

Select

ACCOUNTANCY
IRELAND

Career Guide

Everything you need to know
to build a successful career



Interview tips

What hiring
managers look for
in an interviewee

Play it cool

Expert advice on
managing the salary
negotiation process

IN ASSOCIATION WITH



B A R D E N



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B A R D E N

A word of welcome

You are the sum of the five people you spend most of your time with. You'll spend over 90,000 hours in work during your lifetime. That's more time with work colleagues than with your family and friends. Where you work and what you do there has a fundamental impact on your existence. At least in Barden we think it does. That's why we take recruitment so seriously.

Google "career guide" and you get 520 million pages – that's a lot of homework. To save you the trouble, Barden and *Accountancy Ireland* created this – the expert career guide for finance professionals in Ireland. This guide sets out a blueprint for you to follow as you plan and execute your route to market.

This guide deconstructs the fundamental parts of the application and recruitment process from a candidate perspective and looks at each step through the lens of the finance professional. This guide



is best used in conjunction with the Barden Career Model and is the first in an expert series we are creating in partnership with the outstanding team at *Accountancy Ireland*.

Next year, we will publish an expert guide for hiring managers

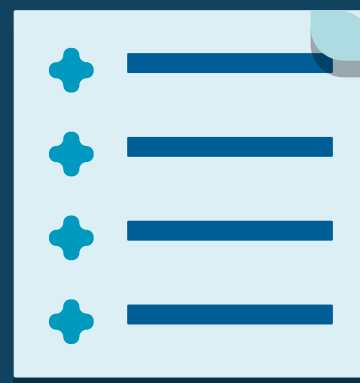
followed by an expert guide dedicated exclusively to the evolution of the Barden Career Model, so watch this space. 💡

We hope that this career guide will help you better understand and engage with the recruitment process during your career, and that it will arm you with the tools and information you need to give yourself the best opportunity to be discovered out there.

When it comes to career advice for finance professionals, forget Google – ask Barden.

Ed Heffernan
Managing Partner
Barden Ireland

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Click on the light-bulb icon to read more about each topic on the Barden website, www.barden.ie 💡



ACE CV SKILLS

There's an art to writing an eye-catching CV so don't treat it as an afterthought.

Every corporate vacancy attracts 250 CVs, according to recently-published research by Glassdoor. And when you consider that organisations will often have multiple vacancies at any given time, it soon becomes clear that for your CV to stand out from the crowd, it will need to be special – very special. 💡

This is where specialist recruiters can add a huge amount of value. A specialist recruiter in accounting and finance has far, far more knowledge and expertise when it comes to CV creation and preparation than a generic CV preparation firm, a partner in a large accountancy practice or



even the HR director in the world's largest company.

Some pointers

Your CV is a representation of you when you're not in the room but the truth is, nobody will read it. At best, it will be scanned so it's vital to make a strong first impression. The first page is prime real estate, and here are some tips to help you create a good first draft: 💡

- Bullet point number one... use bullet points. Also, use generic language and provide context – each are key in building a picture that will be easily grasped by the lowest common

denominator in the recruitment process – the administrator who has little or no knowledge of accounting.

- Engage a specialist recruiter to help craft your CV. Family and friends will be more than willing to help, but there's no second chance to make a good first impression.
- A personal profile with fluffy phrases like “good communicator” and “team player” are too objective and not worth the space. Focus instead on the information that will truly set you apart from your peers.
- You've probably heard this many, many times before – tailor your CV to the role you're applying for. Mirror the language used by your prospective employer, as this will give you a much better chance of being discovered.
- You will most likely be hired based on your more recent experience, so give this the column inches it deserves. When you go beyond five years, you're getting into history so less is more for these roles.
- If your role has three individual facets (financial analysis, financial accounting and project management, for example), in the 'Experience' section you should divide your bullet points accordingly and move the facet or bullet point most relevant to the vacancy you are applying for to the top of the list.
- And as we mentioned earlier, context is king. You should provide detailed context about your past roles to give your prospective employer a sense of your ability – this could include company size, industry, turnover, the size of the finance team or the percentage split of responsibility. Such information is key for potential hiring managers, so don't leave them wondering.

EXPERT CV ADVICE



Elaine Brady, Partner at Barden, shares her thoughts on the importance of CV preparation.

Your CV, and how it is perceived at first glance, will ultimately decide whether you get the opportunity to interview for that dream job. The key thing to remember is 'differentiation'. While it may be tempting to copy and paste the CV of a colleague who works on the same audit portfolio as you, think about what really makes you stand out among your peers.

Your CV represents your personal brand and it's essential that it leaves a lasting impression. Putting time into an initial template and then tailoring it based on the application can greatly improve your chances of being called to interview. It's what you do in the interview then that will secure the role. Your career is too important to leave to chance. Spending time making the CV unique will be worth its weight in gold.

SAMPLE CV

To give you a sense of what a good CV might look like, [click here to view three unique CVs](#) – one for the part-qualified accountant, one for the recently qualified accountant and one for the senior finance professional. 💡

LINKEDIN SECRETS



Go beyond the basics to understand how LinkedIn really works and how you can use it to your advantage.

“Speak the language of the market... this goes for job titles, your summary section, role descriptions and accounting specific and general industry terminology.”

LinkedIn recently reached 500 million members globally, with well in excess of one million members in Ireland. Members traditionally thought of (and used!) LinkedIn to access new jobs. However, the platform has come a long way since then. Finance professionals now use it to share their ideas, concepts and experience while leaders and managers use it to showcase their personal brands and the curious use it to find the answer to the question: “Where am I now?”

For the modern, discerning finance professional, participation on LinkedIn is no longer optional; it has become mandatory. So, the question now isn’t “Should I use LinkedIn?” Rather, the question is “How should I use LinkedIn?”💡

Jump past the basics

We are not going to insult your intelligence by telling you to use a good photo, to bullet-point your experience and to refrain from treating LinkedIn like Facebook. Let’s assume you know the basics and a quick Google will get you lots of advice on the vanilla stuff. Instead, we are going to look at a few ways that, as a finance professional, you can get more out of LinkedIn.💡

Focus on key words

First, play the key word search game like a pro. Companies looking for talent and LinkedIn algorithms looking to push relevant roles into your feed all play the

same game. If you have a word (or a combination of words) on your profile, then you are more likely to come up in a search for those words. Simple in principle, but not so simple in practice.

To give yourself the best opportunity to be discovered, you have to cover off as many angles as possible. One company’s financial controller is another company’s ‘FC’ or head of finance or finance director or financial director. Likewise, one company’s commercial finance manager is another’s ‘FP&A’ manager or senior business partner. One company’s CFO is another’s chief financial officer. Speak the language of the market, not the internal nomenclature you are used to using. This goes for job titles as well as for your summary section and role descriptions. It also goes for accounting specific terminology and for general industry terminology (e.g. manufacturing, FMCG, pharmaceutical etc.) alike.

Slam your summary

Get your summary section working for you. Your summary section is key – you can use it to your advantage. It is more ‘free-form’ than your experience in specific companies. You should use it to give an overview of your experience and industries but, more importantly, you can use it to include words on your profile that you otherwise could not. For example, you may not have experience in FMCG or software

companies, but you can state the following: “I have a variety of industry experience ranging from A to B to C and a genuine interest in the broader FMCG and software industries”. Take this concept, work it around your aspirations for the future, and give yourself the best opportunity to be discovered out there.

Be a qualified success

Watch out for the classic mistake of the Chartered Accountant. Achieving fellowship of Chartered Accountants Ireland is a tremendous achievement – something to be proud of. You become an ACA or FCA in time. Here is the thing about the letters “FCA” – they almost never appear in a job spec and are almost never searched for on LinkedIn. The terms searched for include ACA or “Chartered Accountant”. Consider using phrasing like “ACA (Fellow)” for your profile to make sure you give yourself the best chance of being discovered.

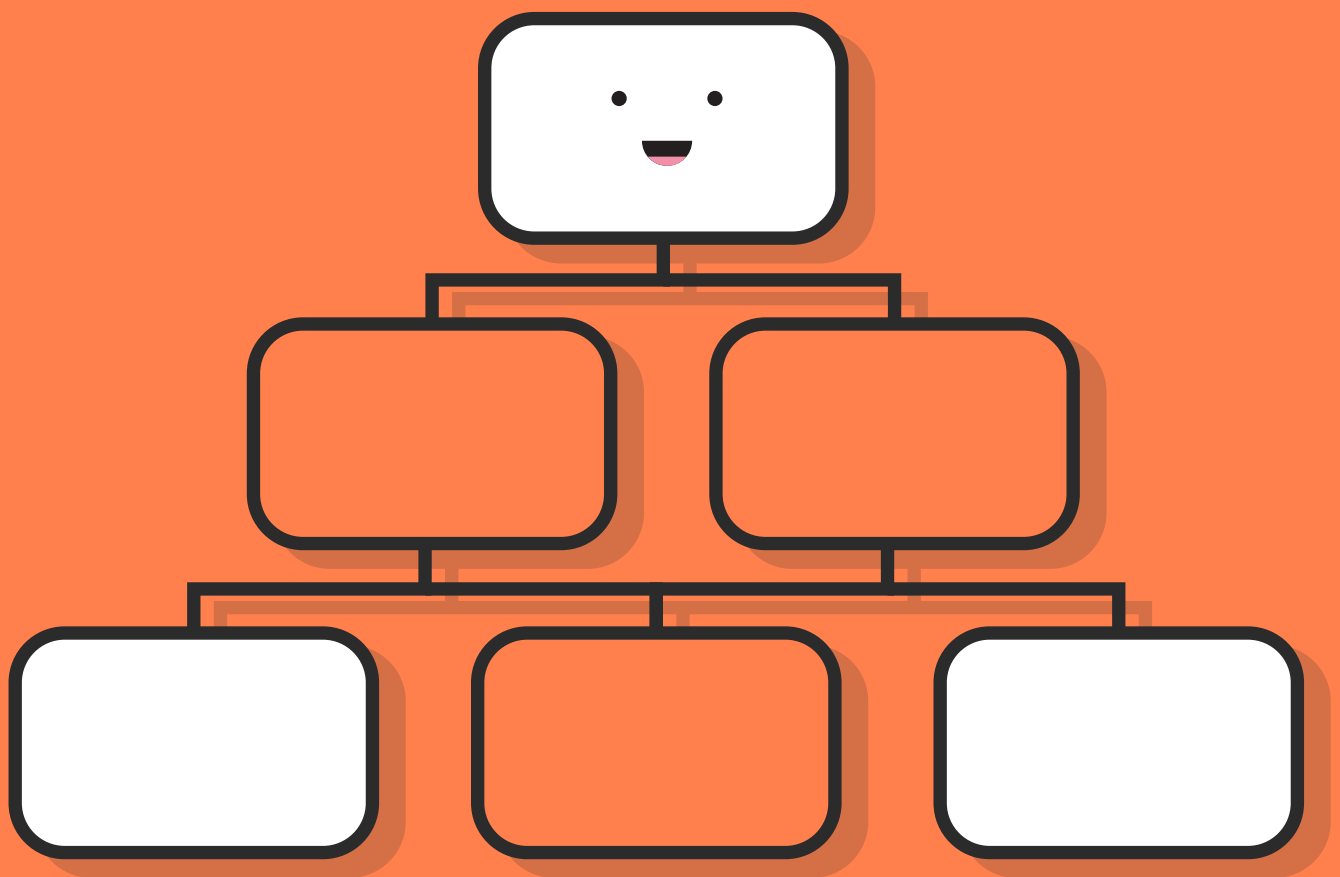
Other opportunities

The above points are just the basics. You can participate in group discussions, keep up-to-date on trends, share content, post your ideas and experience to help others and lots more. Get the basics right first and then get thinking about how else you can use the platform and how much you want to get involved. Like anything in life, you will get out of it what you put into it.

Who knows you?

Before LinkedIn, the saying went “It’s not about what you know, it’s about who you know”. That saying just doesn’t cut it these days. The 21st century version is “It’s not so much about who you know, but rather who knows you.” That’s where LinkedIn comes into its own.

A QUESTION OF CONTEXT



When contemplating your next career move, context should form a significant part of your research.

“A candidate could overlook a suitable role solely because of a misunderstanding around the job title, while a hiring manager could reject a candidate as their title means something different in his or her company.”

Job hunting is a complex business, and for one simple reason: different companies tend to call the same jobs and job activities by different names. The job specs they provide can also be light on detail when it comes to hierarchy, division of labour and the weighting associated with different types of activity.

So, what's to be done? Well, the first thing you can do is forget the idea that you should apply for a role based on the job title. You'll also need to set some time aside to consider your experience, assess potential opportunities and figure out what's more and less likely in your next career move.

It's not an easy task, but it will help keep your career moving forward rather than slipping into reverse.

Job titles

The truth is, candidates tend to scan job specs and make quick decisions based on job titles and other key words. Likewise, HR managers will make fast calls based on a quick scan of your CV (more on that on page four).

In accounting and finance, similar jobs will have similar – but different – job titles. One company's 'financial accountant' will be another company's 'management accountant'. Other job titles such as 'GL accountant' might also creep into the mix. 💡

In this scenario, a candidate could overlook a very suitable career opportunity solely because of a misunderstanding around the job title. Likewise, a hiring manager could reject a candidate because their current job title means something entirely different in his or her company.

Wouldn't it be great if there was one universal language for job-related tasks and activities? It would indeed, but that's a long way off. In the meantime, candidates can be tactical and use this to their advantage by using the job title that best reflects what the market calls the job. And never, even judge a book by its cover when it comes to job specs!

What's in a name?

The job title is just one

opportunity for confusion. Companies also tend to speak their own language when describing the activities of a job. For example, depending on where you work the payments process can be described as accounts payable, AP, purchase to pay, P2P, PTP, payables, payments, invoicing and even bookkeeping. It's a relatively straightforward process, but one with a litany of possible names.

It's easy to see how you could be overlooked for a position simply because the person doing the initial scan of CVs doesn't see the right word on the page in under 10 seconds – and it's even more complex when you wade into the area of value-add activity. But now you're aware of the possible pitfalls, be tactical and use context to ensure that your CV makes its way to the top of the pile. 💡

A question of weight

Here's another element of complexity that can muddy the water even further – two job specs could read the same, word for word, but the percentage of time spent on certain activities could vary wildly. For example, a role that's 90% financial accounting and 10% analysis is very different to one that's 10% financial accounting and 90% analysis.

You mightn't be able to figure out the exact weighting of the role's activities based on the job spec alone, but do request a breakdown before applying for a role. It shows that you're acutely aware of the nuances involved in individual roles and it could save you a lot of regret in the long run.

READY FOR LIFT-OFF?



Planning your route to market is a critical part of your career development journey. Here are six ways to set yourself up for success.

“While the route to market is a very personal journey, it’s sadly a very impersonal process in many instances – be prepared for that.”

Great careers don’t happen by accident. They are the result of many, many strategic moves over the course of one’s working life and just one bad decision – being lured by an attractive salary rather than longer-term career benefits, for example – can derail this process in an instant. In this article, we will help you find the best route to market for you. This process begins the moment you know you want a career change and ends at the CV submission stage. So, first things first... 💡

Do your research

A career change doesn’t necessarily require a move to a new company, so explore internal and external career opportunities in tandem. At this early stage, it’s a good idea to re-draft your CV and have a trusted friend critique it. A good recruiter will also help you perfect your CV, but you can get a head-start by reading some great CV preparation tips here. 💡

Work with recruiters

Seek out one or two specialist recruiters, ideally through referrals from people you know and trust. Sitting down with an experienced recruiter who knows your industry will help shape your thoughts and provide some useful insight into the current market. 💡

Tap your network

While working directly with recruiters will greatly increase your chances of

being discovered, don’t forget the potential in your existing network. Check in with past managers or partners in your target firms to seek their advice – they may even make a direct connection on your behalf. But don’t contact your network only when you want something – you need to give before you take. To build your brand throughout your career, read these tips. 💡

Tailor your CV

At this stage, you will be in a strong position to apply for suitable roles. For each application, tailor the bullet points at the top of your CV or cover letter to outline why you should be interviewed for the role. Weave in the language used on the job specification and give some context as to why you are a suitable candidate. This could include your current industry, the size of your team, the nature of your current activity, the scale of your organisation, or its revenues or budgets for example.

Keep a record

You need to play an active role in the application process, so keep a record of the firms to which you have applied and when you expect to hear back from them. Follow up with the hiring manager or recruiter if you don’t hear back within your expected time-frame, and share responsibility for communication – hundreds of applications could be submitted for a given role, so bear this in mind!

Give yourself time

When you begin the search process, you should begin with a very narrow focus which can broaden over time. This strategy will maximise your chances of landing the best role for the next stage of your career. If your search criteria changes at any stage, however, you should keep the relevant people informed (recruiters, hiring managers, your network etc.)

Conclusion

While the route to market is a very personal journey, it’s sadly a very impersonal process in many instances – be prepared for that. Experience shows that you will get out what you put in so do your research, reach out to the right people, work on your CV and cover letter, and take responsibility for the journey. If you get that right, you’ll already be ahead of the pack. 💡

THE HARD TRUTH...

Companies aren’t always great at giving feedback or keeping in touch – even with the candidates they want to hire!

Expect delays. Expect the hiring manager to promise that he’ll get back to you tomorrow, and then fail to do so. Expect weak feedback, or none at all.

The hard truth is that, once you are not the person they’re going to hire, you fall off the priority list and recruiters rarely have time to look after the “must do that later” list.

If you manage your expectations in this way, you’ll end up pleasantly surprised rather than sorely disappointed.

YOUR TIME TO SHINE...



Take your interview technique to the next level with these expert tips from Ed Heffernan.

“Research the company, but go beyond the superficial. Get your head around what they do and why they do it. If you can demonstrate that your values align with those of the company, you’ll put yourself in a good position.”

If you Google “interview advice”, you will be presented with over six million results. Bizarrely, when you then search for “interview advice for accountants”, you have 84 million results to choose from!

It’s impossible to work your way through the noise of the internet and uncover the real pearls of wisdom, so we’ve done it for you. In the pages that follow, you will find checklists for the three stages of interview – the planning or preparation stage, the ‘on the day’ stage, and the ‘next steps’ stage.

We’ve glossed over all the stuff you already know, like show up on time, look presentable and have a firm but friendly handshake, so add these points to your checklist to give yourself the best chance of success. 💡

Before the interview

- **Research the company:** but go beyond the superficial. Get your head around what the organisation does but more importantly, why they do it. If you can demonstrate that your values align with those of the company you wish to join, you will put yourself in a good position. It will also help you answer those dreaded questions: “What do you know about your business?” and “Why does this company and role interest you?”
- **Get comfortable with the company’s financials:** you’re an accountant, after all, so this should be second nature. Depending on the industry, different figures will hold varying degrees of importance so in leasing, for example, impairment will be key while in the ‘software as a service’ business, revenue recognition and the revenue model will take precedence.
- **Search for your interviewers on LinkedIn:** to identify any similarities or common denominators. If you attended the same college or have a mutual acquaintance, you can create an immediate bond – however tenuous it might be. It’s also a nice idea to connect with the interviewers and send a ‘look forward to meeting you’ note ahead of the interview. It’s a small gesture, but it shows confidence and an understanding of the importance of relationships. 💡
- **Prepare for competency-based questions:** telling an interviewer that you’re capable will only get you so far. If you can demonstrate your ability and quantify the effect of your efforts you will cast yourself in a much more favourable light. 💡

LEADERSHIP MATERIAL

Ken Bowles, CFO at Smurfit Kappa, shares his thoughts on becoming a great leader.

We’ve a great culture at Smurfit Kappa and over the years, we’ve worked to define what makes a successful leader. The capabilities cover areas such as opening up, making the most of diversity, being authentic, knowing yourself, embracing learning and, of course, operational excellence and taking a strategic perspective. No-one will excel in all areas, but I look for these capabilities at all levels as they’re key to success in our organisation.

Our people help shape the future of Smurfit Kappa. We look for people with the potential and ambition to become future leaders... ultimately we’re a large global company but at the same time, we’ve a personable atmosphere with short lines of communication where you can contribute from day one.

That said, people sometimes leave our organisation and the most positive exit experiences I’ve had with employees were when their exit didn’t come as a surprise. So my advice is: if the company isn’t delivering what you expected in terms of career growth or you are dissatisfied with your salary or benefits, talk to your manager first and try to resolve the issue. If it can’t be solved and you hand in your notice, take the time to attend exit interviews and give constructive feedback to your manager and the organisation as a whole. Leaving in a positive way is important; you never know when you’ll meet previous employees and old bosses again.

WHAT TO DO WHEN YOU LACK EXPERIENCE

One of the givens is that you will read the job description carefully and ensure that, for each of the relevant points, you have examples that illustrate your relevant experience.

Don't worry if there are some gaps when it comes to experience, though. "Hire for attitude, train for skill" is an oft-quoted mantra in modern business so when you're asked about an area in which you have little or no experience, fall back on the following line: "I have no direct experience in this area, but I'm a very fast learner and have taken on new responsibilities in my last role. For example..."

Then proceed with an anecdote which shows you're intelligent and flexible enough to develop your skillset as the role demands.



- **Prepare some probing questions:** for the end of the interview because virtually every interviewee is asked: "So, do you have any questions for us?" You won't get a better opportunity to demonstrate your knowledge, understanding of the company and enthusiasm for the role so leverage what you already know about the company to come up with some really challenging and insightful questions. Good examples include: "Can you describe the month-end process and how would I participate?" and "What are your expectations of this hire?"
- **Confirm the format of the interview:** irrespective of whether you're dealing with the company's HR department or a recruiter. The more you know about the interview process, the better prepared you will be. You should also ask for some information about the interviewers – their roles, career paths, what they're like and so on – to give you a rounded view of what you'll face when you enter the interview room.
- **Know your dates:** when you're working through your career history and the experience

you've gained in various roles, it's important that the dates match those listed on your CV and LinkedIn profile as this will demonstrate your attention to detail. It's also important to demonstrate how your past experience could benefit your future employer, but look beyond the superficial. For example, a large hotel chain and a renewable energy company have a lot in common. Do you know why? It's all about context! 💡

During the interview

- **Travel light:** keep your phone on silent and out of sight, leave your bag and jacket at reception, and don't bring your CV as you should know it inside out. Also, arrive five minutes early – but no more, as you don't want to put your interviewer under pressure.
- **Dress to match the culture:** but err on the side of caution. If the office adopts a casual, dress-down approach, attend the interview in smart casual attire. Interviews can be decided on fine margins and in this scenario, jeans and a t-shirt could be the deciding factor.
- **Make eye contact and smile:** this is a common piece of advice

but it cannot be reiterated enough. It demonstrates engagement and likeability, and will subconsciously position you as a team player and a thoughtful candidate.

- **Keep it positive:** if you're asked a question that leads you to say "no" or "I can't", be sure to follow up with a qualifying statement that leaves a favourable impression and provides adequate context for the interviewer. The ability to say "no" is an admirable quality, but you need to be able to say it in the right way.
- **Ask clever questions that get the interview panel talking:** clever questions your peers wouldn't ask as this will set you apart. There are questions you should avoid too – anything to do with salary, work-life balance and so on can be cleared up with the HR department at a later date.
- **Stay on your guard:** interviewers may appear casual and, on occasion, almost familiar in their approach but remember, you are being assessed at every point so keep it very professional. HR representatives are sometimes more formal and structured in their approach

“Questions about your current salary can be tricky, but you should stress that the company and role are most important and you hope to match or increase your current package in line with market norms.”

than hiring managers, but treat all interactions with the same high degree of professionalism.

- **Be prepared for questions on the specifics:** particularly if the role you've applied for has a technical slant. Anything less than a detailed, considered and confident response will leave room for doubt with regard to your ability, so be on top of your technical game.
- **Be coy when it comes to talking about your salary:** if you notice some buying signals (questions about salary, start dates and other interviews, for example), use it to your advantage. Questions about your current salary can be tricky, but you should stress that the company and role are most important and you hope to match or increase your current package in line with market norms. Where possible, leave salary negotiations to your recruiter and don't disclose too many details as you may under-price or over-price yourself.

After the interview

- **Be patient:** hiring managers will routinely say “We'll get back to you tomorrow” and while it might be said with the best intentions, it's often a promise that goes unfulfilled. Always add three days' grace as this will help you avoid unnecessary disappointment and worry.
- **Follow up by email with the HR department or recruiter:** particularly if, after the interview, you're still keen on the role and leave a positive message. In the case of a deadlock, it could tip the scales in your favour.
- **Check in with your recruiter if you don't hear back from them within three days:** there's a saying in recruitment that “time kills all deals”. You have an active role to play in the recruitment process, so use your initiative and take control.
- **Prepare diligently for your second interview:** if you're invited for a second interview, congratulations! All interviews and hiring processes are unique so your second interview may be the same as the first, or it could be more detailed, or it could be broader in its scope. You may be interviewed by the same people, or new people. Whatever happens, prepare as diligently for your second interview as your first and you won't go far wrong. 💡
- **Be positive and enthusiastic:** remember, when you're on par with another candidate in terms of your experience and academic record, the person who wants the job most and who appears to be the best cultural fit will win every time so don't be afraid to show your enthusiasm!

HOW TO TACKLE COMPETENCY-BASED QUESTIONS IN FOUR STEPS

Prior to your interview, you should prepare answers to a range of competency-based questions such as “Tell me about a time when you solved a problem for your employer?” The answer should provide specific examples of activity in your previous roles. Adopting a structured and logical approach will help you prepare rounded and detailed answers that will impress your interviewers:

1. Describe the situation you'd like to refer to.
2. Outline what you did, and avoid referring to “we”.
3. Define the outcome of your efforts.
4. Describe what you learned from the experience.

This approach will help you tackle a variety of competency-based and situational questions. It would be useful to practice your responses, but don't go overboard. Just get used to applying a structured approach and familiarise yourself with the main points of interest.

FOR MORE INTERVIEW TIPS AND TRICKS...



TAP HERE!



MIND GAMES

As psychometric testing becomes more popular, here are some tips for before, during and after the process.

Psychometric assessments are being increasingly used by organisations at the selection stage of the recruitment process to help them select the best candidate for the role and for the organisation.

These assessments often include personality and cognitive assessments. The cognitive assessments will indicate how well a candidate will deal with the intellectual challenges of the role whereas the personality assessments can give a good insight into how a candidate will interact with others and how they prefer to work. 💡

People often find this a daunting process but upon completion, most find that it has been both interesting and insightful, and a valuable experience for them overall. Here are some tips to help you prepare. 💡

Before the assessment

Find out how long the appointment will take and make sure you give yourself ample time. Remember, this entire process is part of your interview, so conduct yourself accordingly – dress smartly, make your appointment promptly and don't be late. Be friendly and polite towards everyone you meet as these factors may also be taken into consideration, particularly if personality profiling is part of your assessment.

Sleep well the night before the assessment. Many companies try to avoid testing candidates late in the afternoon, and for good reason. People perform better when they are rested and more alert, so try to schedule your appointment in the morning or as early as possible in the afternoon.

During the assessment

If you don't understand the instructions or examples, ask for clarification. It might sound obvious, but it is vital that you

understand both before beginning the assessment.

Take a break between tests if possible. If one isn't offered, then ask – performance generally begins to deteriorate after 50-60 minutes. Taking a break after 40 minutes can reverse this trend. So don't be afraid to ask for a short break – it will improve your performance.

If you are doing cognitive assessments online, do them in a place where you won't be disturbed. Generally speaking, these assessments will be strictly timed and it will not be possible to "pause" the test and return at a later time.

Don't worry if you feel that you've performed badly on an assessment. It's difficult to gauge how well you've done. Also, most of the tests are designed so that only 1-2% of people can actually answer all questions. Set it aside and move on to the next one.

For personality assessments, the key is to answer honestly. Give the first answer that comes to mind and don't over-think it. Don't give answers you think are desirable, but may be untrue. There are social desirability scales built into the assessments and it will show if you do this. More importantly, if you're not going to be suited to the role or organisation, then you'll have had a lucky escape.

After the assessment

Ask for feedback. Sometimes it will be offered but if it isn't, ask if it's possible to get feedback. In some cases, there will be a report written on your results and sent to the company. Ask if you may have a copy of this when the process is complete. Whether or not you get the job, it will be a useful and insightful thing to have, and could help highlight areas for future development.

The author, Jayne Lee, is a Chartered Organisational Psychologist at Davitt Corporate Partners.

MOVING ON



Receiving an offer can leave you on cloud nine, but you need to play your cards right to secure the best deal for you. Here, we help you navigate the offer process and leave your current employer on very favourable terms.

If, by now, you have received a job offer – congratulations! You have surpassed your peers and you now have a superb opportunity to advance your career. However, there's a lot of work yet to do. The offer process can be a delicate balancing act and of course, there's the downside of having to break the bad news to your current employer that you're leaving.

In your longer-term interests, it's important that you display the same professionalism at this juncture as you did in the interview room – and to both parties. With that in mind, here are tips to help guide you through the offer process and help you leave your current employer with your head held high, and no bad feelings.

The offer process

- First off, take a steer from your recruiter on how to play your hand as there are feelings involved on both sides.
- If you want to play hard to get, be prepared to be disappointed as holding out for a few extra thousand euro can backfire. If you happen to find yourself in this frame of mind, you should first consider whether you really want the job at all.
- Understand that companies don't typically give huge salary increases. Your offer will be a considered mix of your current salary, the internal rate for the role, and the external market rate for the role. Companies generally set a range for each role, and you should be aware of this range early in the process – it's uncommon for a company to make an offer beyond the stated range.
- Don't focus on the base salary on offer. Instead, focus on total compensation (i.e. the total monetary value of your remuneration package including bonuses, pension contributions, health cover etc.)
- Once an offer is made, remember that the clock is

ticking. The longer you leave it to accept an offer, the more likely the hiring manager will be to question your commitment to the role and organisation.

Leave with integrity

- Once you've accepted a job offer and signed your contract, the next item on your to-do list is to let your current manager know.
- Before you hand in your notice, remind yourself of why you searched for a new role in the first place; have conviction in your decision; and write a resignation letter as this is a perfect opportunity to say thank you without fear of fluffing your lines!
- When resigning, stay strong. Your manager may provide a counter-offer as it's not in their interest for you to leave. Closing any discussion on counter-offers early will save you a lot of heartache, as entertaining a discussion when you know you're leaving only makes the process harder.
- Remember that a significant percentage of those who accept a counter-offer are on the jobs market again within six months. The reason? The fundamental reasons for their initial move have not changed and promises of change within their role or organisation were not forthcoming.
- Move quickly to discuss how you want to exit the business in a positive sense, and how you and your manager can work together to make it an easy transition for the team. 💡
- One month notice periods are generally non-negotiable whereas two- or three-month notice periods can be. Work with your employer to agree an exit that works for both parties but remember: the second you resign the best interests of your next employer should become your priority.

HOW TO LEAVE WITH YOUR HEAD HELD HIGH



Larry Mayers, Director of People Development at Avolon, shares his advice for parting ways with your employer.

A common mistake when people leave their current employer is that they often negate what they learnt at that job and view it as a move away from an employer-employee relationship that didn't work out. This both reduces their learning opportunity and can burn bridges.

I personally expect employees to tell me about their intention to leave as soon as possible. Should there be a notice period, I also expect them to work during this period to the best of their ability and with good grace.

It is possible to leave on excellent terms, however, but this is often only possible if you were on good terms with your employer to begin with. Relationships are built over time and are easier to maintain if they were robust to begin with. Robust relationships based on honesty and shared positive intent will allow people to leave in a positive way. The person leaving will be open and honest about their departure, and will communicate it without difficulty. Likewise, the organisation will understand why as they would have had a history of open communication.

GROW YOUR NETWORK



Ed Heffernan shares his top networking tips based on years of experience. But you won't find this on Google...

Networking is about relationships. It's about being a first-class listener; as Dale Carnegie once said, "If you want to be interesting, be interested". It's also about serendipity – the idea that you can make random chance happen in a non-random way by doing certain things, going certain places and hanging around with certain people.

Professor Dunbar first came up with the theory that an individual can only have around 150 meaningful relationships at any one time. In today's world, however, we have thousands of connections on LinkedIn, Facebook, Twitter, Pinterest and so on. And therein lies the challenge...

Networking is about having strong connections with a small group of people, and complementing that with a wide array of weak connections – from which opportunities can and will arise. It's less about what you know and more about who you know – that's what networking is all about.

There's a vast array of literature out there on networking for the modern professional, but here are some tips based on my personal experience.

Position yourself

Jeffrey Pfeffer tells a powerful story of a manager who attributes his success to his decision of where to sit. He noted that, during the course of the day, people walked to the cafeteria and to the washrooms. He found where the two paths tended to intersect, near the center of the open plan office layout, and took that position as his work location. He attributes much of his subsequent success to that simple move, since it gave him much better access to what was going on in his department.

So if you aren't good at going up to new people, situate yourself so they'll come to you.

"Networking is about having strong connections with a small group of people, and complementing that with a wide array of weak connections, from which opportunities will arise."

Open questions

How does this translate to a CPD event or business lunch? First, everyone there will most certainly feel the same way you do. Standing awkwardly at the edge of people in conversation is not a place anyone wants to be, but we've all found ourselves there at some time or another. Going up to complete strangers and saying "Hi there!" feels a little unnatural and while there's no magic bullet, there are a few things to keep in mind:

- If all you have to say is "Hi there. My name is Bob" followed by silence, then don't bother. That's a conversation that's going nowhere.
- Have a few open questions in your back pocket to stimulate some conversation, ideally where you can listen twice as much as you talk. "What brings you here this morning?" or "What's keeping you busy these days?" are great open questions.
- Don't talk about yourself. Instead, ask the person you're speaking to about themselves.

Be the human being

I prefer not to lead with a handshake or even "My name is Ed. I work with Barden. Barden is a recruitment company that works exclusively with the accounting and finance community in Ireland". You're there as a human being to meet other human beings, not as the manifestation of a business. Be

yourself, not your company. You're looking to make a human-to-human connection, not a business-to-business connection.

Tonality

In a first contact situation you should be engaged, enthusiastic, curious and have supportive non-verbal action. Folded arms don't convey support, for example. Non-verbal communication is key as what we say accounts for just 7% of communication. How we say it (or tonality) accounts for 38% of the overall message while body language (non-verbal communication) accounts for 55% of the overall message. If you really want to get good at networking, I strongly encourage you to read up on [some simple body language tips](#). 💡

Non-verbal body language

Ask questions. Be excited. Ask for details. Don't expect the other person to carry the conversation. Laugh (appropriately) and use that all-so-awesome secret weapon that we all have but often forget about: the simple smile (non-verbal communication again). Smiling is the single most powerful thing you can do when you first meet new people. Research shows that people evaluate everyone they meet in terms of warmth and competence. And of the two, guess which matters more? Yup, warmth.

[For more great networking advice, click here.](#) 💡

BAD ADVICE

Bad career advice is hazardous for your professional health. Here are some of the worst “tips” around.

“There’s no need to over-think your CV, just get your old one and update it with the new stuff! Then, fire it out to as many companies as you can... it’ll take an hour max.”

“Don’t add in all that information about your company on your CV. If they don’t know it, they’ll Google it.”

“Of course the HR Manager will read your CV! And in detail, no less...”

“Be sure to deal with as many recruiters as possible... get them all working for you.” 💡

“Interviews are a breeze. Just be natural... if you prepare too much, you’ll be too stiff and they’ll know you’re nervous.”

“Play hard-ball when it comes to money. Always hold out for that extra €3,000.” 💡

“LinkedIn is a waste of time.” 💡

“Apply for a few jobs you’re not interested in and use the interviews as practice.”

“You’ll definitely get a 50% increase in salary if you threaten to leave. Sure you’re worth it!”

“If you’re busy at work, just tell them you’ll reschedule your interview for when you’ve less on your plate. They’ll understand.”

“The company would be lucky to land you as an employee. Go in



there and demand that they sell the role to you – they need you more than you need them!”

“Don’t worry if you thought your email address was funny when you created it in Transition Year. They won’t notice. And that profile photo of you at Electric Picnic is fine too... it shows that you’ve a sense of humour.”

“If your CV goes into an organisation from two recruiters, you’ll double your chances of getting noticed. Trust me...”

“Don’t bother practising those competency-based questions. Everyone performs better when they’re being spontaneous.”

“They don’t care about personality. You’re an accountant – they just want to know that you’re good with numbers.”

Have you been on the receiving end of some terrible career advice? If so, send your story to editor@accountancyireland.ie and we’ll ask an expert from Barden to put you on the straight and narrow!

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