

## Introduction

Sir Richard Branson has been quoted as saying: “At Virgin, we hire for attitude; if they’ve got the right attitude, we can give them the skills. If they’ve got the wrong attitude, it doesn’t matter how skilful they are, they will be a liability”.

“Attitude is vitally important in a job search”, says Dave Sanford, a senior partner in Boston recruitment firm Winter Wyman and quoted by Kaitlin Madden writing in CareerBuilder.com<sup>1</sup>. Sanford explains that attitude is “the one thing out of the entire process you can control”.

He continues, "You can't control if and when someone is going to call you back, or if the person liked you or what the economy is going to be like, but you can control your attitude and how you conduct yourself throughout the

process."

The right attitude, the right approach to the job search, is essential to job search success. Yet, so often, job search coaching is limited to help with the résumé and interview preparation. The purpose of my presentation is to start a dialogue to discuss how we can best help our clients achieve job search success focussing in particular on developing this right attitude.

Some parts of the job search process can positively affect the job seeker’s attitude and this is great. Other parts, however, have the potential to drain that positive attitude and strategies have to be implemented to prevent this happening.

To start, I want to discuss exactly what is the right attitude and the impact it can have on job search success. Then I intend to work through the job search process focussing on strategies for developing and maintaining the right attitude in each different phase.

## What is the right attitude & why is it important?

So what are the characteristics that make up this right attitude? I have been unable to find a great deal of research on the topic and much of what I’m proposing has been the result of trial and error helping my clients find suitable employment.

For many years, I have told my clients that employers are looking for just three things in every applicant for every position. These are:

<sup>1</sup> Kaitlin Madden writing in *Career Builder*: <http://www.careerbuilder.com/article/cb-2888-job-search-strategies-5-attitudes-that-lead-to-job-search-failure/>

First, and least important – not unimportant but least important – the Skills to do the job

Second, and far more important, the Motivation to do the job well; and

Third, and equally far more important, the ability to fit well into their Team

Skills, Motivation and Team or SMT Take note that each of the attitudinal qualities, Motivation and Team, are on their own more likely to favourably sway an employment decision than mere Skills.

Associate Professor Mo Wang of the University of Florida, and his colleagues surveyed almost 10,000 job seekers. “This is the first study,” he said, “that systematically quantified the overall effectiveness of job search interventions in facilitating job search success”. The results of the research were published in May last year<sup>2</sup>. The research found that the likelihood of employment increased among job seekers only when the job search training programs that they went through combined both skill development and motivation enhancement.

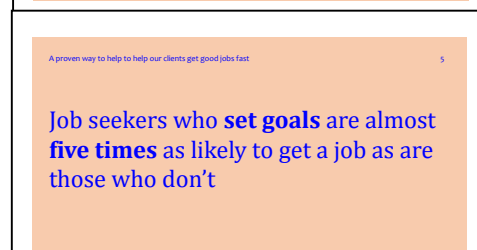
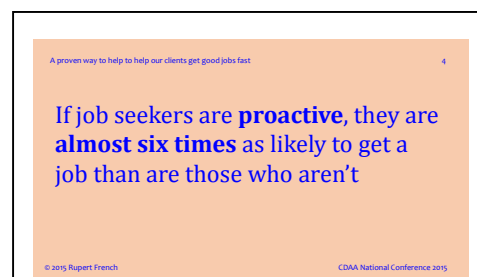
For motivation enhancement, read attitude.

Here are some of the findings of their research:

- If the training program encouraged job seekers to be proactive, they were 5.88 times more likely to obtain employment
- If the program promoted goal setting, those attending were 4.67 times more likely to be successful
- And those attending a program that boosted self-efficacy, 3.25 times more likely

Self-efficacy in psychological terms can be interpreted as the strength of someone’s belief in their ability to complete tasks and achieve goals – self-confidence or a can-do attitude.

A much smaller and not so recent study led by Professor Daniel Turban at the University of Missouri<sup>3</sup> is also helpful in this regard. This study surveyed 300 job seekers in 2009 and found that those who set goals and who developed, acted on and refined a job search plan



<sup>2</sup> Milenko Martinovich writing in the *University of Florida News* about the research of A/Prof Mo Wang: <http://news.ufl.edu/archive/2014/05/motivation-enhancement-key-for-success-in-job-training-programs-uf-study-says.html>

<sup>3</sup> Christian Basi writing for the University of Missouri News: <http://munews.missouri.edu/news-releases/2009/0923-mu-researchers-find-planning-positivism-influence-employment-success-at-different-stages>

had the edge over those who didn't. So too were those who demonstrated a positive attitude, and who were energetic and outgoing. Unsurprisingly, self-discipline and dependability were found to be traits that enhanced the likelihood of job search success.

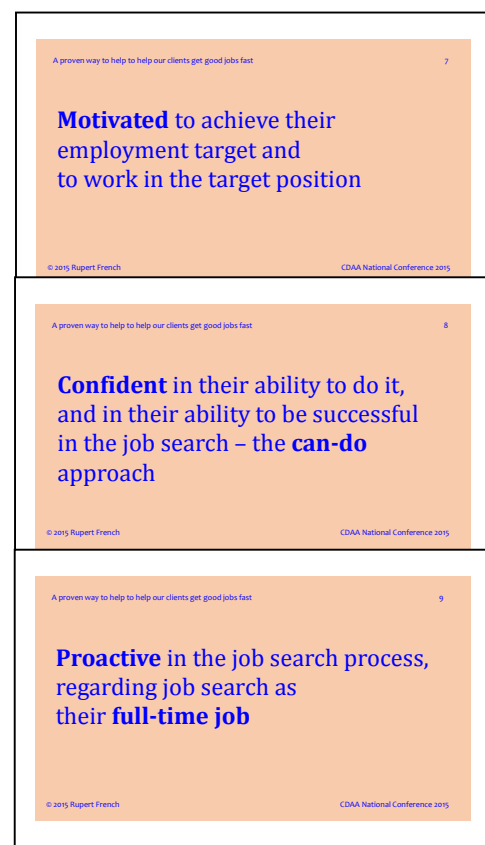
Kaitlin Madden, in CareerBuilder.com<sup>4</sup>, again quoting Dave Sanford, wrote about the importance of a 'can-do' attitude. "If you want to impress your potential employer, think carefully about all of the things going on in his or her work life, causing stress and anxiety. Talk about how you can go into that job and make things easier and better for the manager." In other words, identify the goals of the organisation and what needs to be done to achieve those goals, and then explain how you would help the organisation meet those needs and reach their goals.

Paul Stevens, the Australian pioneer in career coaching and author of several books including *Win that Job!* and the *Australian Résumé Guide* used to talk about the importance of being a 'resource person' rather than a job beggar as long ago as 1990. "I think I could help you with that" is much more likely to win you a job than something along the lines of "Please, mister, give me a job".

Putting all this together, we want our job seeker clients to be:

1. **Motivated** to achieve their employment goals and to work in one of their chosen positions
2. **Confident** in their ability to do it, and in their ability to be successful in the job search – the **can-do** approach
3. **Proactive** in the job search process

We now move into the second, and much larger, part of this presentation, working through the job search process and focussing on the strategies for developing and maintaining the right attitude. To simplify the use of pronouns, from here on in the job seeker is male and the employer female. He is the job seeker; she is anyone he interviews or any representative of the employer organisation.



<sup>4</sup> Kaitlin Madden writing in *Career Builder*: <http://www.careerbuilder.com/article/cb-2888-job-search-strategies-5-attitudes-that-lead-to-job-search-failure>

## How to develop the right attitude and incorporate it into job search practice

### Timeline or target date for employment

Before anything else, the job seeker needs to believe that he is going to be successful. Once he doubts this, his fears become a self-fulfilling prophecy.

To start building this belief, the first thing I do is to get my client to set the target date by which he wants to be in employment. We discuss issues that might affect achieving this and try to be as realistic as possible – but the date should certainly not be more than 13 weeks away. I explain that the date is just a target and that I don't have a magic wand to ensure that he does get a job by the set date but that the date is something to work towards. I then build a timeline back from the target date with certain milestones along the way so that he can check his progress.

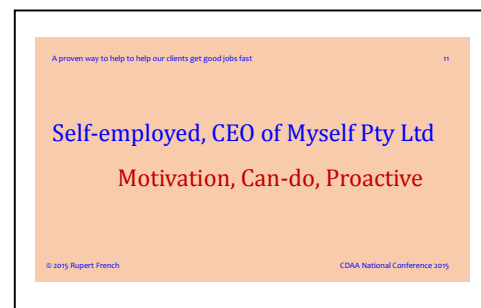
This ties in with Professor Turban's study<sup>5</sup>. His research found that metacognitive activities – thinking about a plan, acting on a plan and reflecting upon that plan – were important early in the job search.

For all its flexibility, the target date and the timeline both help build confidence. There is a light at the end of the tunnel, a goal to work towards and the start of a plan to achieve it. Suddenly employment seems to be achievable and within a set timeframe.

### Self-employed

Once the job seeker has gained some confidence from setting the employment target date and generating the timeline to achieve it, it is important to quickly build on this confidence by encouraging him to think of himself as self-employed rather than unemployed. He becomes the CEO of Himself Pty Ltd, a micro-business currently without clients.

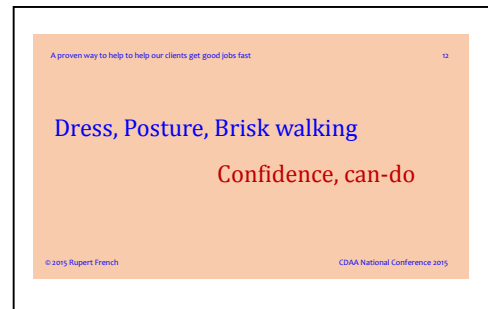
He feels more empowered because, as CEO, he is 'in control'. He is no longer a victim of circumstance, of whatever it was that caused him to lose his job or of whatever it is that is preventing him from getting new employment. He accepts his current, temporary circumstances and takes responsibility for finding a way out. As he adopts the self-employed outlook, he understands that he can take positive action to get his career back on track and, importantly, it encourages him to be proactive.



<sup>5</sup> Christian Basi, *loc cit*

## Dress

What a job seeker wears can have a big impact on his confidence and how much anxiety he has to deal with in the job search. Because of the power of first impressions, as well as how quickly visual information is processed, the way he presents himself to the world through his appearance will affect how others see him, his relationships with others and, as a result, how he views himself.



Some years ago, I ran a training program for long-term unemployed and those at risk of becoming so. On the first day I noted that most of them were very casually dressed. Because I had taken them all individually through a career planning process beforehand, I knew that some of them were seeking administrative and clerical positions. After suggesting that they should consider themselves to be self-employed, I then asked them how they would dress as CEO of Myself Pty Ltd. The next day, the standard of dress had increased significantly and participants told me that they felt much better about themselves as a result. And they continued to dress appropriately for the sort of jobs they were seeking for the rest of the program.

## Posture

Posture is perhaps even more important than what a job seeker wears. How he holds himself, how he walks, can have a huge impact on both on how others see him and how he sees himself. We often talk about body language but usually this is just in relation to interview performance. Body language or posture is much more important than that. Study carried out a couple of years ago showed that the way we stand, sit and walk, actually has more longer reaching implications on our mood and happiness than might realise. In part, this is because of the way others see us but this is not the whole story. Body language also has an effect on our hormone levels. Three years ago in what has become a must-see TedTalk, social psychologist Amy Cuddy showed how ‘power posing’ -- standing in a posture of confidence, even when we don't feel confident, can affect testosterone and cortisol levels in the brain, and might even have an impact on our chances for success<sup>6</sup>. Testosterone has been called the ‘power hormone’ because, among a lot of other things, it helps us to have more focus and attention and it gives us greater confidence, self-esteem and poise. Cortisol, on the other hand, is the ‘stress hormone’ and it tends to sap our confidence and make us feel overwhelmed and powerless.

These findings are confirmed by the research of Professor Adam Galinsky and Li Huang of Northwestern University and published in *The Scientific American* some four years ago<sup>7</sup>. The

<sup>6</sup> [http://www.ted.com/talks/amy\\_cuddy\\_your\\_body\\_language\\_shapes\\_who\\_you\\_are/transcript?language=en](http://www.ted.com/talks/amy_cuddy_your_body_language_shapes_who_you_are/transcript?language=en)

<sup>7</sup> Professors Adam Galinsky and Deborah Gruenfeld with Li Huang, and Lucia Guillory writing in the online newsletter of the Association for Psychological Science, Jan 2011, at <http://www.psychologicalscience.org/index.php/news/releases/standing-tall-is-key-for-success-in-2011.html>

research showed that body language symbolising power can affect people's decision-making processes. An expansive pose and walking tall increases testosterone and decreases cortisol. This increases self-confidence and willingness to take risks and, for this reason, adopting expansive body language can be particularly useful when job seekers are undertaking a task outside their comfort zone.

### Brisk walking

Brisk walking with a spring in the step is another strategy to increase energy and build confidence as well as give a sense of happiness. Dutch behavioural scientist Erik Peper<sup>8</sup> and his colleagues have done extensive research into this area. They found that sitting up straight makes us more likely to remember positive things and think positive thoughts. Exercise increases energy levels and a feeling of happiness.

This means that it is important to introduce body language and exercise into the job search routine right at the start to get the best results.

I find that considering themselves to be self-employed is something my clients adapt to quite readily. They enjoy the positive status of self-employment as opposed to the negative one of unemployment. It encourages a can-do approach as well as being proactive.

### Board of Directors

Professor Wang's research found that job seekers who enlist social support were four times more likely to be successful in the job search than those who don't<sup>9</sup>. I suggest to my clients, who have already adopted the self-employed notion of being the CEO of Themselves Pty Ltd, that they appoint an honorary 'Board of Directors', close friends and family who can provide advice and encouragement in the job search. Having such support, knowing that he is not alone in this campaign and knowing that he has people to answer to for his success or lack of, makes a significant boost to his motivation, his confidence or can-do attitude and to his determination to be proactive.

Working with another job seeker can also be an important psychological support. This is because they are both facing the same problems, they understand each other's situation and, together, they can often find solutions to those problems. Because they both face the same difficulties, they are in a better position than others to coach each other through the necessary strategies. It is important that, when one of them wins a job, he continues to help the other until he too has the job he's after.

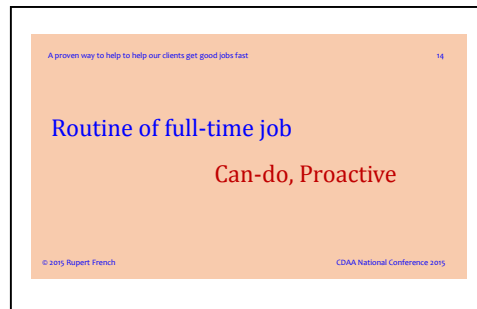


<sup>8</sup> 'Increase or Decrease Depression: How Body Postures Influence Your Energy Level' Erik Peper and I-Mei Lin writing in *Biofeedback*, online journal of the Association for Applied Psychophysiology & Biofeedback, and accessed from <http://anxiety-support.org.nz/wp-content/uploads/2012/04/Posture-and-Depression1.pdf>

<sup>9</sup> Milenko Martinovich writing in the *University of Florida News* about the research of A/Prof Mo Wang: <http://news.ufl.edu/archive/2014/05/motivation-enhancement-key-for-success-in-job-training-programs-uf-study-says.html>

**Routine, full-time job**

One of the most debilitating features of being out of work is the lack of structure. I find that job seekers welcome the concept of working at the job search as if it were a full-time job so long as they have meaningful work they can do to progress the job search.



What would the CEO of a micro-business currently without clients want the Chief Sales Rep to be doing? That’s right; being out there 9-5, Mon-Fri, reaching out to prospective ‘clients’ or, in this case, employers. This requires being proactive, looking for jobs that have not been advertised and undertaking ‘market research’, meeting people who could be helpful in the job hunt and preparing job applications. So, yes, job search is a full-time job – or as full time as the job seeker can afford to make it.

This approach really does encourage him to be proactive – and this, as we have already seen, increases the likelihood of achieving satisfactory employment almost sixfold. Just by being proactive, job seekers become six times more likely to win a good job.

To say that job search is a full-time job is one thing; to show job seekers how to plan their days and make best use of the time is something else. To assist in this area, I have developed a Daily Action Planner<sup>10</sup> and diary

The Job Winner’s Diary			The Job Winner’s Daily Action Planner		
Day	Date	20	Day	Date	20
Schedule	A/B	Task list	A What are my active job leads for today? (Max 3; min 2)		
8.00			1. _____		
9.00			2. _____		
10.00			3. _____		
10.30			B What am I doing today to follow them up?		
11.00			<input type="checkbox"/> Research at the Library / Career Information Centre / Internet / other for (which leads?) _____		
11.30			<input type="checkbox"/> Telephoning to set up an interview for (which leads?) _____		
12.00	Places to go / People to contact Notes		<input type="checkbox"/> Preparing for an information / employment interview for (which leads?) _____		
12.30	Organisation Contact name		<input type="checkbox"/> Attending an interview for (which leads?) _____		
1.00	Address Tel		<input type="checkbox"/> Thank you note / telephone call for (which leads?) _____		
1.30	Organisation Contact name		<input type="checkbox"/> Tailoring and sending off a résumé / job application for (which leads?) _____		
2.00	Address Tel		<input type="checkbox"/> Other (please specify) _____ for (which leads?) _____		
3.00	Organisation Contact name		Have you entered these tasks in your diary? YES NO		
4.00	Address Tel		C Results		
5.00	Organisation Contact name		_____		
6.00	Address Tel		_____		

<sup>10</sup> The Daily Action Planner and accompanying Diary are freely downloadable from my website [www.jobwinnersguides.com/resources\\_for\\_managing\\_an\\_effective\\_job\\_search](http://www.jobwinnersguides.com/resources_for_managing_an_effective_job_search)

With this tool, a job seeker can plan how best to use the whole day in the most effective and the most time-efficient way to proactively work towards his employment objectives. A significant boost to self-efficacy!

### **Career path planning – identifying the niche –**

Successful small businesses don't try to market to everyone; they identify a niche and then seek to meet the specific needs of that niche.

To be successful, the job seeker needs to do likewise. I urge my job seeker clients to focus on just two job leads at any one time or, when necessary, three but this is an absolute maximum.

To many clients, this seems to be counter-intuitive. They might say, 'I've got more chance of getting a job if I send off lots of applications'. But, it's not true; in fact, apart from the two being worked on at the time, the more applications they send off, the less likely they are to get a job.

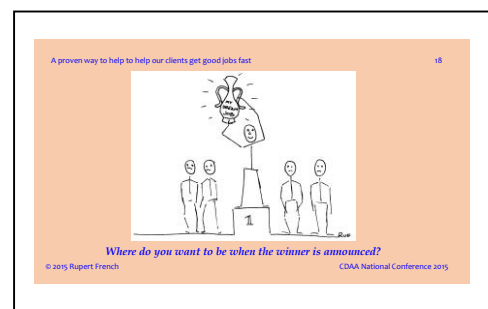
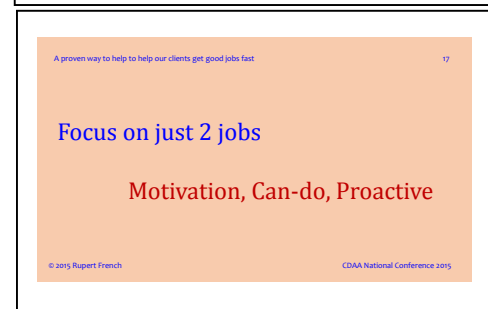
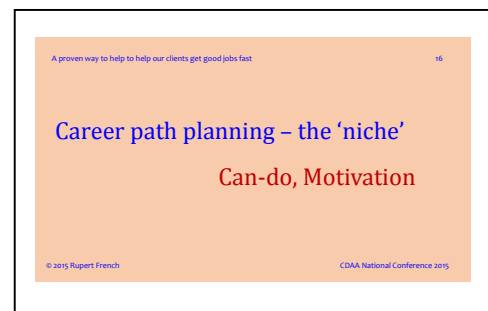
This is because job search is a bit like competing at the Olympic Games – except there are usually no Silver or Bronze Medals. The job seeker has got to go for Gold. And to win Gold, he has to be better prepared than anyone else, to have spent more time and effort on the whole application process; that is résumé, interview preparation, research and networking, than anyone else.

Focussing on just two job leads at a time benefits confidence. Being focussed on just two jobs makes it easier to feel in control. The task ahead is not so great because it is concentrated on those two jobs and, because he's not overwhelmed, the job seeker is more motivated and more likely to take a proactive approach. By focussing on just two jobs the job seeker can spend more time to research each of them than would be the case if he were looking at say 20 applications. This further benefits confidence, the can-do attitude.

This, then, becomes the sort of position for which he starts preparing a draft résumé. As I'm sure you will agree, a résumé is a brochure marketing the services of the job seeker for a specific position. Creating such a document has to further develop the job seeker's confidence in the ability to do the job and the motivation to do it well.

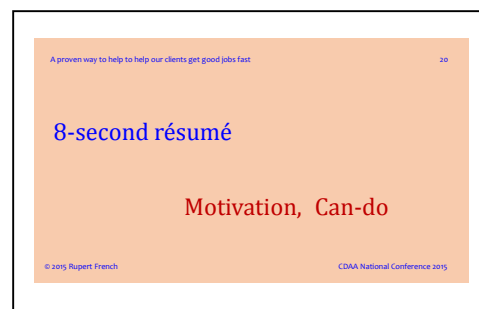
### **The 8 sec résumé**

A good résumé can provide another great boost to motivation and confidence as well as encouraging proactivity. This is because it talks about the job seeker's suitability and motivation for the specific position.





Many, many surveys have indicated that employers spend on average about eight seconds to decide whether an application is worth further investigation or goes in the reject pile. In eight seconds they can read about halfway down the first page. As the quality that employers are seeking almost in front of everything else in the résumé is the candidate's motivation for the job, this needs to be clearly indicated in the top half of page one.



Achievement statements are the 'stuff' of a good résumé.

By retelling the stories of specific achievements, the job seeker convinces the employer of not only skill but also motivation. An example of this could be instead of saying "I have good mechanical skills", an effective résumé would say instead, "Rebuilt a 1949 FX Holden over the past three years and won first prize for best restored vehicle at this year's Melton Motor Show". The retelling of specific achievements like this makes a significant contribution to the job seeker's positive self-image. Compiling a good list of these achievements, many more than may be necessary on the résumé, is a great boost to confidence and self-esteem. I have developed three activities to help job seekers identify their achievements and some extensive notes to help them write them up in the form of effective achievement statements. I can email these to you if you leave me your contact details at the end of the presentation.

A job seeker can further develop confidence and self-esteem by asking his referees to look through his résumé and advise him how it might be improved. Almost certainly this will lead to positive feedback and it may also result in a referee remembering an achievement that the job seeker himself had forgotten.

I do encourage my clients to ask their referees to advise them on their résumés. This has several advantages. Firstly, it ensures that the referees are really up-to-speed with the job seeker's skills and achievements. Secondly, referees often remember achievements that the job seeker has forgotten. Thirdly, sharing their résumé and discussing it with others, is in itself an affirmation and therefore a boost to self-confidence.

Also, of course, it means that referees are up-to-date with the job seeker's achievements and can, therefore, speak more confidently on his behalf.

### 'Market research'

Just as market research is essential to small business success, it can also be pivotal to job search success.

Ideally the job seeker should research each position sufficiently thoroughly to be able to plan his first few weeks in the job. This is a big ask but I have seen the positive effect it has on clients when they have done it properly. The more detailed their knowledge of the position, the easier it is for them to envisage themselves being successful in the position. This provides a significant boost to their confidence and self-esteem and, almost



automatically, they adopt a can-do attitude. Another bonus of this thorough research is that they will be able to answer interview questions almost as if they were working in the position already – a huge boost to interview confidence.

However, as we have said, it is a big undertaking and can be overwhelming to some job seekers. To overcome this, I suggest regular meetings with one or more members of the 'Board'. This prevents flagging and helps the job seeker keep up a good momentum. Through discussing research progress so far and planning what steps to take next, the research process is broken down into doable steps and the positive feedback given by Board members is hugely encouraging to the job seeker. Yes, it is a big task but it increases the likelihood of success so very much that it is worth every minute devoted to it and the more thorough the research, the greater the impact it will have on the job seeker's motivation and self-confidence.

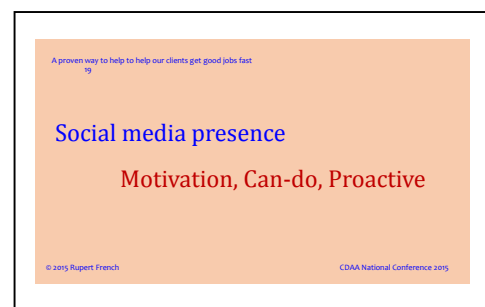
The first and easiest part of this market research is undertaken using the internet and social media. As the job seeker visits his target organisation's website and reads online annual reports and press releases, he builds up a good picture of the organisation and gets a feel for the corporate culture. As he does so, he can better gauge how he would fit into the organisation. This either helps build his confidence that this is a suitable organisation to work in or, if he starts to have reservations, it encourages him to stop pursuing this lead and to try another.

### Online presence

While working online, the job seeker can start to create his online presence. Through creating profiles on whichever social media platforms he chooses to use, he is telling the world what sort of a person he is. Stories of involvement with Little Athletics, photos of a holiday in Vietnam or participation in a Rotary project to build cyclone-proof housing in Fiji will all help to demonstrate to an employer how he would fit into their team. Putting this together boosts his feeling of self-worth, his can-do attitude, his motivation and his proactivity because it is all positive and empowering.

An online résumé is not recommended. Unfortunately there are people who recommend creating an online résumé and then letting recruitment agents and employers find the job seeker. This is not a good idea. Firstly, to be effective, the résumé needs to be tailored to a specific position. Which position is the job seeker going to choose to target? Secondly, if the job seeker wants to be proactive, he needs to be able to choose the position that's best for him rather than allowing other people to try to slot him into their choice of job.

I encourage clients, while they are using social media, to embark on joining in professional discussions on such platforms as LinkedIn or Twitter. In this way, they start finding names of people who might be useful contacts. Following them and then connecting with them could begin email correspondence and lead to face-to-face meetings, the start of networking.



## Networking

Networking gets many people well and truly outside their comfort zone. Yet it is almost indispensable to job search success. Done properly, it can be a real boost to confidence and motivation and, as it progresses, to further stimulating proactivity.

However, because people feel uncomfortable, it can initially have a draining effect. To overcome this, some practical strategies for maintaining self-confidence may be necessary and we will discuss some of those shortly.

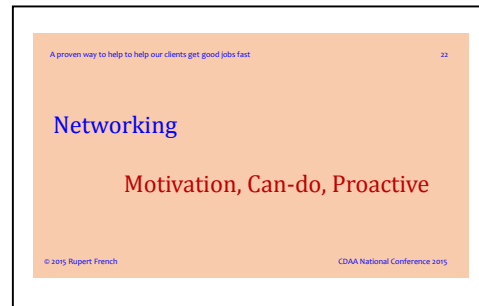
To have the greatest chances of success, get your clients to start slowly. Aim for just one information or networking interview in the first two weeks. If this is practical, suggest to the job seeker that he select someone with whom he has already established contact, perhaps through LinkedIn or Twitter because, in this case, the ice is already broken. If the job seeker is feeling diffident about this, it may be worthwhile getting him to discuss the choice with one or more members of the 'Board'. This will not only provide positive affirmation and encouragement but also the impetus and determination provided by his responsibility of having to report back to the 'Board' afterwards.

The job seeker should now research the organisation and the contact as thoroughly as possible to avoid wasting precious time by asking questions to which he could easily have found the answers beforehand. The internet, the organisation's website and social media pages, annual reports, marketing material, are all good sources of information. The contact herself may be on LinkedIn or Facebook or some other social media platform and this is well worth while following up. As he does the research, he should make notes. Then, when he has finished, he should consider what else he needs to know to be able to plan his first few weeks in the job. He can then use this as a basis for the questions to ask when he meets the contact.

Again, discussing plans for the meeting and for the questions to ask with a member of the 'Board' will help give the stimulus to push ahead, no matter how uncomfortable he might feel. As I said earlier, there are also some very simple and practical strategies for maintaining that positivity through the networking process. Here are two that I find very effective at this point.

## Laughter

Laughter is one of these strategies. When the job seeker feels paralysed with anxiety before a meeting, a funny story can break the spell. Laughter is a great unsticker – it relaxes the mental tightness by taking the mind off the problem. Laughter provides energy and increases enthusiasm. It opens the mind to new ideas.

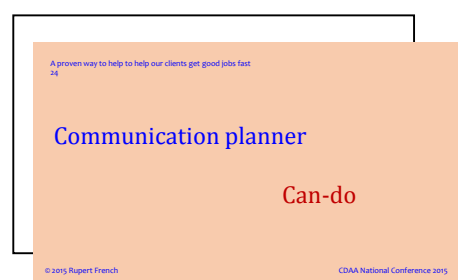


I go as far as recommending that job seekers carry a favourite cartoon in their job search folder and they take time to look at it before any stressful encounter. A good reward for completing some difficult task could well be for the job seeker to treat himself to a really funny movie. Belly laughing has been described as internal jogging and it's really effective for lifting people's spirits and energising them.

Don't laugh! When running a job search training program for long-term unemployed and those at risk of becoming so, I used to start each day with 10-15 minutes joke swapping. This really got people moving and created an enthusiastic, collaborative atmosphere which in turn resulted in outstanding employment outcomes. This could be replicated by swapping jokes at the beginning of every 'Board' meeting. Laughter is a seriously good coping tool and should be used more often than I suspect it is.

### Setting up the first meeting – communication planner

The second strategy is to use a communication planner. Making the first phone call to set up meeting is something that many people find difficult. To maintain confidence, the use of a communication planner like this<sup>11</sup> can be a great help. Planning what to say and writing down in brief note form or in full is not only a prop to maintain confidence, it also strengthens the resolution to make the call.



If the job seeker feels insecure about making the call, it is worthwhile discussing the communication plan with a 'Board' member beforehand. In this case, it is also useful to debrief with that same 'Board' member after the call has been made. This will quickly build the confidence to carry out calls easily and independently.

If the first telephone call is to establish the best time to get in touch with the person to be contacted, the communication planner might look something like this one.

<b>Name</b>		Tel 1 9 551 5432
<b>Organisation</b> Bulls Eye Bearings		Tel 2
<b>Position</b>		<b>Receptionist's name</b>
<b>Address</b> 413 Cotterslea Road		<b>Mobile</b>
<b>Town</b> Glenfield	<b>P/code</b> 0629	<b>Tel home</b>
<b>Subject</b>		<b>Response</b>
Give my name		
Name of receptionist		
Name of production supervisor/leading hand		
Convenient time to contact		
My purpose: seeking info and advice		

<sup>11</sup> This Communication Planner is freely downloadable from my website [www.jobwinnersguides.com/resources\\_for\\_managing\\_an\\_effective\\_job\\_search](http://www.jobwinnersguides.com/resources_for_managing_an_effective_job_search)

Notice emphasis on giving and taking names. The job seeker's prime objective is to establish relationships, to get people to like him and using people's names is a big part of this. A strategy which I believe would be very useful here would be to get a small notebook with an A-Z index and to keep a record of the contacts made through the job search process, including not only their contact details but other useful information about them. This, in itself, builds confidence and, along with it, the motivation to be increasingly proactive.

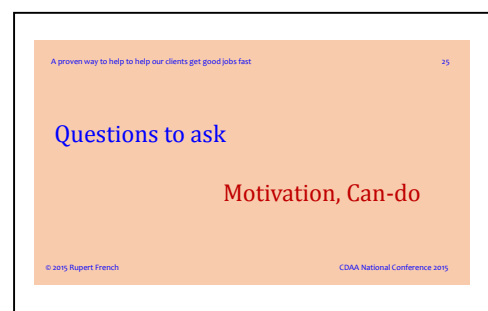
I now want to discuss how to maintain a confident, proactive and motivated attitude during the information interview phase of the job search.

To simplify the language, I frequently use the term 'meeting' to refer to an information interview. From the attitudinal point of view, this can be quite beneficial. Some people feel more comfortable facing a meeting than they would facing an interview and, in reality, an information interview is essentially just a meeting in which information is being sought and given.

First, let us discuss preparation for the meeting; then we'll move on to performing well at the meeting itself and finish the section with the strategies to use immediately after the interview.

### Questions to ask

Each meeting should be no longer than 15 or 20 minutes. The job seeker's informant has a lot of things to do apart from talking to him. And it is important that, at the end of the meeting or information interview, she believes that the time has been well spent. The job seeker needs to come across as confident and businesslike and, therefore, it is important that he is efficient, has carried out extensive prior research and has planned the questions he intends to ask at the meeting.



From the attitudinal point of view, the job seeker wants to show his motivation by the thoroughness of his research and needs positive feedback for asking intelligent questions. I recommend that he write his questions down to take into the meeting. This will make it easier to remember to ask them all. If he leaves spaces between them, he can jot down the answers.

Over the several interviews he may be undertaking with people from that organisation, he will want to discover information on five different areas. These are:

1. The work: the key tasks and responsibilities, how each day is likely to pan out, the best bits and the worst, what would his colleagues be like, and the boss, the corporate culture etc.
2. The prospects: the prospects for the industry, for the occupation or profession and for the organisation. And his prospects – how would this position help him achieve his longer-term career goals?

3. The selection criteria: the knowledge, qualifications, skills and experience required for the position – what are the employers looking for? Note: these questions concentrate on job-specific capabilities rather than the attitudinal ones we have discussed earlier. However, never forget that it's the attitudinal skills that are very often the deciding factor.
4. Possible job openings now or in the near future, in this organisation or others in the same industry. Warning! The job seeker has said that he is not asking for a job, yet here he is asking about job openings. It is essential to maintain his integrity so say he should say something like this: "Look, I told you that I'm not asking you for a job and I'm not. However, the information that you and others have given me have confirmed that this is an area where I would love to work. Do you, by any chance, know of any possible openings that might be coming up in the near future either here or in another organisation?"
5. This question should always be asked at the end of every information interview: "Is there anyone else you suggest I should talk to, to get further information?"

The job seeker may need two or three information interviews to properly cover the first topic and then perhaps another one or two for the second and so on. Some interviews may start with one topic area and then continue with another. All interviews should end with a question asking for referrals to other possible informants.

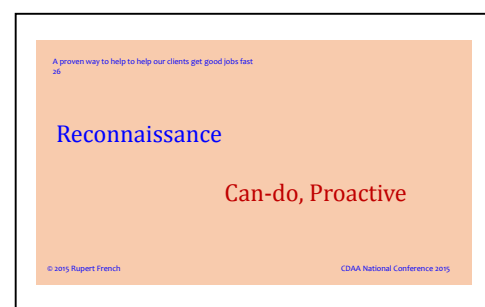
It is wise to start drafting a plan for the first few weeks in the job right from the start. This will help the job seeker keep focussed on the questions he needs to ask to complete the plan. Even after extensive interviews, it is likely that he will still have to make some assumptions to finish the plan. He can then use these assumptions to frame questions for the employment interview.

Now that the job seeker has set up and planned his first meeting, the next step is to attend. This is perhaps the step that many job seekers find the most difficult and this is where we need to encourage the use of many strategies for building and maintaining confidence and self-esteem.

### **Pre-meeting preparation –reconnaissance**

The first of these is thorough planning. 'Proper preparation prevents panic.' As a mentor, make sure that all reasonable research has been undertaken and understood. Get the job seeker to write out the questions so that they can be used in the interview.

With the job seeker, plan a reconnaissance trip to the interview venue. Yes, this can sometimes be seen as using a sledgehammer to crack a nut but it's amazing what a difference it can make. If the job seeker is at all nervous, suggest the use of public transport if it is available rather than taking a car. Public transport is more likely to allow the job seeker to travel hassle-free and, therefore, to be able to focus solely on the forthcoming meeting.



Visiting the venue for the meeting means that, at the actual meeting, he will not have to face the added stress of being in unfamiliar territory. On the reconnaissance, the nearer he can get to the actual room where the meeting will take place, the more familiar it will be on the day and, therefore, the less the stress.

Visiting the venue also gives the job seeker a chance to see the dress code. Wearing the right clothes is very important for self-confidence.

Another very useful task on the reconnaissance trip is to find a café, somewhere to have a light meal and a drink before the interview. At the interview, the job seeker is going to need a lot of mental and nervous energy and to get that energy, he will need to 'fuel up'. A light meal of complex carbohydrates will continue to provide energy over a long period of time and complex carbohydrates also cause the body to produce serotonin, a neurotransmitter that makes you feel relaxed. Many people find that a good cup of coffee or tea not only makes them alert but they find it can also relax nerves and make them feel calm and confident to take on the coming challenges. Suggest that the job seeker gives himself a treat, making both the meal and the drink a gourmet experience. This has the effect of making him feel good about himself.

### **The day of the first information interview**

On the day of the first information interview, in order to minimise any negative effect of nervousness, he should keep the day as hassle-free as possible. I suggest that he leaves in time to arrive at the café about an hour-and-a-half before the meeting. This should allow plenty of time for a light meal.

While enjoying the meal, the job seeker has the time to think ahead to the forthcoming meeting and to rehearse his questions in an unpressured environment. This form of mental rehearsal can make a big difference to confidence at the beginning of the meeting and success at this point increases confidence through to the end.

All the time the job seeker should deliberately act in the way that a successful person would. Treat the waiting staff as a successful person would – with respect. In turn they will treat him as a successful person and that will help to maintain his positive self-image.

Thank the waiting staff warmly for their service. Expressing gratitude has been shown to improve self-esteem and to increase mental strength and the ability to handle stress<sup>12</sup>. This will lend confidence for the forthcoming meeting.

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<sup>12</sup> “7 Scientifically Proven Benefits Of Gratitude That Will Motivate You To Give Thanks Year-Round”, Amy Morin writing in *Forbes*, 23/11/2014 accessed at <http://www.forbes.com/sites/amymorin/2014/11/23/7-scientifically-proven-benefits-of-gratitude-that-will-motivate-you-to-give-thanks-year-round> and “Gratitude Enhances Change in Athletes’ Self-Esteem: The Moderating Role of Trust in Coach”, Lung Hung Chen and Chia-Huei Wu writing in *Journal of Applied Sport Psychology*, Vol 26, Issue 3, Jul 2014, pp 349-362.

Use the loo at the café. Coffee and tea are diuretics, meaning that they make people want to have a pee. The job seeker doesn't want an urgent need to use the toilet to take the shine off his performance at the meeting.

He should leave the café so as to arrive at the interview venue about 15 minutes before the appointed time. If it is practical, he should walk from the café to the venue for the information interview, and walk tall and walk briskly. As the research of both Prof Galinsky and colleagues and that of Erik Peper and associates has shown, posture and aerobic exercise have significant positive effect on energy and self-confidence<sup>13</sup>. Also it will allow him to get some oxygen into his system so that he can best use the energy provided by the meal.

Throughout the job search, the most important thing a job seeker can do is to build rapport and to get people to like him. When he reaches the reception area, he should greet the receptionist by name. Hopefully this would be written down on the communication planner when he first contacted her. As he arrives, he should tell her his name and why he is there. It can be very effective if, at this point, he can give her a 'bouquet'. By this, I don't mean a bunch of flowers but saying something nice about her workplace; for example, saying how light and airy it is in her office or commenting on a bed of newly-planted-out flowers outside the entrance to the building. Showing interest in her workplace is a good way to get her to like him. But it would be counter-productive if he takes up too much of her time.

To maintain the optimum attitude, the job seeker should then take a seat, sit with an upright posture and a smile on his face and envisage success in the meeting.

### **The meeting itself**

As soon as he is invited in, the job seeker should close any notes he has open into his left hand and extend his right arm to shake hands. There is strong evidence to indicate that a firm, friendly handshake while looking each other in the eye<sup>14</sup> is a great way to establish good rapport and enhances the likelihood of positive communication. The act of establishing a relationship is, in itself, an affirmation of how the job seeker's approach has been accepted and this helps build self-confidence.

The job seeker should not worry about body language. Certainly it is important but if he is genuinely interested in the position he has been researching, his body language will quite naturally show that interest. If, on the other hand, the job seeker spends time asking himself whether he is projecting the right message through his body language, he is likely to lose sight of the main ball.

Having said that, if the chair he is offered is square-on facing that of his informant, he should turn the chair slightly so that he is not directly confronting her. He will find it more difficult to get her to like him if he is so directly opposing her. He will also notice the effect that it has and will feel a lot more comfortable.

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<sup>13</sup> See footnotes 6 and 7.

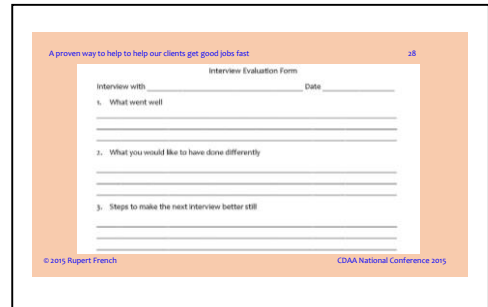
<sup>14</sup> "The Power of a Handshake", Steve McGaughey writing for the online *Beckman Institute News*, Oct 2012, regarding the research of Florin and Sandra Dolcos accessed at <http://beckman.illinois.edu/news/2012/10/dolcoshandshake>



Before leaving the building, he should be sure to thank the receptionist for her role in receiving him into the building.

**After the meeting**

Now he should go straight back to the café. He may well be high on adrenaline but, whether he is or not, the café should be his next call. There is no need for another light meal but a hot drink can be restorative after all the mental and nervous strain of the interview. However, the real purpose of revisiting the café is to allow him to evaluate the meeting that he has just had. He could use an evaluation form like this<sup>15</sup> or indeed, a blank sheet of paper.



Interview Evaluation Form

Interview with \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

1. What went well

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

2. What you would like to have done differently

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

3. Steps to make the next interview better still

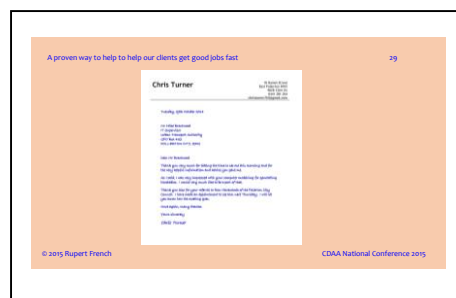
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

This form has been abbreviated to better fit into the page. In the full form, however, there is plenty of space for writing notes and the more detail that can be put in, the better. Evaluation like this makes each interview a learning experience and the job seeker will find himself quickly gaining interview skills and confidence through doing this. He may also find it very worthwhile to share his interview evaluations with ‘Board’ members to seek advice, positive feedback and encouragement.

The second task to be completed at the café is to write a brief thank-you note to his informant. I suggest that it should be not much more than about 100 words, three or four short paragraphs and perhaps six or seven sentences. I strongly recommend that it be hand-written. Peter Post, author of *Essential Manners for Men*, writing in boston.com, a digital

<sup>15</sup> This Interview Evaluation Form is freely downloadable from my website [www.jobwinnersguides.com/resources\\_for\\_managing\\_an\\_effective\\_job\\_search](http://www.jobwinnersguides.com/resources_for_managing_an_effective_job_search)

offshoot of *The Boston Globe*, wrote: ‘One of the real benefits of a handwritten letter is the personal touch it conveys, which comes from the effort to handwrite the message. That message on paper says to the recipient, “You are important to me” in a way that an email does not.’ Emails get forgotten, word-processed letters discarded but the hand-written letter is remembered and often kept for some time.



Below is an example of a thank-you note after an information interview.

## Chris Turner

18 Hamel Street  
East Follerton 8765  
9828 1264 (h)  
0441 281 264  
christurner765@gmail.com

Tuesday, 29th October 2014

Mr Mike Brentwood  
IT Supervisor  
Urban Transport Authority  
GPO Box 432  
FOLLERTON CITY, 8701

Dear Mr Brentwood

Thank you very much for taking the time to see me this morning and for the very helpful information and advice you gave me.

As I said, I was very impressed with your computer modelling for generating timetables. I would very much like to be a part of that.

Thank you also for your referral to Ron Haverstock of the Follerton City Council. I have made an appointment to see him next Thursday. I will let you know how the meeting goes.

Once again, many thanks.

Yours sincerely

Chris Turner



Time spent in thanking people provides, as we have already seen, a significant psychological benefit to the thanker. It is not an optional extra. Job seekers need to make expressing gratitude a habit in their job search. As a result, they will notice an increase in self-confidence and self-esteem and this in turn will help make them more successful. And they shouldn't forget to thank 'Board'

members for their help and encouragement.

### The job interview

The job interview is handled in exactly the same way as the information interviews. The only difference is in the preparation – because this time it's the employer who will be asking most of the questions.

The job seeker needs to work out what questions the interview panel would be most likely to ask. This might be done in collaboration with one or more Board members. This list should include behavioural questions and questions inquiring about times when projects didn't succeed. While preparing answers to these questions, the job seeker needs to ensure that achievement statements comprise at least 50% of every answer. Achievement statements, including, but not restricted to, the well-known STARS, talk about specific events in which he has demonstrated skill and motivation.

To remind him of these achievements, he should jot key words on an Interview Preparation Sheet<sup>16</sup> (See next page) as has done Annabel, a uni student seeking part-time waitressing work.

I strongly recommend that job seekers take this sheet into the interview. It will help to give confidence. If it is put in a smart folder or compendium, it will look efficient and, by looking efficient, the job seeker's positive self-image is further enhanced.

After the interview, just as he did for information interviews, the job seeker should go back to the café, write an interview evaluation and then a thank-you note to the chair of the interview panel.

### Conclusion

The purpose of this presentation was to identify motivational factors that have significant impact on job search success especially when working with disadvantaged job seeker clients. We have looked at attitudes that have been found to bring job search success and, to simplify everything, I identified three attitudinal factors to discuss.

<sup>16</sup> The Interview Preparation Sheet is freely downloadable from my website [www.jobwinnersguides.com/resources\\_for\\_managing\\_an\\_effective\\_job\\_search](http://www.jobwinnersguides.com/resources_for_managing_an_effective_job_search)

Interview Preparation Sheet

<p>Mr Pearce Chalmers                  Ms Sally Woodstock                  Mrs Grace Borders</p> <div style="display: flex; justify-content: space-around; align-items: center;"> <div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 2px 10px;">PC</div> <div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 2px 10px;">SW</div> <div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 2px 10px;">GB</div> </div> <p style="text-align: center;">★ seating plan</p>	<p><u>Notes</u></p>
<p><u>Points you want to get across at the interview</u></p> <p><u>Criterion 1 Customer service</u>                  Kalingula Fish Markets</p> <p><u>Criterion 2 Food &amp; beverage handling</u>                  Intro to food &amp; bev course                  Macdonalds</p> <p><u>Criterion 3 Presentation</u>                  Young Fun Fashions</p> <p><u>Communication</u></p> <p><u>Interpersonal &amp; team</u>                  Netball team</p>	
<p><u>The questions you want to ask at the interview</u></p> <p>My neighbour comes here quite a lot. He told me that you serve excellent salads. I love salads and I would be happy to help prepare them before customers come in if this would help.</p> <p>I know that you are licensed. At the moment, I don't have my Responsible Service of Alcohol certificate. Would it be useful if I attended a course during the next uni vacation?</p>	

These attitudinal factors were:

- i. **Motivated** to achieve their employment goals and to work in one of their chosen positions
- ii. **Confident** in their ability to do it, and in their ability to be successful in the job search – the **can-do** approach
- iii. **Proactive** in the job search process

We discussed some of the results of the little research that has been done in this area, research which suggested that these attitudinal factors have significant impact on the likelihood of job search success.

In the second and larger part of the presentation, I went through the job search process, describing strategies for building and maintaining the three identified attitudinal factors to enhance the likelihood of success. At the same time, I tried to convey how each part of the job search process contributed to the development of the right attitude and demonstrated it to prospective employers.

The presentation was based mainly on what I have found to be effective in the job search. I am sharing my thoughts in the hope that in this way we can start a discussion and perhaps prompt some serious research. It is a topic that merits research, especially in this time of unacceptably high youth unemployment.

If you would like to be part of the discussion, may I suggest that we use the CDAA Group on LinkedIn?

