

## CPA Ireland's Guide to Career Strategies

This is the fifth in a series of articles by CPA Ireland aimed at providing you with a comprehensive guide to improving your job prospects, with advice on your CV, cover letters, networking skills and much more. Here, we discuss how best to plan your career strategy and improve your search for jobs.

If you are faced with unemployment at the moment, like a lot of other people around the country, you are probably considering your next step. While there may be limited job opportunities around, it can often be that you're not looking in the right places. Securing the right position takes hard work, research, persistence and good instincts. Here are our top tips:

- **Take control.**

There's no point in relying on websites or the classifieds in newspapers to produce your perfect job. Appoint yourself the project manager of your job search. Set yourself targets, plan strategies and modify your plans in response to your changing circumstances.

- **Network.**

Keep in contact with everyone in your network and make sure to follow-up any meetings with an email or a phone call to build your correspondence. The importance of networking is stressed by all the top recruitment agencies, so why not go an extra step and have your own business cards printed up. This is relatively cheap to do at the moment and will ensure that everyone you meet knows how to get in touch with you, while making you appear more ambitious and professional.

- **Make use of your university's resources.**

Take full advantage of the alumni services that are provided when you graduate. These are normally updated with career advice and provide assistance to alumni who are seeking employment. Be aware, too, that many placement offices will provide certain types of help to graduates of other colleges.

- **Clarify your career goals.**

According to Robert Half, this time can be put to good use. 'Keep in mind that taking your time with a job search can work to your advantage - it gives you the chance to clarify your professional and personal goals, which you may not be able to do if you immediately find a position.'

- **Fine-tune your research skills.**

There are more ways to find a job than just signing up to an online jobs site. Research is the key to getting ahead. Conduct thorough and effective research into your area of choice: what firms are growing, who are the largest, who are making plans for the future? Trade publications, newspapers, online websites and blogs, social networks and research databases will all provide you with the information you need.

- **Find a Target**

Once you have selected a business, find out if you have any contacts within the organisation who can help you get a foot in the door. Failing this, find out the name of the human resources director or the executive in charge of your preferred department and send them a well written CV and cover letter.

- **Look at smaller firms.**

With the larger companies and multi-nationals downsizing at the moment, a great deal of opportunities lies within Ireland's smaller firms and businesses. Don't restrict where you apply for work just because you envisaged a different career path.

- **Be geographically flexible.**

Limiting yourself to one town or village is limiting your job opportunities. Ireland is small enough to consider commuting or moving to another county. Remember, some areas of the country have been hit harder by the recession than others, but there are still opportunities out there if you look hard enough. Don't restrict yourself to urban areas either by ignoring jobs in smaller towns or rural locations.

CPA Ireland is one of the main Irish accountancy bodies, with more than 5,000 members and students in the island of Ireland. The CPA title is the most commonly used designation internationally for professional accountants and the Institute's qualification enjoys worldwide recognition. Its current membership operates in public practice, industry, financial services and the public sector and CPAs work in over 32 countries around the world.

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