

Personal promotion

To get ahead in the highly competitive creative sector, you need to know how to promote yourself effectively to the people that really matter in your industry.

Creating your CV

Grab the attention of prospective employers by ensuring your CV delivers a good first impression in the first vital seconds of reading. Remember, your CV is your professional marketing tool, so it must be focused, up-to-date and well presented. Different individuals, employers and industries look for different criteria, so it's crucial that you do your research and tailor your CV accordingly.

Thinking about your CV's design and adding images can help to showcase your abilities. If you're putting together a creative CV, use a professional publishing package such as Adobe InDesign, rather than Microsoft Word. Ideally, if emailed, the CV should be converted to Adobe PDF, a standard and secure industry format. If you're going to produce a CV in an unusual format, you should be confident that your targeted employer is likely to respond well to this, and make sure the quality is impeccable.

Don't forget...

- Check your spelling and grammar – get someone else to look at your CV before you send it
- Be concise and use bullet points
- Keep it to a maximum of one or two pages
- Summarise your GCSE results, and promote your Further and Higher Education achievements
- It's useful to keep a master CV which holds all of your achievements and qualifications
- Print on high quality paper if posting a hard copy of your CV
- Ensure your contact details are up-to-date
- Always include a covering letter or email
- If your application is rejected, ask for feedback from the employer.

Impressing at interview

Don't just rely on your dazzling charm and sparkling wit! If you really want this opportunity, a lot of other people will probably want it too. So it's crucial that you prepare thoroughly, just as you would for any competition.

Find out what format the interview will take and prepare accordingly. A quick phone call to the organisation will usually do the job. Types of interview might be:

- **One to one, formal / informal:** Take the interviewer's lead on this, but always remain professional - don't let yourself be lulled into a casual attitude.
- **Sequential:** Usually a series of interviews one after the other, sometimes with different people from the employing company.
- **Panel:** These will include two or more interviewers, and is common with larger companies. Questions are usually pre-prepared, and responses noted and assessed.
- **Meet the team:** This allows the organisation to see how you fit in - you should be prepared to talk in front of large numbers of people about your finished work.
- **Group:** You may be put into a situation with current staff to demonstrate your social skills.
- **Presentation:** A popular means of assessing communication and interpersonal skills - often using PowerPoint or similar software.
- **Portfolio:** Presented either digitally or as traditional printed material, to demonstrate your creativity and skills. Employers won't just be looking at your work - they'll also be assessing your body language, expression and personality.
- **Telephone:** Increasingly used as means of short-listing candidates (and may be conducted by an agency on behalf of the company). Make sure your responses are clear and concise.
- **Assessment centre:** Sometimes used by large to medium-sized companies.

Asking informed questions at an interview is an opportunity to show you've really done your research and are genuinely enthusiastic about working for the organisation. Decide on a few questions that you'd really like answered during the interview. If you need to, it's OK to refer to a pre-prepared list:

- Show an interest - ask about the job, organisation, employees, products and processes

- Don't ask about salary, pensions or other perks until the interviewer raises the subject
- Avoid questions that have already been answered in the graduate brochure or website, etc.

Under the spotlight

A job interview can be one of the most intimidating situations that most of us have to go through. How do you avoid appearing like a rabbit in the headlights?

- **Arrive on time.** Punctuality is pretty fundamental - turning up flustered and dishevelled hardly gets things off to a good start. Aim to get there a few minutes early.
- **Self affirmation.** Boost your confidence while you're waiting. Repeat to yourself: "I am an imaginative and creative individual with proven technical, organisational and communication skills."
- **Dress to impress.** Even the coolest art director or gallery manager will respond favourably to someone who's made a visible effort. Try to find out what the day-to-day dress code is and take it one step beyond. Putting on a smarter outfit than usual will boost your confidence, too.
- **People really do shake hands.** A limp or reticent handshake gives a very poor impression. You may not be used to doing it, but confidently shaking hands with your interviewers can help to create an immediate rapport.
- **Avoid the fiddle factor.** Interviewers can be irritated by distracting habits such as playing with your hair, nails or jewellery when you're talking. And chewing gum is an absolute no-no.
- **Turn off your mobile.** Enough said.
- **Mirror, mirror.** Reflecting your interviewer's posture and gestures encourages them to feel comfortable in your company. But take care not to overdo it.
- **If in doubt, breathe out.** Focusing on your outgoing breath is a good way of reducing any outward signs of stress, such as darting eyes, sweating, etc.
- **The eyes have it.** Maintaining comfortable eye contact (not staring fixedly) throughout your interview will give the impression of confidence and trustworthiness. Looking down into your lap could be interpreted as shifty.
- **Don't be afraid of a pause.** It may feel like an eternity is passing during natural breaks in the discussion, but a pause can give you a chance to collect your thoughts. It's even OK to request a few moments to think about an answer to a question - much better than blurting out something you could regret later.
- **Keep smiling through.** Most creative arts businesses are about people. Smiling will make you feel better about yourself as well as giving your interviewer a good vibe.

Online showcasing

Showing your work online is now a must for creative professionals. A prospective employer could consider the lack of a web link on a CV (or other print-based promotional material) a major omission. A variety of easy-to-use products are now freely available online and can help you to create a professional-looking digital showcase.

Blogs

Possibly the quickest and easiest way to get your work online, a well-edited and maintained blog can give a useful insight into the personality and influences of its creator. Blogs can be used effectively as a visual portfolio (some blogging platforms also offer a website feature), and they're ideally suited to writers as a showcase for their talents.

Portfolio builders

These offer a means to showcase visual images or display project work - for example, planograms, trend reports, architectural drawings, etc. They vary in the amount of product branding or advertising visible on the showcase and have limited format flexibility. Free, limited space options are usually available, and some offer unlimited file uploads. Search 'online portfolio builders' to find available products.

Website builders

You don't need to have HTML code or web building skills to use these kind of products. A basic package is usually free of charge. To add a professional touch, it may be worth buying a domain name of your own and transferring a website created with one of these platforms to that domain. Search 'website building tools' for a list of options.

