

# HOW TO PRESENT YOURSELF TO EMPLOYERS

## YOU ARE THE PRODUCT

When you are looking for a job, you need to think carefully about the sort of person that a prospective employer is looking for. It is important that young people start to think about their own skills, qualities and experiences that will make them more attractive and employable. In effect, they are 'the product' and they must therefore 'sell' themselves as part of their job hunting process.

As with all products, it is vital that you consider what it is you have available to sell. When you have pinpointed these saleable products, you need to bring them to market. We will look at five key areas which most employers examine when they are looking for people to fill vacancies. These areas are:

- Skills
- Knowledge
- Personal qualities
- Experience
- Achievements

## SKILLS

When we think about skills, we are referring to areas that have been developed through experience and practice.

Explain to the group that their skills are therefore the abilities they have acquired through learning and training as they have grown up over the years. They are measurable behaviours which enable people to perform actions which achieve a desired outcome.

People develop skills when they have acquired the ability to apply knowledge and use it to complete tasks and solve problems.

We often think of skills in terms of technical skills, such as typing or repairing machinery, or more general skills such as communication skills or organisational skills. All skills can add value to the way you present yourself to employers.

- Ask the group to think of as many technical skills as possible and flipchart the results.
- Now ask them to think of more general skills and flipchart these also.
- Are they surprised that there are so many areas that can be classed as skills?

We often hear of the term ‘transferable skills’ which refers to skills that can be applied to a wide variety of jobs and situations. For example, the skill of being able to organise a project efficiently would be a significant transferable skill which most employers would value. Transferable skills are therefore skills that may be transferred from one job or role to another.

- Ask the group to think about tasks that they have carried out particularly well.
- Now ask them to think about the skills they were using in these situations.
- How can these skills be used in different situations?

Sometimes people have certificates to prove they have certain skills, for example typing or computer skills. At other times they have no formal qualifications but can demonstrate their skills to a prospective employer.

It is important to ask the group to think seriously about their transferable skills. As they are still at school, they may not have had the opportunity to gain certificates to prove they have developed certain skills to a particular level of proficiency. They must therefore try to identify transferable skills that they can offer.

Give out **WORKSHEET 8** and ask the group to spend some time thinking about their transferable skills.

They can then rate how they think they perform for each skill. This will give them an idea of their strengths and will also highlight areas that they need to work on.

When everyone has completed the transferable skills worksheet, ask the following:

- Which skill do they think is the most important and why? Does everyone agree?
- Is there a skill which most people have scored ‘very competent’ in? Why do they think this is?

## EXPERIENCE

It is important for the group to understand that experience is something that you can't gain from a college course or buy from a local shop. Experience has to be earned the hard way. If you have some experience, it can be a very important feature and will add to your 'selling points'.

In a certain technical sense, experience can give you valuable knowledge and skills. In a broader sense, it can help build qualities such as patience, maturity, judgement, the ability to remain calm in a crisis etc.

When they review their experience, they will need to consider the following:

- The overall length of their experience
- The length of experience in each particular area
- The breadth and depth of experience across a range of areas
- The quality of their experience
- Their particular combination of the above

You will need to go through each of the above so that the group understand the ways in which their experience can be described and explained to a prospective employer.

Give out **WORKSHEET 11** and ask the group to work in pairs. Tell them to consider the experience they have gained in each of the areas on the list in the past 2 or 3 years.

When they have completed this worksheet, convene together as a larger group and ask for a volunteer from each group to go through their worksheets.

Most people think experience is gained when you start work. Are the group surprised at the amount of experience they have gained even though they have yet to take on full-time employment?

## PRODUCING A CV

Explain to the group that the purpose of the CV session is to show them that good writing usually undergoes a process of revision, editing, reviewing and then perhaps a complete rewriting process until the writer is satisfied with the results.

This process applies to all good writing and the group should therefore be prepared to work hard on their CVs, editing them and revising them continuously until they are satisfied that they present them in the best possible light.

It is also a good idea to put the CV aside and go back to it over a period of weeks rather than trying to complete it in one session.

The CV should be written with a specific job objective in mind. It may be that you are considering more than one area of work and in this case you will need to produce a variety of different CVs for each type of work.

Throughout the CV session, the group will be asked to provide constructive feedback to others on their CVs. They should carefully examine each part of each CV and consider whether it achieves the objective of the writer.

It is important that nobody takes offence if their CV is criticised, although the criticism should be done in a positive, kind and constructive manner.

As the facilitator, you will need to provide guidance on providing constructive criticism. The aim should be to enable everyone to gather their ideas and facts together to produce a CV that truly reflects their skills, experience, achievements, personal qualities and knowledge.

Give out **WORKSHEET 13** and explain to the group that the sole aim of a CV is to win them an interview.

The purpose of a CV is not to get you a job. It is to give you the opportunity to present yourself to a prospective employer. You will have the opportunity of selling your product – you – in a face-to-face meeting with a customer – the employer.

Give out **WORKSHEETS 14/1 & 14/2** and give the group time to work through each section.