and our customers and partners.

4.

Living and working in Finland for more than five years, I am used to work here, and my family has found its home here. My main working languages are English, French and German. I can manage with Finnish at least during the coffee breaks and lunch hour discussions.

I would be happy to answer any further questions and provide personal references.

Kind regards,

Signature

Name

Address

Contact details

Skills paper

In order to be able to comprehensively describe your skills you need to prepare a skills paper. It is self-deception to imagine that you can talk about yourself and your skills on a spontaneous basis during an interview. That's not going to happen. You will find it difficult to organise your thoughts and to express yourself in an interesting and constructive way.

To avoid this and to prepare for the interview list all your skills in a document for your own use:

1. List all your skills from
 - a. the working life
 - b. your formal education
 - c. your private life, such as hobbies or family life
2. Group the skills in such a way that related ones are not only grouped together, but the groups make a flow from one to another for easy reading.
3. Give a comprehensive description in such a way that the skills will make a narrative so that once you start to read the paper you also want to finish it.
4. Give the document a professional appearance just in case you decide to share it with the people conducting the interview.
5. Bring the paper to the interview
 - a. for your own support
 - b. to be handed to the employer, if convenient and if it brings added value to your interview

If there is anything you want to do to prepare yourself while waiting for the interview, then read your own skills paper.

SKILLS - example of a skills paper

Management

Project Management: I can conceptualise, plan, conduct and report on a different project. This includes defining activities, timelines and resource requirements. I also deliver on time what I have promised.

Team Management: I can lead a team, including establishing job profiles for each team member, establishing work plans and monitoring progress. It also includes making sure team members are treated in an equal manner and that they can develop their strengths and work on their weaknesses.

Financial Management: I can draft a budget for a specific project, a program or department or for a small organisation. This includes identifying the needs and required (sources) of financing or income and establish budget lines. I am able to monitor spending and prepare a final report, however I will need support from a financial manager providing me with software or templates if requirements go beyond simple accounting.

Event Management: I can conceptualise and host events. This includes identifying the target audience, the nature of the event, the agenda and the title. I can keep the audience engaged, making sure their interests are satisfied and they will find a clear outcome to take with them. I can select and invite speakers, presenters, appropriate rooms, simultaneous interpretation, catering, documentation, photographers, technical equipment, etc.

Organisational governance and administration: I can identify needs and roads towards improved governance of an existing structure. I will start by excellent compliance with legal requirements and add appropriate internal rules that serve that structure's purpose.

Fundraising:

Public Fundraising: Among the European Commission's budget lines as well as national level, governments' grants, I can identify those which will be suitable for our projects or our organisation. I can write and submit applications, and I can manage the grants from start to end, fulfilling all requirements including those on reporting.

Fundraising with private donors: I can activate my contacts to private foundations and deal with the specific requirements of foreign based foundations. I can manage trust-based and professional relationships with donors, understanding their priorities and convincing them of the opportunities our projects or our organisation can offer to them.

Advocacy and Lobby work

Strategy: I can draw up an Advocacy Strategy targeting decision makers at European, national or local level, or a combination of those, and implement it. Within such a strategy, I will identify at which point direct or public lobbying is useful. I am not limited to topics I have worked on in the past.

Advocacy: I can conceptualise and plan strategic position papers and other awareness raising tools designed for a specific target audience.

Lobbying: I can speak directly to decision makers, delivering a clear message and responding to their needs for evidence and expertise.

Communication

Public Speaking: I can speak in public and convince a targeted audience. Even in last-minute or unforeseen situations, I am confident in conveying a message to the point.

Media work: I can build and maintain relationships to relevant partners, getting them interested by telling stories that link to their interests and promote our own.

Writing: I can structure, formulate and edit texts according to the specific target audience. This can be short articles or longer opinion pieces. I can write short stories and professional texts. I can produce materials, presentations and guides.

Negotiation

With team members: I can negotiate with my team members as well as advise them on various topics.

Representing my employer to other partners: I can negotiate on behalf of my employer and our organisation. I will negotiate for compromises that allow both sides to win and that are aligned with goals previously agreed internally within my employer to promote our interests.

Troubleshooting

Finding ad hoc solutions: In a situation where worse come to worst, and there are no rules to be applied, I can stay calm and find a basis for dialogue to solve the issue at stake in a constructive manner.

Creating sustainable solutions: When a problem reappears repeatedly, I can analyse it, get help when needed and prepare a) a prevention mechanism or b) solutions to be applied to solve this problem in a standardised and fast way in the future.

Mediation and consolidation

Bringing people together: In any situation of conflict, I will listen to the different points of view and translate between conflicting parties. I prefer to remain neutral (unless it is a negotiation situation), understanding opposing interests and get them to formulate a way forward. When possible, I will mediate with the purpose of reaching a sustainable solution accepted by all partners.

Leading people forward: I can make people understand that the most important aspect is to move things forward and not get stuck in one problem. I can get them to resolve bottlenecks or other reasons for stagnation of a process.

Languages

I can work in **English and other languages** (name the languages). In addition, I can use (name languages) for private and social purposes, still promoting my networking and work-related goals.

Hobbies

Music: I play in a band. Sometimes we perform for an audience at events and small concerts.

History: I am interested in the history of the human evolution.

IT Skills

I am familiar with Microsoft applications and I am a confident Internet user.

Working plan and suggestions

While preparing for the job interview you should already think about the work and different tasks that you are going to do. It is not enough that you prepare to talk about yourself as the interview really isn't about you but about how you will contribute in the future.

You will find key expressions from the advertisement about what the job may include and demand. Also, you should learn as much as possible about the employer, the way they operate in and also read the chats about and around the employer. This way you can prepare a plan about what you will do once you are chosen for the job.

The working plan is a detailed plan on all possible and relevant tasks and duties and includes always the what, why and how on each specific topic. Once you identify the *what* you should answer the question *why* and immediately answer *how* you will contribute in achieving this.

The structure of the working plan is simple, easy to read and concise. Make reading it like reading a story by moving fluently from one *why* to another.

- **What** – One issue at the time per paragraph
- **Why** – Background about the importance of that particular thing
- **How** – How are you going to deliver

→ 3 – 5 lines per issue, no less and no more.

Produce a document, like a very comprehensive paper, with all relevant ideas and proposals neatly described. Make sure it's not just good but also looks good. The text must make a fluent story, so the order of issues is important. It is vital that you answer all the key questions and that you are able to add something new that hasn't come up in the job description as this will prove your competence and show that you are the one that they really need.

Working plan and suggestions – example

Reaching out to new customers in order to introduce new growth to sales. This will be achieved with marketing over social media such as Facebook, twitter and Instagram. Personas well known to the general public may also be involved depending on need and resources.

Peer-to-peer learning and exchange of best practise to strengthen the sales team through bi-monthly meetings. The meetings shall be kept short and concise and the best practise shall be continuously monitored and evaluated.

Improving interaction with sales and R&D and production to better answer the needs of the customers and improve product quality. This will be achieved by sharing sales reports with the production and customer reviews with both R&D and production.

... to be continued.

Impressions about the applicant

A decisive factor for getting the job is the impression we make. CVs and cover letters describe you as professionals and that is important. Without the necessary skills and experience there is little added value in recruiting you. What is equally important is that you are the right person for the job and for the company. To be of interest for the employment market you have to be continuously active. This is not something you can build up in the course of a few days or weeks once you decide to apply for a new job. It is equally important for your current occupation, especially if you want to build a career.

Do you have networks?

How active are you? Do you meet with people and have at least some basic social skills? If not, then consider improving this part. If you say you are an introvert and don't really like social life give a thought on the impact of your working life. There are very few jobs where anyone can work in isolation. You have to show that you can perform well with other people and that you are a team player.

What are your interests outside of your work?

Are you working 24/7 and do you believe this is a virtue? What do you think this tells about you? Are you more efficient than others or do you need more time for the same tasks as others? Do your higher number of working hours really correlate with a better outcome? There is always a competing angle to look from. What you may consider as being a hardworking professional may to another look like you are constantly underperforming. Consider this.

→ Consider the impression you give and how you can improve it!

Pitch talk and advertising yourself

Prepare to advertise the product – that being you. Imagine you are selling something over the internet or at the marketplace. How do you think you could catch the interest of others and convince them to buy your product?

The pitch talk, whether it is 30 seconds or 60 seconds, must be about what you offer the future employer and why you are the person to do that. And what is 30 seconds at home is much more when you stand in front of some strange people, feel nervous and probably feel quite nervous. So, prepare for 20 seconds and 45 seconds. That leaves you with a healthy margin and makes sure you don't say anything unnecessary.

The skills paper, described previously, is of great help when you prepare the pitch talk. Remember that you need to prepare a new and fresh pitch talk for every job opportunity you find. Focus on the structure and what you need to include. After some practise you will even be able to improvise. Later on, when you already got the job, you can turn the pitch talk into short and effective sales talks with the purpose to sell your ideas, your products and whatever you will be doing. The structure and idea is always the same.

The phone calls

Usually you can call somebody in connection with the new job. This applies both for the case where you look for a particular job or you make an approach with an open application.

The purpose of the call is, once again, to get an interview. Receiving additional information about the job and employer is second to this. For this reason, a phone call is a golden

opportunity and you should not omit it. Once again, be well prepared. Don't make a random call without a manuscript.

The persons to call are somebody in the organisation and somebody in a consultancy company. You may have both options or just one of these. If you have both, then go for both as the approach of the calls is slightly different.

You should make the call the following day and no later than two days after you have sent your application. Remember to mention that you have sent your application and that you have a few questions.

Duration and technique of the call

Once you get hold of the person and the call starts, begin by following your manuscript. Begin by introducing yourself and by adding that you have a few question (make a point of this, because people may be busy) and start with your first question. Once you catch the attention of the person at the other end of the call make sure to keep them talking. You need the manuscript so that you have the correct questions in the right order to have the calls going.

The duration of the call should be between 5 – 15 minutes, not longer than that. And once the talking starts going on it doesn't matter if it follows your manuscript. The point is to make the respondent feel that you are a good listener and a good professional. Most people feel positive about those who listen to them and help keep the conversation going on. This way you will make a good impression. impression. If you are out for information for your personal benefit, then use other sources. When the time is up or you feel (in a shorter time) that you have achieved what you aimed at, then thank the person and mention once more that you have already sent your application.

Company representative

The company representative is the person who has particular information about the jobs and the needs of the company. If there is an open position, then you will usually find a phone number and a name, including a title. From the title you can deduct whether you will be talking to a person from the HR (leads to a more general discussion) or to a manager (leads to a more detailed discussion).

Prepare 2 – 4 questions based on whom in the company you are going to call. The questions must be relevant for the person that you call. Remember: it's about the employer, not about you.

Consultancy agency representative

For the call to a consultancy agency representative you need 1 – 2 questions. The questions should be such that they underline your interest for the job. You can, for example, ask about the process, the interview (times) and whether there is something in addition to what was mentioned in the job advertisement. Make sure to give your name and mention that you have sent your application. It is important to conduct the call on terms of the person that you are calling. In this case it is enough to talk for just a few minutes, no more than 5 minutes. This will give a positive and prompt impression about you. Consultants are top of professionals and you cannot fool them. For this reason, stick to your manuscript.

Open position call

When you apply for an open position then your questions for the phone call will accordingly be relayed with the work that you are applying for. HR people are better prepared to discuss

employment related questions and managers are better fit to discuss matters about the job, like the production or customer relations (depends on what the job is about, find out).

Open job application call

For an open job application, the requirements are different. Once you identify what you could offer the company then, as the next step, you need to identify a suitable person to whom to send the application and then call this person. You will not have the benefit of a job description that will help with your questions, so prepare carefully and do a proper background research.

The interview and the timing

To be invited for an interview you need to do some extra work. It's seldom enough to just send the CV and cover letter and apply for the job. Countless other people are doing the very same thing at the very same moment.

The job description usually includes, at the end, some contact details. Those are mostly two kind; one is for a consultancy agency and the other to someone in the organisation of the future employer.

You need to call both of these in order to establish some kind of a contact so that you will be remembered. The timing of the calls and the strategy are important. Don't mess this up.

Sending the application

Sending the application should happen sooner rather than later for at least two reasons; you give a better impression and you don't miss the job.

Giving the right impression is a vital part of your application. When you act in time you give an impression of a person that has priorities, is prompt and is truly interested in the job at hand.

Sometimes employers don't wait until the end of the application period (if there is no legal requirement). When a suitable candidate turns up then that candidate can get the job and you wouldn't even know about it. This can happen for several reasons, one being that in cases where there is a shortage of experienced and skilled people employers may choose to take the one at hand instead of risking to lose the person. The best candidates tend to have more than one choice and can make their pick.

The call

The call should be made a day, no more than two, after the employer has received your application. Usually the application is sent by email, so you place the call the next day. If the people you are going to call are available only on given days and at a given time, be creative and make a plan.

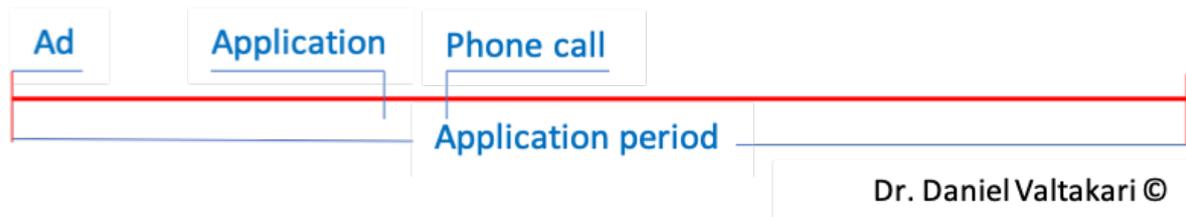
The purpose of the calls is that you will be remembered, and the best way is to make the people you call talk. You need to prepare a few questions, but you must not stick to them if you manage to create a good and fluent conversation. You must, however, have solid and serious questions just to get the discussion running.

For the contact person at the employer you need questions about the job, the working environment, expectations that they have and so on. Prepare between 2 – 4 questions. One question would look stupid and 5 or more questions are not only too many but would indicate

that you actually might have no clue about the job. You ask the questions until you get the person talking and you just make sufficient comments to keep up the talking for about 5 – 15 minutes, no more. Prepare a nice way to end the discussion and remember to say that you are looking forward for an invitation to an interview and you hope you will be able to continue the discussion then again.

For the consultancy person you only need one or two questions, for example what the timetable of the process is and when have they planned to have the interviews. This is to show that you are motivated and not many people call, so the person will take a note that you called.

In the phone call chapter, you will find more advice. A graphical illustration of you applying may look like this:



Some tips and ideas

Should you have the luxury of several simultaneously available job opportunities, then start with the one you would like to have the least. The reason is simple – you need to practise. If you start with the best offer, you may just end having the least interesting, because you might not perform as well as needed. So once again, start with the least tempting.

Talk and talk with people and let them know that you are open for new opportunities. Most jobs are not advertised, or you will not find them yourself. Letting your network know that you are looking for new opportunities will open new doors to you.

When you find opportunities make sure you prepare well. Find out everything you can about the job and the employer. Talk with friends, bring it up in your networks and check internet sites, homepages and chats. Yes, chats are the place where you can find the hidden gems that give you just that extra touch you need to win over the competition.

Whatever you want to do or say always remember the three questions: **what**, **why** and **how**. Never leave ideas unfinished or unanswered.

Always bring four pieces of hard copies to the interview. One set is for you and you never ever give that away. You have three sets for the employer representatives. If there are more of them then they will share. Never use a laptop or pad. It looks stupid and you lose eye contact. Also, you may encounter some kind of malfunction and your chances go down the drain. Have the copies neatly prepared in four separate folders.

Although you have sent a cover letter don't hesitate to make an updated version that you bring as hard copy to the interview. Be honest and say that after the invitation you had the opportunity to improve the letter.

There was a woman who stayed home with her young children that she cared for. During some ten years the kids grew up and the family built a house. The woman was supervising the construction project and taking care of everything else while her husband was working. At first, she was afraid she had a ten-year gap that she just couldn't fill. However, while listing

her skills, she found out that she had learned a lot and, to make the story short, ended up as a project manager.

I have several times suggested that the CV and cover letter would constitute one document like a leaflet with a page for each matter; cover letter on one page, CV on one page and additional info on the next pages. The front page could be like a music sheet for a person working with music. The background of each page can contain a drawing or composition with a watermark with 10% grey. This has proven to be successful.

Trust yourself! If you want the job, you have to convince yourself first, before others will believe that you are the one that should be hired.