



CV & Interview Success

Avoiding the common pitfalls when securing a new role

Michelle Visser RN, Director and owner, Fusion Partners Ltd
Wayne Smith, Director and owner, Fusion Partners Ltd

Step 1: CV readiness

The first step in securing your new role is being Curriculum Vitae (CV) ready. This can be daunting, particularly if you have not been in the job market for some time, however the best advice is to regularly review and update your CV so that when you need it, you have captured real time achievements and experience and are ready to just apply the finishing touches.

If you are unsure where to start, then follow the steps below;

A few key tips when creating a CV:

- **Keep it simple and relevant – include dates, title of your role and where you have worked, key achievements and your reason for leaving if able**
- **Use spell check and have someone grammar check your CV as errors here do not provide a good first impression**
- **Avoid subjective language, talking in the third person and using acronyms/ abbreviations**

Remember this is a snapshot of your experience and should largely be tailored for the role you are looking at, with the summary profile at the beginning of your CV, outlining what you bring to the role and highlighting synergies with what they are asking for. An example is included below:

Head of Nursing Workforce Development
Employer organisation

June 2018 – June 2020

The Challenge: Establish an organisational nursing workforce development plan in collaboration with regional nurse leaders and stakeholders. Situate organisational nursing leadership at governance and funding and planning level.

Key Responsibilities:

- Developed and delivered a workforce plan incorporating a clear and stepped career pathway for clinical and non-clinical registered nurses.
- Ongoing support for registered nurses on the NP pathway, and those on management/ leadership pathways.
- Leadership in development of service level planning to incorporate NPs into team structures
- Positioning a designated nurse leader role at organisational governance level.
- Development of orientation and socialisation guidelines for clinical services incorporating NPs into service delivery.

Key Achievements:

- Development of a clear, stepped nursing career pathway, linked to professional development and post graduate education. Supported by Workforce funding.
- Positioned nursing as a key workforce within funding and planning and incorporation of regional nursing development and nursing leadership roles into the District Annual Plan.
- Positioned organisational nurse leader at Governance level.

Reason for Leaving: Contract came to successful conclusion

Step 2: The interview

If you get shortlisted, you will have to prepare for interview. You will have 1 hour -to show them what you can do.

Ever attended an interview only to walk out and have absolutely no idea how you did or wondering why you stumbled over an answer? You are not alone...

Interviews are unnatural and can feel overly structured, too relaxed or one-sided leaving people feeling that they did not sell themselves and their abilities, build rapport or gain enough experience to fully understand the potential employer.

Let's face it – an hour is not long to help someone understand who you are, how you operate and the value that you bring to an organisation and to fully understand the organisation it's people, environment and challenges. So how can you make the most of this hour, leaving having presented your true self, understanding the opportunity and with a clear understanding of where to from here?

1. Do your homework

This is easier if you are working through a recruitment professional/ business. Take ownership of this, check out the business, and what is happening in the sector. Look at their values, the population they serve and be sure to have some prepared questions ready, along with some key examples for questions that will be asked. If you have never been exposed to behavioural/ situational interviews then a great idea to find a friend/ family member and have some practice runs, via role play (you may feel silly but it will be well worth the effort).

2. Build rapport fast.

Building rapport is a skill and some find this easier than others however, all of us can develop this skill. Ensure that you find a point of connection early, establish/ demonstrate an interest in the person/ people interviewing them. This can be done with a statement around the fact you have researched the organisation and then ask a simple question or establish a point of commonality. Remember to smile and maintain good eye contact as those first few seconds are critical to how others perceive us and engage.

3. Demonstrate self-awareness and respond to cues

Acknowledge people's time and ensure that you answer questions specifically and check if you have answered their questions. This allows for any points of clarification to be checked and any ambiguity addressed. Watch for body language cues, for example, if someone appears to be disinterested or loses eye contact, assess and then re-engage by directing a simple question or statement to that person by name, to ensure they are present and you have their interest. Be aware of the amount of time you are speaking and avoid rambling, repeating yourself or going off track (if you do this then circle back and acknowledge this, then go back to answer the person's question and check you have then done so).

4. Be concise and factual and use examples

Keep answers succinct and respond to the style of your interviewers. Consider the types of questions you may be asked and be prepared with specific and relevant examples. Be prepared for the unexpected and adjust your style according to the direction of the interviewer. Generally, if interviewers are conversational then they will expect the same from you and the opposite applies, if they are more factual and structured then respond accordingly.

5. Acknowledge & follow up

Remember to thank people for their time and ask what to expect in terms of timing and next steps. This provides a further gauge on how they feel the interview went and demonstrates your interest, without being over-eager. Follow up with an email that day to thank people as this further demonstrates professionalism, strong follow up and ensures you stand out in the crowd.

Step 3: Offer Acceptance & Contract Review

This is the time to ensure all ducks are in a row and that you take the time and advice, to ensure you are comfortable with your contract and formal offer. A few critical tips when assessing your contract include:

1. **Nature of employment:** Check the status of your employment e.g.; is this a permanent employment offer/ fixed term employment offer/ individual contracting agreement? Important to understand the differences and what this means to your employment rights.
2. **Remuneration package** – Is this clearly outlined (generally in the schedule) and includes all benefits, over and above base salary, including Kiwisaver, penal rates, insurances, expenses and the like? Also check when salary reviews take place with your employer and when and how you are being paid. You may be employed under a MECA or in an individual contract (IEA). If you are on the MECA then your contract will be standardised but still worth checking thoroughly.
3. **Redundancy clause/ notice period** – Check this clause carefully as you will want to understand what notice you need to give in the event you resign and dually, what notice period your employer is required to provide (typically these should be aligned) and whether you have a specific redundancy clause or this is merely a notice period, which will be paid in the event your role is dis established.
4. **Hours & location of work** – If you have specific requirements around flexibility or locations of work, check this carefully and ensure that this is included in writing before acceptance and if in doubt, get legal help and have a professional check this over. Of course, if you are in a clinical role then your location and hours will generally be fixed.
5. **Your reporting line & duties** - Check that you understand expectations of the role, who you are responsible to (this may include more than one person).

Contracts can be a minefield and we are not experts so always suggest, if in doubt, seek out a legal review before you sign. An employer is required to provide you reasonable time for any contract review and the opportunity to seek legal advice, as needed so this will not jeopardise your offer as long as you communicate your interest and the fact you need some time to go through this due diligence.

For further information:

- Contracts: business.govt.nz
- MECA: https://www.nzno.org.nz/groups/health_sectors/dhb
- IEA: link tba

Michelle & Wayne are Co -Directors & Founders of Fusion Partners Ltd

Michelle started her career as an RN and worked in senior nursing roles in New Zealand and the UK.

Fusion Partners is an Auckland based People & Business Solutions company, providing permanent and fixed term recruitment services, business consultancy and leadership coaching and development. To find out more about the authors, visit: fusionpartners.co.nz