

**PARAGON  
RECRUITMENT**  

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**THE PEOPLE PEOPLE**

Get that job.

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## Your CV

Your CV should clearly present relevant and truthful information to a potential future employer.

Your application to a company will be their first impression of you, so make it a good one!

Your CV should summarise your experience and skills to date and wherever possible, relate these specifically to a particular role. Additionally, it can be helpful to highlight your most relevant key skills/experience, in your covering letter/email.

The purpose of a CV is for an employer to be able to select you for interview; they will need to understand enough about you from what you detail on your CV, to know if they would like to interview you.

4 It's easy for a CV to be too short or too long – remember who your audience is and what they need to understand about you from your application.

## Tell the truth

However tempting it may be to exaggerate, a skilled interviewer may quickly find out any anomalies. Also be aware that it may be found out at a later stage, as most employers carry out reference and background checks.

Make sure that all details you submit on an application are accurate, whether this is via your CV, application form or an employment portal. This should include qualifications and grades, dates and job titles.

**Job offers can be withdrawn on the basis of the reference and background checks that employers undertake.**

## What should a CV look like?

There is no universal format and you may choose to have several versions of your CV, or to tailor your CV each time you make an application for a role. Be sure to include:

### Personal Details

- Name and title.
- Contact details – address, e-mail (make sure it's suitably professional), mobile/other telephone or contact numbers. You want these to be clear as you want them to be able to contact you for an interview!
- LinkedIn profile – it may be useful to include a link to your LinkedIn profile, on an emailed application. If you do, make sure this is updated and consistent with your CV.
- Driving licence – do you hold a licence?
- If you require a Work Permit or VISA, it may be beneficial to advise any potential employer of the type of work permit/VISA that is required. Many individuals and positions across a variety of industries are now exempt from work permit requirements.

Immigration legislation changes on the Isle of Man now make it easier for those who have a Tier 2 Visa to find another role locally. It's always best to seek individual guidance in this area from either the work permit office or immigration department.



**Match objectives  
& aims to job**

## Personal Profile (Skills and Career Summary)

Why are you interested? Summarise the relevance of your experience/skills/qualifications to date specific to the role, along with important personal qualities you feel would benefit a future employer.

State your career aims. If this is your first job, concentrate on your interest and enthusiasm in the role, company and industry and any relevant work experience.



### Key Skills / Achievements

Make these relevant to the job you are applying for. These achievements could include challenges you faced and targets, deadlines or budgets you met. You could also include areas of personal or professional development.

**Personal Details, Personal Profile and Key Skills/Achievements are all of particular interest to a future employer – these should be included on the first page of your CV.**

### Career History – Employment and Work Experience

Start with your most recent role and include dates of employment. Also specify any different roles held with the same employer; at a glance, this can reflect your progression within an organisation, over a number of years. Use formal language, rather than abbreviations, slang or corporate terminology. It's useful to give examples of achievements and add context to your experience, including figures, budgets, timescales etc.

Explain any **gaps in your employment history**. You may feel that this isn't important or you might think that it's easier not to mention this, but it is preferable to be honest, up front and positive about reasons for any break. Assumptions may otherwise be made about any gaps and your CV may be put to one side.

Alternatively, if an interviewer makes a discovery about an omission, it can immediately put you on the back foot at interview. They may then focus on this rather than the positive reasons why you would be good at the job.

State dates of the gap and the reason e.g. if you had time out travelling, job seeking, volunteering or caring for a relative, include this (along with details of what you've learned, if appropriate). Note: you may need to support this with evidence, as part of employment verification procedures.



### Qualifications

Include the most recent, first. Any professional qualifications, dates you completed each stage and/or when you gained the full qualification.

Include the university, college or school you attended and any grades, with particular attention to grades achieved in Mathematics and English. Include any work-related courses if relevant.

### Interests

This can give an employer a more rounded picture about you. If you include this section, keep this short and make items specific and interesting. Be prepared to discuss these. Avoid including general activities which are part of everyday life e.g. shopping and socialising.



**Tailor relevant skills & achievements for each application**

**Presentation:** present your CV neatly and clearly:

- **Font size/type:** use a clear typeface, with the size not being too small or large. Careful use of bullet points and bold type can be effective.
- **Be concise:** although do include sufficient information for an organisation to understand your relevance for a job. A CV doesn't have to be condensed onto one page, but ideally it should not be longer than three pages.
- **Spelling:** firstly, spell Curriculum Vitae correctly! Make sure you have proof-read your CV for spelling and grammatical errors. Also ask someone else to cast their eye over this too. Make sure you use the correct version of a word (your/you're, role/roll) and that you have used a UK rather than US spell check on the document.
- **Consistency:** make sure formatting, font type/size, spacing etc., are consistent throughout the document.
- **Layout:** is it presented in a logical order without duplication.

If you are submitting a printed copy of your CV make sure you print your CV in black ink on good quality white paper. Any accompanying covering letters should use identical stationery.

### Application Forms

Many organisations have their own application forms which they request applicants to complete either additionally or instead of submitting a CV. This assists employers at interview stage, as information is requested and presented in a consistent order.

- Read the instructions for how to apply and follow them.
- If they do not additionally ask for a copy of your CV, do not attach a copy of your CV and ask the company to refer to this, instead of completing the form.
- Ensure that this is truthful, error free, clear and fully completed, effectively highlighting the information that is most relevant about you.

- Take a copy of the completed form for your own records, so that you can review this prior to interview, if matters progress to this stage.

### Covering Letters / Emails

Large corporate organisations may have an HR resource that manages the recruitment process on behalf of Recruiting Managers across the business. Be aware that your covering letter may not be sent on to line managers to review, so ensure that you include any important information on your CV.

A covering letter or email can be another way of reinforcing the positive reasons why you are applying for the specific role. Ensure that your application is received on time and include the reference number or job title that you are applying to. If possible, find out who you should address your letter to. Spell their name correctly.



### Online Applications including Recruitment Portals

Employers are increasingly raising their profile through digital advertising and promotions. It can be possible to apply electronically to job adverts, perhaps by using your LinkedIn Profile, but as with all applications you should ensure the accuracy and relevance of information that you submit, so take time to consider if this is the best approach.

An increasing number of employers operate online recruitment portals to effectively and consistently manage applications, interview and offers. These can sometimes be accessed via their website.

Initially, either you or your agency will upload your specifically tailored CV, online. This is likely to cover your contact details and other personal information – be particularly careful that these are input accurately! Potentially you may also need to include a summary of your employment history and qualifications. Some portals will send you confirmation of your submission but they may also ask you to complete some additional details through a link that they provide.

Ensure that you regularly monitor your emails, as you may then be invited to interview. It's always helpful to remain in contact with your Recruitment Consultant about any email communication that you receive, as they can guide you through the process and provide advice on your interview preparation (this may be fairly specific for each organisation).

If you are offered a role, you may then have further information to complete in regard to references and the organisation's other verification procedures. Timescales for onboarding differ for each organisation, so ensure that you check and action your emails promptly.

### Social Media – LinkedIn / Facebook / Instagram / other

Generally it's essential that you are aware of your profile on social media. *Make sure that you have appropriately adjusted your privacy settings* so that future employers only see the information that you want them to!



**LinkedIn** is a professional networking tool that enables you to connect to individuals and organisations that you know and have worked with, as well as those that interest you. It is a powerful tool that can help build your professional reputation.

Initially, it will be useful to establish your professional profile online – do remember that this is highly likely to be viewed by potential employers. You can use this as a tool to help you during the recruitment process – being able to research organisations, as well as find out further background detail about those that you are going to meet for an interview.

Include as much or as little information as you wish on your LinkedIn page. There are section headings - Profile, Activity, Experience & Education - to expand upon; some choose to have basic details only but others include their full CV. Alternatively you may wish to include your professional summary and key career highlights / achievements, rather than detailing every aspect of your full CV.

A photo in this instance is useful to include, rather than having a generic blank icon. Add connections and keep updating these on an ongoing basis.

Like, share and comment on articles that interest you - you can use this to search or be approached for jobs.



**Build your online presence positively**



**Follow businesses of interest online:  
Instagram, Twitter, Facebook and LinkedIn**



## Interviews

**You don't get a second chance to make a first impression...**

You want to feel confident when you go to an interview and these tips could help you feel positive and prepared. Your Paragon Consultant will be happy to meet with you prior to an interview to give you guidance on how you can prepare, **but only you can work on the preparation itself.**

### Why are Interviews so difficult?

Primarily, the basis for the meeting is to talk about yourself, which makes it an unusual situation. This can feel stressful but it doesn't have to be this way with a bit of preparation!

Always remember that you have been asked for an interview for a reason – they already think you are a potential fit for their vacancy and company, so take confidence from this.

It's good to find a way of presenting information about yourself, in a manner that you are comfortable with. You are unlikely to be the only person to be considered for the job - **if you don't say positive things about yourself, then no one else will.**

If you prepare, you should feel ready to field any question that is asked. You will already be clear about what you want to say and how you express yourself.



**Prepare example answers to demonstrate your skills & experience**

## How do I prepare for a job interview?

### Review your CV and the job advert / description

- Sit down with your CV and make notes. Think about any obvious areas that an interviewer will ask you about. For example, a recent qualification or career move.
- Review the job advert/job description and note the areas that you have covered, as well as those that you would need training in. With areas of development, consider your approach to learning and be able to talk positively about how you can get up to the required level. Avoid stating inaccurate details at interview, such as having more experience than you do – this will be found out!
- Be prepared to talk around your experience and CV, using examples to support your answers 'I have good communication skills' makes more of an impression when followed by '...which I use in my company as a member of the company social committee'. Try to make the majority of supporting illustrations from the workplace, as this is the most relevant context for a potential employer to relate to.

### Research the company and industry

- The company's website demonstrates how the company wants to be seen, details its products/services and often gives you information about their key people (this could give you an insight into the background of your interviewer!)
- Where possible review LinkedIn for Company pages and your interviewer's profiles.
- Have a good level of background knowledge about the industry, particularly important if you haven't worked in the industry before. Look into relevant qualifications an employer may want you to undertake and any current/future legislation that may impact upon the industry and the company.

## Have a clear idea of where you are going and when

- **Know the time, date and location of the interview.** The name and job titles of your interviewers are also useful to know. If there is more than one interviewer present, one may be a line manager that you'd work more closely with if you got the job.
- **Plan** how you will get to the interview in good time. Anticipate any delays (e.g. roadworks), taking into account the time of day that you will be travelling.

## Initial impressions count - appearances, attitude and body language are incredibly important.

- **Dress code.** If called to interview, ensure that you are presented appropriately and where possible, in line with the employer's dress code. If in doubt it's always better to be overdressed for an interview.
- **Switch off your mobile phone!**
- **Your interview starts before you set foot in the building.** Treat everyone with equal courtesy and be careful about the topic of any conversation you have.
- **Arrive on time,** greet your interviewer by name and use a firm confident handshake.
- **Make eye contact and smile.** If there is more than one interviewer, look at each of them during your answers.
- **Body language / posture.** If you sit up straight, feeling your spine against the back of the chair, you are likely to both project your voice and answers clearly. It's also a good position to adopt in relation to body language, which can otherwise inaccurately portray you as not sufficiently enthusiastic about the role or motivated.
- **Be aware of any nervous habits** such as fidgeting and try to avoid these.
- **Speak clearly** and don't rush your answers. You can take a short time to think before you speak.

- **Demonstrate enthusiasm** and interest. Showing a positive 'can-do' attitude is the most valuable first impression you can make.
- **Try to be as positive** in your answers as possible, especially when asked about why you are leaving your present employer. Look forward and focus on the reasons for a positive career move rather than looking backwards and giving any negative comments about your job / manager / company.



## Different types of interviews

### General / standard interview

This is a broad discussion about you, your experience and interest in the company, with them being able to outline their background and role requirements in more detail.

Interviewers will talk around your CV and technical skills, as well as qualifications and experience in relation to their role.

### Biographical interview

Questions will focus on your CV, your career moves to date and personal motivations, both past and present. This may be an opportunity to talk about challenges you have faced and overcome but give you time to present positive reasons for your choices as well as the focus you are seeking from a future move.

### Competency interview

This will require you to demonstrate your skills, knowledge and abilities, (collectively known as competencies), by giving specific examples from your past experience. It is considered that previous experience is evidence of how you may be likely to manage a scenario in the future. Employers can use this method to varying extents, with some organisations having this as one stage of a comprehensive interview process, with others asking a few short questions.



## A way to structure your answers for each competency example could be broken down as follows:

- **Situation:** Think of an example that is specific to the competency/behaviour and outline the background information which will help the interviewer understand the scenario you will discuss.
- **Task:** Talk about what specific situation arose or what you were required to do.
- **Action:** What actions did you take or were required, for you to address the issue?
- **Result:** What was the overall outcome? What happened as a result of your actions to you/the customer/the department /the company etc.?

### Common job interview questions



Look at interview questions as an opportunity to demonstrate that you have the qualities relevant to the job and the company.

Whilst it's good to think about how you'd answer the questions below, don't learn answers off by heart and repeat them by rote.

If you feel prepared to answer these, then you can often adapt your answers to other questions. Here's a guide to what an interviewer may want to hear in an answer.

#### Tell me about yourself

This is often an opening question, so the answer is crucial in creating a positive first impression. There's no need to go in to too much detail. If the interviewer wants more information they will ask for it. If you are attending interview for your first job since leaving education, then focus on what led you to be interested in the particular role or company e.g. is this relevant to your studies?

If you already have experience, then give a short overview of your career, with supporting examples of achievements and skills, along with appropriate qualifications.

#### What are your strengths?

Remember that you are unlikely to be the only person to be interviewed for the job. You need to positively describe your key strengths at interview, or you won't be doing justice to your abilities (professional experience, qualifications, but also personal behaviours).

Think about what makes you good at your job and if possible, tie your answer in with what is outlined on the job description/advert. If this is your first role, talk about the qualities you have developed during your education or from an outside interest. Demonstrating clear enthusiasm and interest is also important, along with using relevant examples to support and illustrate your answers.

#### What are your weaknesses?

This sounds daunting. The interviewers are wanting to know that you can recognise something that you do not class as a strength, perhaps an area that you realise you could require more training in, or recognise could become more significant within a different role.

It's important to show that you can be realistic about your qualities and can speak up when you don't have the answer or the skills required. It would be good to have ideas about how you would address a development area, as you are already showing commitment to addressing this.



### Dress for the job

Alternatively, you could talk about an area or skill that you have already developed e.g. if you felt you lacked knowledge of an area of your experience and identified this as an issue, describe what steps you took to improve and how you become more confident with this.

It will be noted that you are now able to refer to this as a strength; it shows that you can look at yourself objectively, take action and improve your performance as an individual and employee. Managing your answer both retrospectively and positively, can be the best way to answer a difficult question!

'I don't have any weaknesses' may appear arrogant. 'I have a tendency to work too hard' can be seen as avoiding the question. Avoid attempts at humour with anything like 'Kryptonite' - it's difficult to know how your audience will respond.

### **Why should we employ you? Why are you the best person for the job?**

There may be similarities here with 'What are your Strengths?' Talk with enthusiasm when you express your ideas. Highlight what you can bring to the role/organisation and make as many comparisons as you can with your key skills, experience and qualifications to the information detailed on the job description.

### **Where do you see yourself in five years time? What are your goals?**

This is a question about your short and long-term objectives, as well as what motivates you. If you are studying towards attaining (or want to commence the study of) a relevant professional qualification, then this gives you the opportunity to state when you expect to complete this and what you feel this will enable you to do.

If you have a clear idea about what you want to achieve in your career, you can talk about the steps you foresee having to take in order to get there – relate this to the position you are being interviewed for. *You need to achieve a balance though, as it's not a good idea to talk about the role you are being interviewed for, as a stepping stone to bigger and better things.*

Often it may be easier to talk in general terms about your ambitions, showing you want to progress, but don't necessarily put timescales in place for how long you see working in one job/company. Whilst you can also use examples in your personal life, if you want to run a Marathon or some other ambition, try to balance this with work-related focus as this is the context an employer is more specifically asking you about.

### **Why do you want to work here?**

The focus of this answer differs slightly to why should we hire you. Your answer should focus more specifically upon them as an employer. *Think about how the company and role tie in with your experience to date and longer term goals.*

It would never be a good idea to say 'Because the agency told me about you' or 'I just need a job'. These statements indicate that you haven't made any effort to find out more, so perhaps you have no interest in them or lack motivation.



**Perfect your handshake,  
eye contact, body language,  
posture, breathing - smile!**

## What are three positive things your last boss would say about you?

This is another way of saying positive things about yourself, but from your manager's perspective. How do you do the job well, can you work well in a team, are you a good supervisor/manager, are you motivated/committed to achieving targets/goals and are there any personality qualities that are particularly valued? It should just be a question of choosing the best or most relevant qualities!



### What salary are you looking for?

Salary is a particularly difficult area to talk about, because it's not something we all do a lot of the time. It can feel like you are put on the spot to give a figure but you have to be careful to get the balance right – you don't want to under or over value yourself.

If your CV was submitted by a recruitment agency, then you often have an indication of the salary an employer is able to consider and also know what you advised your consultant, that you would be seeking for another role.

It can be useful to make reference to the guideline salary that was provided with the job description and confirm that it's around the same area that you're looking for. Whilst you may also want to take the benefits package they offer, into consideration, it can also be difficult to take in and evaluate all of these details in an interview. All in all, it can be easier if you speak in general terms.



### Know your worth & salary expectations if asked



## Questions to ask the interviewer

You usually get a chance to ask a few questions at the end of your interview, so make the most of this opportunity. Demonstrate your interest in them as well as your knowledge and understanding about what has been covered and researched. Concentrate on issues that matter to you.

Generally, it is not a good idea to ask about pay or benefits, as this makes you seem more interested in what the company can do for you, rather than what you can do for them. If you have used a recruitment agency, then you are likely to be aware of this detail already.

Before your interview, you could make a bullet pointed list of around 5 areas that you want to ask - it would be OK to take this with you to act as a reminder at this stage of the interview. For example:

***Why has this position become available?***

***Where will the job fit in the team structure?***

***What qualities do you feel are most important for an individual to be successful in this role?***

Some questions should delve deeper into the culture and goals of the company, which could include:

***What is the best thing about working for your company?***

***How would you describe the company culture?***

It could be useful to ask a question that demonstrates your awareness of a current issue which could affect the organisation. This could have been drawn from a recent article or relate to an upcoming piece of legislation.

How well your interviewer responds to your questions could give you a great insight into the company. The interview is not only there for them to assess if you are a good fit for the organisation, it is your chance to see if you would be happy to work with them.

If you feel confident that your interview went well, you could ask the interviewer why they had wanted to meet with you. You hope that they may have to review and then summarise all of the positive reasons why they asked to see you.

An alternative approach may be to ask if they have any reservations about you, as this could give you the chance to give an immediate response to any concerns. Your hope is that either of these options will end the interview on a positive note.

### **What will be different at a second interview?**

A second interview may either involve you meeting different people and covering some similar questions to your first interview potentially in a brief manner OR could mean meeting the same individuals but asking more detailed or challenging questions.

Either way, prepare for this interview as you did for your first meeting. Be ready to expand further on ideas that you previously expressed, speak positively and enthusiastically and illustrate your answers with examples.

Second interviews also give you a chance to ask questions that you didn't have time to ask previously, or those that occurred to you when the interview was over. Make a list of areas to cover when you get a chance to ask questions.

If you do not have to consider confidentiality, this could be your opportunity to ask for a tour of the offices, to gain an insight into the working environment and company culture. There could be many reasons why an organisation may not be able to give you a tour, but it can give you a real 'feel' for the company.

Occasionally, second interviews may take place in a different setting, such as a bar or restaurant. Be on your guard – a less formal environment could lull you into a more relaxed state. Try and stay professional and focussed.

### **How should I approach a Telephone / Skype / Remote or Conference style interview?**



Employers are increasingly carrying out initial candidate assessments by these means either for convenience purposes (e.g. because of the working location of Hiring Managers within an International business), or because of the nature of the work that is required (e.g. if using the telephone is one of the main criteria for the role). This can act as a first step before inviting someone to a face-to-face meeting.

Keep a notepad / diary handy along with a pen that works, so you can note key points, such as dates for the next round of interviews. If there are any dates when you may not be available for a second interview, make sure you have these listed.

- Stay focused. Take the call where you can concentrate and not be disturbed.
- Smile as you would in a face-to-face meeting – you can hear this in someone’s voice. It will impress upon the interviewer that you are genuinely enthusiastic about the opportunity to talk with them.
- Dress as you would for an interview – it sets the tone and prepares you (potentially you could be surprised by being contacted via video rather than Telephone Skype call!).
- Speak clearly.

If you follow these tips then your interviewer should get a positive impression and want to invite you to a face-to-face meeting.

### Role Play assessments

This is an exercise to test your ability to perform in the role for which you have applied. This may be for particular roles in Customer Services or Sales, but it’s not widely used. Depending on the company, this may be an initial interview or a stage of their recruitment process.

You need to try to participate in the exercise as if it were a real-life situation, using your previous experience to positive effect. It has similarities to competency interviews in that the interviewer is hoping to find out how you would react if you worked for the company.

Use any preparation time to read information thoroughly. Bear in mind that it is not just your answers that will be under observation, but also your behaviour. How do you respond to an angry customer? How do you reply to a query when you do not have all of the facts? Can you express your/the company’s view clearly under pressure?

### What should I do next?

At the end of the interview, the interviewers may tell you the timescales that are involved, such as whether they have other people to see and when they will be getting back to you/ Paragon. If they don’t say this, it could be one of your questions to them.

After your meeting, speak with your Paragon Consultant to tell them your thoughts about the interview, the role and the company. Provide the timescales that were advised to you.

If you do not hear back within the timescale advised by the client company, follow this up politely. There may be a number of reasons why there has been a delay. If your application was through Paragon, then we will do this on your behalf.

If you are unsuccessful with your application, it can obviously be disappointing. Try to obtain any feedback about why this was the case as you could use this information constructively for your next application. Endeavour not to take this decision too personally; there’s little to be gained by arguing with the company about their decision.



**Ask for decision timelines & next step**

## Job offers

### Congratulations – you got the job!

Wait to receive your offer in writing from the client company before taking any action.

Check that the details of the offer match what were discussed at interview.

At any stage, if you have any questions, discuss them with either your recruitment consultant or the employer.

Hand in your notice and advise your consultant / the company of your leave date from your present employment, as well as your start date for your new job.



Consider temping as a step to securing a permanent role



Build your online presence positively



Set Paragon Job Alerts to receive new jobs to your inbox; keep in touch with your recruiter



Join appropriate groups online, look out for advertised jobs



Check out local job boards, press and magazines



Attend careers events, open days, networking events



Review options with the Job Centre and set job updates



Undertake voluntary and part time work as a way to build skills and experience



Ask friends and family



Follow businesses of interest online; Instagram, Twitter, Facebook and LinkedIn



Good luck!