

How to Apply for that Ideal Job

In the first of a three part series Frank Newberry provides a range of useful techniques to help you get the job you really want.

It has been my experience that greenkeepers are not in the job for the money. A good salary is always going to be important, but many greenkeepers could earn more money elsewhere doing jobs that have no variety and no access to good fresh air.

So let's appraise the job you are in and think about ways it could be made more interesting for you. One place to start might be to get your name on something called a 'succession plan'. Every responsible employer has a written or mental succession plan that is used when an employee leaves their job unexpectedly.

The succession plan enables your employer to plan the succession of jobs, i.e. when the Course Manager leaves, the Deputy will do the job until interviews have taken place and a new one appointed.

This approach to staffing can extend down so that a First Assistant succeeds a Deputy, and so on. Getting your name on a list means that your employer has officially stated that you are the successor until the vacancy is filled. This looks good on your CV, but also gives you six weeks or so to demonstrate your worth before the interviews.

Now let's look elsewhere for your ideal job. Take a look at this e-mail I received earlier this year.

'Dear Frank,

I came to see you at BTME with my work colleague for some advice on presenting our CV and about looking for jobs. At the time I had an advert for a "Head Greenkeeper" job.

So I took your advice and completely changed the format of my CV to how you said, and sent it off to 50 clubs. I also phoned and spoke to the guy who was doing the interviews and asked him if I could come down to meet him and have a look around.

I had six positive replies back about my CV, who were all very impressed with it. But most of all I got an interview, for the job I most wanted, which I was successful with and I start as Head Greenkeeper on Monday.

Yours sincerely, Paul'

In Paul's instance he had vacancies to chase but this is not essential. You can, and should, try applying for a job or a vacancy that does not exist. My brother used to go into the reception areas of organisations, pick up reports, accounts and any brochures about the firm.

He'd take them home, study them and then write a letter saying how he had always admired the company and it would be great one day to maybe work for them in some capacity.

He would indicate that he would love a visit and on that visit he would explain how they might save their money by contacting him when they have a suitable vacancy. They need then only advertise the position if they were not happy with him. Now my brother is a likeable fellow, and, of course, he usually gets the job he wants.

Many people maintain a standard CV and then use a cover letter to match the skills they have to those wanted by the employer. However, this approach is now somewhat out of date. Employers do not like to search through documents when they have 80 or more to read.

A customised CV with all the information about your suitability in the first paragraph increases your chances of being interviewed dramatically.

That said you have to write a covering letter, so consider reproducing the suitability paragraph in the letter itself. However, you cannot write a meaningful cover letter or a CV if you do not know what employers are

really looking for. If the advertisement doesn't tell you much then call the employer and ask for a copy of the job description and something called the employee specification.

The job description will tell you what the job is about and the employee specification will tell you what the employer thinks the ideal candidate is like. Armed with that information you can write a letter and CV that should fit the vacancy perfectly.

There is research that says that employers make quick decisions about who they will interview. This decision is usually based on getting a good early impression from a CV or job application.

This makes the first third of the first page of your CV a key area. I recommend candidates put their energy into getting a really positive career profile (suitability statement) at the top of their CV so that employers do not have to search for the information they want. Here is a real life 'before and after' I did for a Deputy Course Manager to guide you:

Profile (before CV advice)

'Reliable, honest, qualified and experienced greenkeeper, capable of preparing and monitoring budgets. Competent in construction work, experienced in use of modern machinery, and knowledgeable in computerised irrigation system and up to date with health & safety law'.

Profile (after CV advice)

"I am an accomplished and experienced Deputy Course Manager with first-rate leadership skills and a proven track record of success. I have a reputation for being positive, cheerful and highly resilient under pressure. I have been able to consistently develop excellent working relationships with fellow employees, members, guests and club committees. I have played a leading role in the planning and implementation of a number of construction projects and I am a skilled computerised irrigation system technician. I have at all times enjoyed being a key player in successful work teams; setting and maintaining high quality standards for daily play on the golf course."

Employers will read your entire CV as long as it is attractive and concise - two sides of A4 as the maximum, perhaps with a note at the bottom of the CV offering further information if required. I also recommend the following layout as logical and easy to read by employers:

- Your name, address, contact numbers and perhaps a flattering photo of you.
- Career Profile (a suitability statement/pen picture of you).
- Specific Work Achievements (linked to the requirements of the job vacancy).
- Career History with dates.
- Educational Qualifications including NVQ's.
- Relevant vocational and technical training.
- Licences, certificates and accreditations etc.
- Hobbies, pastimes and family details.

So good luck with writing your CV. Brin Bendon and I will be on hand at the Careers Fair at BTME 2005 (18 -20 January) if you need help to perfect your CV. If you have one please bring it with you. In the meantime if you want to see sample CV's etc. visit my website www.franknewberry.com and follow the 'Contact' link to the 'Request Information' page.