

# Make your mark

The way to win in a tough job market is to stand out from the CV crowd, says **Liz Frost**

Let's face it: with a population of more than 7million, it's hardly surprising that London has thousands upon thousands of applications for its job vacancies. The last thing a prospective employer wants to do is wade through a mountain of identical CVs to fill a role. In fact, faced with a desk full of applications, they are much more likely to sieve off those that really stand out than sift through the whole lot. So how can you avoid being a needle in the employment haystack?

'First of all, ask yourself whether you are well-suited for the job for which you're applying,' says Impact Creative Recruitment director, Nick Evans. 'It sounds simple, but it's surprising how many people apply for jobs without having the correct minimum requirements and then wonder why they aren't successful in getting an interview.'

Although it can feel empowering to apply for a job that's way above your station, you're more likely to get an interview if your CV shows you have got what it takes to do the

work. It's also a good idea to swot up on the company before you apply. Not only will you impress your potential employers, but it might help you decide if the company is right for you. After all, employment is a two-way street and it's as important for you to be happy with who you work for as it is for an organisation to be happy with you.

Professional services organisation, Deloitte, puts company knowledge high on its list when recruiting. 'People who know about the different components of the work that we do are more likely to be successful,' says Sarah Shillingford, graduate recruitment partner. 'It's a good idea to show how your experience is relevant to the company, even if it isn't in the workplace but perhaps through your hobbies or how you handled a personal situation.'

Evans agrees: 'If you have the same qualifications as the next person but simply know more about what the organisation does, you are more likely to get a shot at the job.' Although a lot of London employers face the task of wading

through CVs and narrowing them down to a shortlist, Deloitte uses online application forms which ask questions about skills and education. 'The online system ensures consistency when applications are reviewed by HR,' says Shillingford. 'The only judgment we can make about the person from their online application is through their skills, experience and the quality of their answers, so it's best to think carefully before answering.'

If you are applying through the post, though, good grammar is an absolute must. 'If you're not sure, ask somebody to run a critical eye over your application before you submit it,' says Evans. 'Your covering letter is just as important. There's no need to repeat the information already on your CV, just be clear and to the point.'

But what about visuals? 'Don't be too jazzy with your CV or covering letter,' says Evans. 'The employer is likely to choose the CV from which they can get information easily.'

Finally, a follow-up phone call can sometimes mean the difference between getting an interview or not. 'Phone manner is really important,' says Evans. 'Speak clearly and politely, don't mumble and most importantly, be clear about why you're phoning up.'



Go it alone: London employers receive thousands of job applications, don't let yours get lost in the crowd