



Guide to Job Searching

Part 1

Introduction

Welcome! Embarking on a job search can be both an exciting and challenging journey. Whether you're entering the job market for the first time, making a career change, or returning after a break, this guide is here to support you, develop your confidence and empower you throughout your job hunting process.



Approaching the job search



Your job search is a unique journey. No one else has the same experiences, history and skills as you, making your path distinct. Therefore, it's essential to adopt an independent and strategic approach tailored to your individual strengths and career goals. This personalised strategy will set you apart and guide towards the opportunities that best align with you and your unique profile.

Start by defining your goals: what type of job are you looking for, and in which industry? Identify your skills, strengths, and experiences, and consider how they align with your career aspirations. Additionally, take time to reflect on your core values and the type of people you enjoy collaborating with.

Consider what work environment aligns with your personality and what hours suits your lifestyle. Understanding these aspects will help you target opportunities that not only match your skills but also provide a fulfilling and balanced work life. Remember, the job search is not just about finding any job but finding the right job that suits your talents and fulfils both your personal values and ambitions.

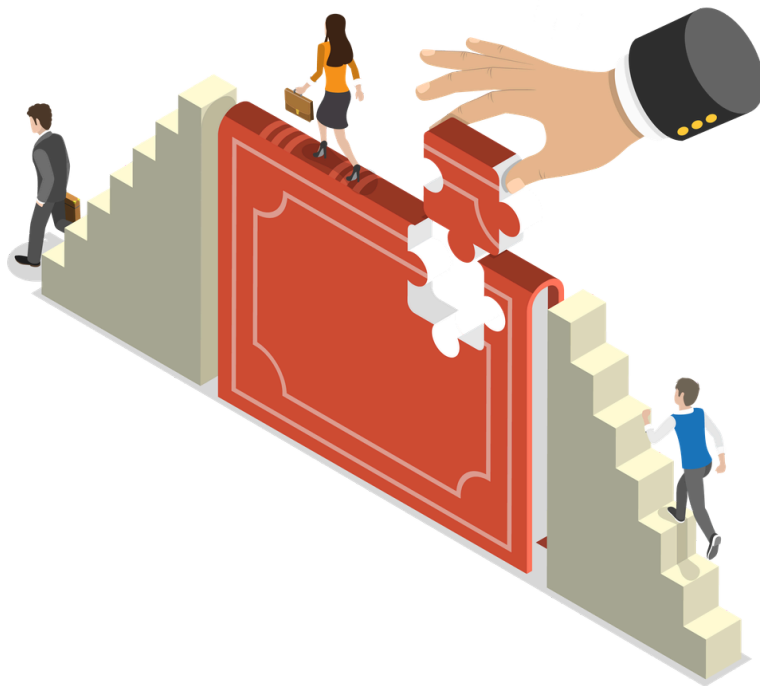
Planning your job search

A well-organised plan is crucial for an effective job search. Begin by creating a schedule that allocates specific times for job searching activities such as researching companies, preparing your CV and applying for jobs. Set realistic, measurable goals to keep yourself motivated and on track. For instance, aim to apply for a certain number of jobs each week or reach out to a set number of professional contacts.



Addressing career gaps

Career gaps can be a concern for many job seekers, but they do not have to be a roadblock. Embrace these periods as opportunities for growth and be prepared to discuss them positively and honestly. Highlight what you did, whether it was volunteering, freelancing, taking courses, raising family or being a carer. Emphasise how these experiences have enriched your life skills and contributed to your personal and professional development. Employers value candidates who demonstrate resilience, adaptability and a proactive attitude in the face of challenges.



Utilising resources

Leverage the resources available to you to enhance your job search. Career counselling services, job boards, networking events, and social media platforms like LinkedIn are invaluable tools. Attend workshops and webinars to stay current with industry trends and to network with professionals. Don't hesitate to reach out to your network for informational interviews, advice and potential job leads. It's imperative to stay open to new learning. Every rejection is an opportunity to learn and improve. Utilise online courses to upgrade new skills or learn new ones.



Managing anxiety and self-doubt

Job searching can be a stressful experience, often accompanied by anxiety and self-doubt. It's important to acknowledge these feelings and manage them effectively. Practice self-care and maintaining a healthy lifestyle: eat well, exercise, and ensure you get enough sleep. Breaks are essential to avoid negative emotions taking control. Also, develop strategies to manage anxiety such as meditation, mindfulness exercises and journaling.

Positive affirmations can also help boost your confidence. For example, remind yourself of your achievements and the unique qualities you bring. Surround yourself with friends and family who support you providing encouragement and perspective. Works for Us have some great courses such as Interpersonal Skills, Confident to Work, Interview Ready and many others. Find out more about these at <https://www.worksforus.org.uk> or call **07852 963744**.



Maintaining a positive outlook is key to a successful job search. Rejections and setbacks are part of the process but they do not define your worth or potential. Every application and interview is an opportunity to learn and grow. Celebrate small victories such as completing a well-crafted cover letter or securing an interview.

Stay focused on your long term goals. Adopt a growth mindset, understanding that each challenge allows you to develop and improve. By staying positive, you not only improve your mental wellbeing but also project confidence and enthusiasm to potential employers.

Remember, your search journey is unique to you. It requires patience, persistence and a proactive approach. This guide is designed to provide you with the tools to navigate the job market effectively. Believe in your abilities, stay organised and positive. Good luck with your journey. We are sure you will find a job that suits you.

Works for Us Team

3 most essential requirements



Planning and tracking progress

Understanding how to start and track your progress is essential time management and goal achievement. There are various methods available, and it's important to choose the one that best suits your personal preferences. This worksheet will help you explore different planning tools and reflect on which methods work best for you.

Identifying your preferred planning tools

Read through the following list of planning tools. For each tool, consider which feels the most comfortable for you. You may want to use more than one.



Journaling

This involves recording job search activities, applications submitted and reflecting on progress. It involves a personal log to track achievements, setbacks, and lessons learned, providing insights.



Mind mapping

Visual technique for organising job search strategies, goals and connections. Helps map out ideas, prioritise tasks and identify opportunities, fostering clarity and creativity in planning and monitoring progress.



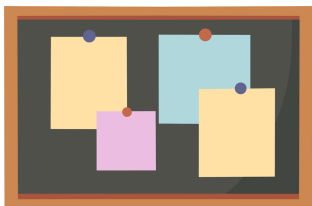
Calendar apps

Digital tools for scheduling job search activities, interviews and deadlines. They help organise tasks, set reminders, and manage time effectively, ensuring timely follow-ups and tracking progress throughout the job search process.



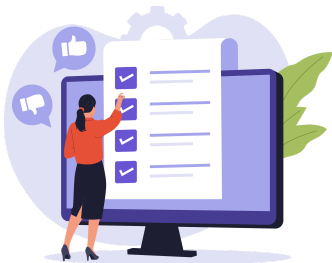
Spreadsheet

Digital grids for tracking job applications, contacts and interview schedules. They enable sorting, filtering, and analysing data to monitor progress, manage follow-ups, and evaluate the effectiveness of job search strategies efficiently.



Corkboards/Whiteboards

Physical tools for visualising job search tasks, deadlines and progress. They facilitate organising job applications, interview schedules, and networking efforts. Easily customisable with notes, reminders and updates to monitor and adjust job search strategies effectively.



Online task management platforms (e.g., Trello)

Digital tools for organising job search tasks, applications and follow-ups. They use boards, lists and cards to track progress, assign priorities, set deadlines and collaborate with notes and attachments, ensuring efficient management and monitoring of job search activities.

Setting a daily timetable

Setting a daily timetable is an effective strategy to ensure you remain engaged and stay motivated. For example, you can commit to working 2 hours in the morning and 2 in the afternoon or evening. Reflect on your daily routine and create a timetable that fits your lifestyle. Consider the following questions:

- 1. What is your current daily routine?**
- 2. How many hours can you realistically commit to focused work each day?**
- 3. Draft a daily timetable that includes time for work, breaks, and other activities:**

Time of day activity

Morning:

Afternoon:

Evening:

- 4. How will you ensure that you stick to this timetable? Create your own personal agreement. For example:**

I (your name), pledge to follow my job search timetable diligently. I will:

- Set clearly and daily and weekly goals to research, apply for jobs, undertake new learning
- Review progress weekly and adjust tasks as needed
- Use my journal, calendar or tools like Trello for effective task management.
- Maintain discipline with work hours and breaks
- Seek support from mentors or partners for feedback

Signature

Date

Personal considerations for effective job searching

When searching for a job, it's important to consider various personal factors to ensure the role aligns with your own goals, values and financial requirements. This worksheet will guide you through reflecting on these considerations and help you develop a comprehensive job search plan. Using your journal or notepad, answer the following questions:

Personal fulfilment and passion

- Consider your strengths (things that make you grow and flow)
- What activities or tasks provide you with a sense of purpose?
- What motivates and excites you?
- Identify types of roles or industries that align with your interests, values and skills.

Career goals and skill development

Create a step by step plan to reach your long term career goals, including necessary training or Continuing Professional Development (CPD).

- What are your long term career goals?
- What skills do you need to achieve these goals?
- What opportunities for learning and professional growth should you look for?
- Design a step by step plan to reach your goals:

Step 1:

Step 2:

Step 3:

Financial stability and benefits

Reflect on your financial needs and the benefits that are important to you. These may just be temporary.

- What is your required salary to meet your financial needs?
- What additional benefits would you like to have?

Work life balance

Consider the job's demands, work hours and flexibility.

- What is your ideal work schedule?
- How important is flexibility in your job?
- Calculate the travel time to and from your potential workplace
- Would you prefer to work remotely? Why or why not?

Job satisfaction and company culture

Reflect on what makes a job satisfying for you and the type of company culture you prefer.

- What tasks do you enjoy on a daily basis?
- What type of company culture do you thrive in?
- How do the company's values and environment match your preferences?
- Compose a letter to a friend imagining that you have just settled into a new job you are really enjoying. Explain to them what's good about your day, perhaps it's the surroundings, colleagues, the work itself, the boss etc.



Simon Sinek: Find my Why

Simon Sinek's "Find Your Why" explores the idea that true inspiration, leadership and fulfilment come from knowing the deeper reason behind what we do. At the heart of his philosophy is the **Golden Circle**: Why, How and What. While most people and organisations focus on what they do or how they do it. Sinek argues that the most influential individuals and leaders with Why - their purpose or belief that drives them. This internal clarity inspires trust, loyalty, and long-term success.

Sinek proposes that your Why is not something you invent - it's something you uncover through your life experiences. It comes from moments when you felt most alive, proud or fulfilled. He offers a simple formula to express it clearly:

"To (contribution) so that (impact)"

To make it more approachable, this can be simplified to:

"I help (who/what) by (what you do), so they can (positive result)"

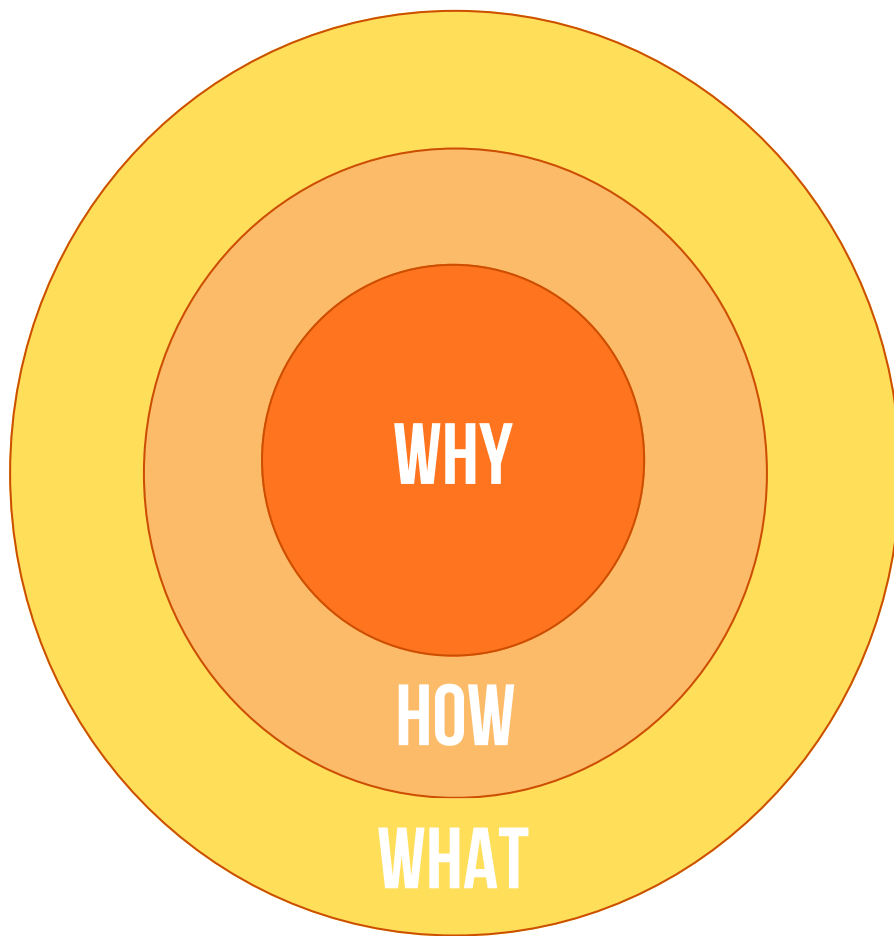
For example:

"I help students discover their strengths so they can grow with confidence".

A business coach might say, *"I help entrepreneurs clarify their vision so they can lead with purpose".*

These statements do more than describe what someone does. They express a deeper mission that guides their work and decisions. Sinek emphasises that when you act in alignment with your **Why**, you attract others who believe what you believe, whether they're customers, partners or team members.

Ultimately, Find Your Why encourages individuals and organisations to reconnect with meaning. It's not enough to work hard, you need to know why you're working in the first place. Living and leading with your Why brings energy, direction and authenticity. Whether you're launching a business, changing careers, or leading a team, this clarity of purpose can transform how you communicate, operate and inspire others.



Sample: If you are a career coach your **why may be;**

Why: To help people unlock their potential and believe in themselves

How: By being empathetic, a good listener, and providing practical support.

What: Working as a career coach, trainer, development specialist, or trainer.

The Hedgehog Concept: Jim Collins

The Hedgehog Concept, developed by Jim Collins, is a simple yet powerful idea to help individuals focus on what they can be best at. Here's a straightforward explanation:

The concept is based on three overlapping circles:

1. What you are deeply passionate about
2. What you can be the best in the world at
3. What drives your economic engine (or what you can be paid for)

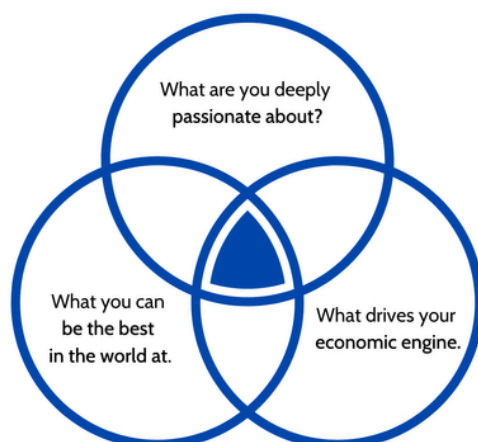
The Hedgehog Concept suggests that you should focus your efforts where these three circles intersect. By doing so, you can achieve excellence and fulfilment in your personal and professional life.

To apply this concept:

1. Identify your passions
2. Determine your unique strengths and talents
3. Consider what people would pay you to do

Where these elements overlap is your "sweet spot" - the area where you're most likely to succeed and find satisfaction.

The Hedgehog Concept



Source: *Good to Great* by Jim Collins

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The name "Hedgehog" comes from the idea that hedgehogs do one thing exceptionally well - curl up into a spiny ball for protection. Similarly, this concept encourages individuals to focus on their core strengths rather than trying to be good at everything.

Example 1:

Sarah's Hedgehog Concept:

1. Passion: Sarah loves technology and problem-solving.
2. Best at: She has a natural talent for explaining complex technical concepts in simple terms.
3. Economic engine: There's a growing demand for technical writers and trainers in the tech industry.

Intersection (Sarah's "sweet spot"): Sarah decides to become a technical writer specializing in creating user manuals and training materials for new software products.

In this role:

- She's passionate about the work because it involves technology and problem-solving.
- She can excel because she's using her talent for simplifying complex ideas.
- She can make a good living due to the high demand for her skills in the tech industry.

By focusing on this intersection, Sarah is more likely to find success and satisfaction in her career than if she pursued a job that only matched one or two of these criteria.

This example shows how the Hedgehog Concept can guide an individual towards a fulfilling career path that aligns with their passions, strengths, and economic opportunities.

Example 2:

John's Hedgehog Concept

1. Passion: John loves working with his hands and takes pride in creating things that last.
2. Best at: He has exceptional skills in woodworking, particularly in crafting custom furniture.
3. Economic engine: There's a growing market for high-quality, handmade furniture in his area.

Intersection (John's "sweet spot"): John decides to start his own small business as a custom furniture maker.

In this role:

- He's passionate about the work because he gets to create tangible, lasting products with his hands.
- He can excel because he's using his woodworking skills and attention to detail.
- He can make a good living due to the demand for unique, handcrafted furniture in his local market.

By focusing on this intersection, John is able to:

- Turn his craft into a sustainable career
- Work independently, which suits his personality
- Build a reputation for quality workmanship in his community

Further reading

- Cal Newport - So Good They Can't Ignore You
- Simon Sinek - Find your Why
- Marcus Buckingham - Love and Work
- Richard Bolles - What Colour is your Parachute?
- Laurence Boldt - Zen and the Art of Making a Living
- Jim Collins - Good to Great



Short term vs long term

In the short term, securing any available job is essential to cover rent and daily expenses. Flexibility and adaptability are key while taking on various roles to maintain financial stability. However, the long term goal remains focused on building a sustainable career by gaining the necessary qualifications and experience.

SHORT TERM



Find immediate work to cover rent and expenses



Be open to any job that provides stability



Manage time effectively between work and studies

LONG TERM



Gain qualifications for a desired career



Transition into a field aligned with aspirations



Build skills and experience for future opportunities

Week 1: Self-assessment and job search prep

Identifying your strengths and interests

Self-assessment and preparation are key steps in finding a job that aligns with your strengths, interests and career goals. This worksheet will guide you through identifying your skills, reflecting on your interests, setting career goals and preparing for applications.

Technical and soft skills

Technical skills refer to the specific knowledge and abilities required to perform tasks related to a particular field or occupation. These are often measurable, teachable and typically involve expertise.

Examples: (all should be evidenced)

- Effective verbal and written communication skills
- Ability to work either independently or as part of a team
- Skills in managing one's time effectively to meet deadlines
- Capability to think critically and find solutions to challenges

Soft skills refer to personal attributes and interpersonal skills that enhance an individual's interactions, job performance and career prospects.

Examples: (all should be evidenced)

- Experience in using electronic systems for processing transactions
- Knowledge of software and techniques for tracking and managing stock
- Ability to use barcode scanners for pricing and stock control
- Proficiency in using Microsoft applications like Excel, Outlook and Word.

List your technical skills

Skill 1:

Skill 2:

Skill 3:

Skill 4:

Skill 5:

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List your soft skills

Skill 1:

Skill 2:

Skill 3:

Skill 4:

Skill 5:

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Your strongest traits

Trait 1 (e.g., committed): Example of using this trait

Trait 2: (e.g., flexible): Example of using this trait

Trait 3: (e.g., innovative): Example of using this trait

Trait 4: (e.g., diplomatic): Example of using this trait

Trait 5: (e.g., resourceful): Example of using this trait

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Industries and fields of interest

Industry choice 1:

Industry choice 2:

Industry choice 3:

Interest 1:

Interest 2:

Interest 3:

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Likes and dislikes

Like 1:

Dislike 1:

Like 2:

Dislike 2:

Like 3:

Dislike 3:

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What motivates and fulfills you

Short term:

Long term:

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Defining your career goals and aspirations

SMART plan

S

Specific: Goals should be clear and specific, answering the questions of who, what, where, when, and why.

Example: "I want to become an area manager for a large coffee shop chain as this will enable me to use my existing skills as well as develop new ones, develop my career for better long term stability and to achieve my financial goals

M

Measurable: Goals need to be measurable so you can track your progress and know when you've achieved them.

Example: I will identify the path/steps and any training I need to follow in order to achieve this within 2 years

A

Achievable: Goals should be realistic and attainable, taking into account your current skills and resources.

Example: I will network with colleagues in the industry and apply for progression opportunities as they appear

R

Relevant: Goals should be relevant to your broader career aspirations and align with your long-term objectives.

Example: Becoming an area manager aligns with my long-term goal of advancing to a senior management position within the industry."

T

Timebound: Goals need to have a deadline to create a sense of urgency and prompt timely action.

Example: I will achieve my goal of becoming an area manager within the next three years."

Examples of career goals with SMART plan

"I want to become a senior manager at a leading retail company".

Specific: I will secure a senior manager position in the operations department of a top retail company.

Measurable: I will complete a leadership training program and successfully lead five major store projects over the next two years.

Achievable: I will use my five years of experience (career capital) in retail management and enrol in an advanced management course.

Relevant: This role aligns with my long-term career goal of becoming a retail executive.

Time-bound: I aim to achieve this promotion within the next three years.



Examples of career goals with SMART plan

"I want to become an Area Manager for a Coffee Chain "

Specific: I want to become an area manager for a well-known coffee chain.

Measurable: I will manage the operations of five coffee shop locations and improve their sales performance by 20% within one year.

Achievable: I will complete a food and beverage management course and gain experience by managing one or two coffee shop locations first.

Relevant: This role supports my long-term aspiration of working in high-level management within the hospitality industry.

Time-bound: I aim to secure the area manager position within the next 18 months.

By framing your career goals within the SMART criteria, you create a structured and actionable plan to achieve your professional aspirations in the retail and coffee chain industries.



Research and preparation

Researching industries

Researching your chosen industry is crucial for several reasons:

- It helps you understand current trends and future prospects, ensuring you're entering a viable field.
- You gain insights into required skills and qualifications, allowing you to prepare effectively.
- It reveals potential challenges and opportunities, helping you make informed decisions.
- Understanding the industry landscape aids in identifying top companies and potential employers.
- It helps you tailor your CV and interviews to industry-specific needs and terminology.

You can discover niche areas or specialisations within the field that align with your interests.

It demonstrates enthusiasm and initiative to potential employers, setting you apart from other candidates.



Examples

Becoming a Retail Store Manager: If you have no previous experience the best way would be to try and obtain a position as a retail sales assistant. You could start as a temporary sales assistant and work at the weekend or in a busy season like Christmas. You would then need to research and undertake some courses either online or at college to improve your skills and opportunities. With experience you could become a retail supervisor, manager or department manager.

Becoming a Coder: To explore opportunities in coding, start by following tech news sites like TechCrunch or Sigma labs and join coding communities on platforms like GitHub or Stack Overflow. Check job boards for in-demand programming languages and skills. Take online courses through platforms like Codecademy, Coursera or Udemy to get a feel for different coding languages. Attend local tech meetups or hackathons to network with professionals. Research tech companies of interest and look for entry-level or internship positions. Consider obtaining certifications in specific programming languages or frameworks to boost your credentials.

Becoming a Teaching Assistant: To research becoming a teaching assistant, start by checking your local school district's website for job requirements and openings. Follow education news sites like Education Week or Teaching Times. Join online forums for educators, such as those on Reddit or Facebook, to gain insights from current teaching assistants. Look into necessary qualifications, which may include a diploma or degree, depending on the position. Consider volunteering at local schools to gain experience. Research online courses in education or child development to enhance your skills. Attend education job fairs in your area to network and learn about opportunities.

Thorough research ultimately increases your chances of finding a fulfilling and successful career path.

Industries of interest

Industry 1: Trends and opportunities

Industry 2: Trends and opportunities

Industry 3: Trends and opportunities

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Compare your current skills and experiences

Skills/experience 1:

Skills/experience 2:

Skills/experience 3:

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Job Fairs and Forums:

Resource 1:

Resource 2:

Resource 3:

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Areas for further learning or training

Area 1:

Area 2:

Area 3:

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TIP

Here's some suggestions for researching job descriptions:

1. **Start with job boards:**

Use popular sites like Indeed, LinkedIn, and Glassdoor to find relevant job postings.

2. **Analyse multiple listings:**

Look at several descriptions for the same role across different companies to identify common requirements.

3. **Note key responsibilities:**

List the most frequently mentioned duties and tasks.

4. **Identify required skills:**

Pay attention to both hard and soft skills consistently mentioned.

Weekly planner

A weekly planner is a useful tool to help you organise your tasks, manage your time efficiently and stay on track with your goals. This worksheet will guide you through setting up your weekly planner, prioritising tasks and reflecting on your progress.

Setting weekly targets

Identify your main goals for the week. These can be related to work, personal development, or any other area in your life.

Goal 1

- Description:
- Why is this important?
- Steps to achieve this goal:

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Goal 2

- Description:
- Why is this important?
- Steps to achieve this goal:

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Goal 3

- Description:
- Why is this important?
- Steps to achieve this goal:

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Weekly reflection tracking progress



Reflect on your progress at the end of each week. Note any accomplishments, challenges and adjustments needed.

Reflect on your overall progress and plan for each week.

- 1. What were your biggest accomplishments this week?**
- 2. What challenges did you face and how did you overcome them?**
- 3. What tasks or goals were not completed and why?**
- 4. What will you do differently next week?**
- 5. Set goals for next week:**

This will help you stay organised and focus on your goals.