



The GraduateCoach  
Essential Guide to

# **GREAT PRESENTATIONS**



The chances are that in university you would have had to do the odd presentation in front of your class, maybe even as often as once a week, but there is a world of difference between talking in front of your peers and impressing at an interview. More is expected. This is where GraduateCoach comes in.





The GraduateCoach  
Essential Guide to Great Presentations

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## ABOUT US

Graduate Coach has been set up to help students and recent graduates acquire the skills they need to get their dream job.

Having interviewed over 3,000 students and graduates over the last three years, we have a lot of very recent knowledge about how unprepared students are for the rigors of the job market.

There are only 35,000 'proper' graduate calibre jobs available in any given year. And so as every parent and student knows, competition for jobs is therefore ferocious with any advertised position receiving well over 100 applicants. We do not believe that any of this is going to change in the near future. Indeed, if anything it will get worse as student numbers increase further and the current recession causes companies to cut their recruiting.

Our unique approach will teach students and graduates how they can acquire skills such as interviewing, presentation abilities and CV construction. We will also be offering advice and help on a more fundamental level by getting a students to really think through what type of person they are and therefore what type of job they would be best suited for.





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Chapter One

# INTRO

# GIVING GREAT PRESENTATIONS AT YOUR INTERVIEW

*In 2001, a Constituency Selection Panel for the Conservative Party was interviewing candidates for a safe seat in the House of Commons. Eight candidates had been selected to present, seven of whom walked in, placed their notes on the lectern that had been provided and presented from behind it. When the eighth candidate entered with no notes at all, it came as a breath of fresh air as he ignored the lectern and conducted a flawless presentation from the edge of stage. He won the seat. His name was David Cameron.*

Increasingly, particularly within the corporate and sales sectors, candidates are being asked to prepare a presentation as part of the selection process. Many people would rather run down the street naked than perform this activity. It is fair to say that some are naturally better at public speaking than others. However, it is a myth that these skills can't be taught.

## ASSESSING YOUR SKILLS

Your personal assessment – ask yourself these questions before going any further. They will get you in the right mindset, prepare you for what you will need to do and, depending on how much you know already, how hard you will have to work.

## WHERE ARE YOU NOW?

How many presentations have you done?

What did you learn from any previous experiences?

What have you particularly enjoyed about doing presentations?

Were there any aspects you didn't enjoy?

## WHERE WOULD YOU LIKE TO BE?

- Would you like to be a presenting virtuoso?
- Do you want to be able to do a presentation without any stress or worry?
- Do you want people to automatically think of you as a good performer when they need a presentation?

## HOW DO YOU GET THERE?

Wherever you are and where you'd like to be, we'll show you your route map to presentation success.

In today's tough job climate, an increasing number of candidates with similar qualifications and experience are going for the same role. Presentations during the application process are a popular way of sifting the diamonds from the rough. Ideas come and go but the skills necessary to present well are there for life and are an asset in so many jobs today.

It's impossible for us to predict what kind of presentation you'll be asked to prepare for your audience. Often you'll need to base it on the simple subject, "Why me for this job?" You may be asked to prepare a presentation about the company using all the information you can find out about it.

The point is that whatever the subject of your presentation, the rules remain the same.

In a good presentation, you are solving someone's problems, you are inspiring them to hire you and you are telling them something they didn't know before. Plus you need to do it in an interesting, concise and original way. Sounds difficult? We'll make it easy.







Chapter Two

# **WRITING A PRESENTATION**



# ELEMENTS OF A GREAT PRESENTATION

GraduateCoach has identified six key elements that go towards making a great presentation. These are:

- Understanding your audience.
- Being yourself.
- Presenting yourself.
- Structuring your presentation.
- Keeping it simple and thinking positive.

Understanding your audience could dramatically alter the way in which you approach your entire presentation. If you are speaking in front of the managing and financial directors of the company, for instance, your presentation would go differently than if you were speaking to a few brand managers who have been at the company for less than two years.

Something that we are intent on instilling in graduates is that there is no need to try to be anything you are not. By sharing some very simple tricks with you, we want you to increase your confidence in your abilities and let the audience see just how good you are.

In presentations, as in the rest of life, practice is essential. You have to work hard to be an effective public speaker. Jonny Wilkinson is a prime example of how hard graft pays off. By the end of 2009 he was the top point scorer in rugby of all time. We take examples from him and others of his calibre to accentuate how vital it is to put in the hours in order to improve.



# UNDERSTANDING YOUR AUDIENCE

A great idea before you even begin planning your interview presentation is to find out who you will be doing it in front of.

The reception your presentation will get depends greatly on who will be listening. For example, if you are making a presentation to people from the creative industries on a relatively trivial subject, you might be advised to inject a degree of humour into your set-piece. On the other hand, if you are speaking on a matter of gravitas to senior partners at a law firm, you would be well advised to adopt a more serious tone.

## PLAY TO YOUR STRENGTHS

Chris Davies  
GraduateCoach Founder

*I started my career within an advertising agency and learned pretty damn quickly that selling is 90% about rapport-seeking. If you find some common ground, then you have got the sale.*

*Because I'm from Newcastle, every time we had a team of clients who were remotely Northern, I would be asked to present. I would walk in to a room full of people ready to reject and say 'no' and walk out with five new best mates. And it was simply because I had asked, "Where are you from?" and established a rapport. You could then go on to have a bit of banter about everything from football to the North/South divide. It's not just what you say, it's the way you say it. If you can establish a connection early in proceedings, then you will be talking to a more receptive audience.*

*There are hundreds of ways to establish some common ground. It can be anything from showing an interest in where they come from to asking if they are having a good day. In the end, people like to do business with people that they like.*

Establish a rapport with the members of your audience and find some things out about them. Then find some possible common ground between you.

*Common ground = conversation opener = rapport = bond  
= a job/sale*

*A study by The Journal Of Advertising Research has found that emotions are twice as important as facts.*

The theory that emotions can factor strongly in business was proved in an episode of the popular BBC television programme, *Dragon's Den*. Businessman, Theo Paphitis, who is renowned for his cutting comments and retail knowledge, coughed up £25,000 of investment to Max McMurdo and his recycled furniture made from shopping trolleys on the grounds that he liked McMurdo's personality.

## Christian Thompson

Business Development Manager, PDV

*It's a general rule of thumb that the bigger and more prestigious the company, the larger the audience for presentations will be. And people usually make presenters feel at ease. The important thing to remember is that people aren't buying into the product, they're buying into the person. I've worked in places where people have loved giving presentations; that's all they've wanted to do all day. This is unlikely to be the case for everyone, but definitely try to enjoy it, as the feel-good factor will rub off on to the audience.*

*The worst thing you can do is go on for too long. Humans have got about 20 minutes maximum before they start to lose their focus. Any more than that and it is a waste of breath. Use hand gestures, use comedy, keep your voice upbeat. There's nothing worse than sitting through a long, monotonous presentation.*

Presentations that you are asked to do, especially as part of a job application process, will probably be no longer than 10-15 minutes.

The chances are that if they feel it's necessary to test you in a presentation type situation, then the job you are applying for will also incorporate this element. An employer will not be testing your skills in this area just for kicks and giggles.

*The first thing that you need to realise is that you are primarily selling yourself and not the subject of your presentation.*

The overriding aim of a presentation is not for an employer to hear your ideas, but to see how you present and react under this kind of pressure.

An employer is ideally looking for three things in a good presentation and you, the presenter.

- Someone who keeps it simple and doesn't get bogged down in details that could be sorted later.
- Someone who is clearly ambitious.
- Someone who is pragmatic and realistic. As the old Chinese proverb goes, "Talk doesn't cook rice". Come across as someone that will get things done as oppose to someone that has great ideas but does not follow them up.

Employers feel much the same way about watching presentations as they do about conducting interviews. They are taking time out from their own hectic work schedule, in which case they will have an, "I don't have time to waste" disposition. So if you put their time to good use, you are likely to impress.









## Lucy Fox

Agency Sales Executive, National Magazine Company

*I have to watch a lot of presentations in my job. One particular one that sticks out was by a company that was relaunching one of its magazines. They were completely unprepared. Slides were missing, others were rushed through and they stumbled over their words. Quite a big portion of it was completely irrelevant as well. The key is preparation. If you've prepared as much you can, then there shouldn't be any question that you can't answer. You can tell if someone's well-prepared because they walk in confidently, they are together, clear and precise. It's your presentation – if you don't know exactly what you're doing, no one else will.*

Put the work in, prepare and research all you can about the company. If you haven't shown dedication and commitment to the presentation, why would they ever think that you'd show it in the job?

## Tim Macardle

Regional Sales Engineer at CSC

*I met up with the company, in some form or another, three times. The first time was just an informal chat in a pub. It sounds weird but the culture and someone being able to adapt easily is quite important to them. They also like to ease you into the application process. The second time I had a much more formal interview and had been asked to prepare a presentation entitled, "Why me?" The third time, I took a psychometric test.*

*I didn't want to get caught out not knowing something I should have, so I researched as much as humanly possible into the company. I then planned my presentation based on what I'd found out about the company and matched it up to my skills.*

*I did have notes, but I'd rehearsed it so much that in the end I didn't need them. It became more like a conversation because in my mind it was equally important that I get to know them as them getting to know me. I wanted it to be as unlike a lecture as possible, involving them in it where possible. There were only two people I was doing it to and so I saw that as a chance to make a connection with them. I improvised a lot of what I said as well, which I think they quite liked because it showed I could think on my feet.*

*It lasted for 15 minutes and afterwards they asked me questions, all of which I felt completely comfortable to answer because I'd prepared myself.*

*Of course I was nervous, but that needs to be hidden. Because I had met with them before, I knew that I could just talk to them. After that, I relaxed and it just flowed. They're only human after all.*

*A few days later, they told me that the guy that had gone in after me had sat down and had been as rigid as a plank of wood. When they asked him to begin his presentation, he got out a piece of paper and just read off it without looking up. I got the job.*



# BEING YOURSELF

“Be yourself” is something that is said all the time. The fact is, however, that in trying to be yourself, you find yourself being anything but.

So be proactive about it. Several factors can stop us from being ourselves. Among them are the feelings of stress and worry that being asked to make a presentation can sometimes provoke. Imagine you are holding a sign saying ‘Me’. Then imagine all sorts of things that would make you worry during an interview presentation like “What will I wear?” “I will forget what I’m supposed to say,” “I need this job,” “I haven’t practised enough.” These cover up the ‘Me’ sign. You need to get rid of them.

The following advice may not completely relieve the worry, but keeping it in mind will help to reveal the real you.

Try not to come across as desperate.

*A good way of avoiding stress is to carry on doing other things while preparing your presentation.*

Don’t let it take over your life. If you do, it will not only come across that you consider this to be a matter of life or death, but you will not gain any perspective on what you are producing.

Remember, you want it, but you don’t need it. Keep things in perspective and you will be seen as level-headed.

“ Realistically, no one is going to give two stuffs if you are stammering and stuttering away as long as you’re not trying to be something that you’re not. You never know what they’re looking for. If you are being yourself, then the confidence you exude is going to be authentic.”  
(Christian Thompson, Business Development Manager, PDV)

## KNOW YOUR BABY

A brilliant way of coming across confidently is to know your presentation through and through.

It’s like asking a parent about their newborn baby. They will know literally everything there is to know, when it cries, eats, sleeps and all the other aspects of its life.

To achieve ultimate confidence you need to know your presentation on the same level – it needs to be your baby.

## CHILL OUT

The night before, try to have a relaxing evening. You know your presentation, so have faith in that. You won’t be able to perform to the best of your abilities if you are shattered.

“ As long as I feel relaxed then I feel well prepared for the race.” (Lewis Hamilton)

# PRESENTING YOURSELF

There is so much to be said for looking good equating to feeling good. Picture yourself in front of your audience wearing something a bit oversized or too small, with a stain down the front. Now imagine your confidence levels as you speak. Your mind needs to be free of trivial worries.

Choose outfits in colours and shapes you have worn before when you felt confident and at the top of your game.

The interviewers want to be able to picture you being proudly presented to existing and prospective clients as their newest addition to the team.

*If you show up looking anything less than brilliantly presented, their excitement about introducing you will fly right out the door.*

Decide what to wear early on whilst planning, so that it is something you can cross off your to-do list. It will also avoid any last minute rush that makes you flustered and saps confidence.

“ *The main thing is that you are being yourself. That the person we are watching isn't completely lying about their character. If you are shy, be shy and use more visuals.* ” (Chris Davies, GraduateCoach Founder)



# SUMMARY

## ELEMENTS OF A GREAT PRESENTATION

- Access the skills you already have.
- Understand your audience, ask the HR Department or your recruitment agent who will be sitting in on your presentation.
- Be yourself, be confident but don't try and be someone you're not.
- Establish a rapport with your audience.
- The aim of the presentation is for the employer to see how you present and react under pressure.
- Decide what you are going to wear early on.



# HOW TO STRUCTURE A GREAT PRESENTATION

Now comes the tricky part. It is always the most time-consuming of tasks. Structuring exactly what you are going to say at your interview presentation and, more importantly, how you are going to articulate it.

## DO YOUR RESEARCH

Apart from knowing everything there is to know about the company, standing you in good stead for any questions that they might ask you, you can also use the research you have done in your presentation to explore other issues relating to the sector the company is part of.

Doing this does two things – it makes you look informed and it also makes you look interested.

If you can convey your knowledge in an effective way, the people you are presenting to will be impressed at your initiative.

## WORK FROM THE BOTTOM UP

Like the foundations of a building, presentations need to be strong from the start. Rather than flitting about thinking up many ideas and their sub-plots, find a main central idea and then build on it onwards and upwards.



## DON'T GET BOGGED DOWN WITH THE DETAILS

For now, just look at the bigger picture. The smaller details are unimportant at the beginning. Concentrate on building that solid starting base. If you are working in a group, delegate the other members to deal with the minor details.

Avoid mentioning statistics, data or anything that will compromise the simplicity of your presentation. If they are concerned about the fact that you haven't touched on a particular point, they will ask you, giving you a chance to whip out the necessary information and wow them with your knowledge.

## TELL A STORY

A long monologue needs to be pretty special for it to be entertaining. It's safer just to add some extra colour to your presentation. Include examples and people's stories. In this way your presentation is brought to life, allowing you a chance to add some humour and lively examples to back up what you say.

## BE PROACTIVE

A lot about inspiring confidence is showing that you are not full of hot air. The interviewers want to be able to trust in you. After all, you may well end up working for them. They are professionals and will be able to spot a bluffer.

Make sure you convey the message of your presentation in the clearest way possible. At the end you should also summarise what you have just told them.

“ *Making your points clearly and concisely is the crux of any decent presentation.*” (Chris Davies, GraduateCoach Founder)

This is one of the most important aspects of a presentation. It says so many things about you as a presenter and as a person. Show your audience that you are capable of following a logical train of thought.

### Example

*“Over the next 15 minutes, I am going to talk to you about my work experience to date and the skills I have gained, along with my university degree and the relevance it has to the role. I will then be touching upon other experiences, such as a recent internship, which have contributed vastly to my knowledge in this area. I will then finish with a summary and leave some time at the end for questions. Does that suit everyone?”*

After setting the scene, you can now move seamlessly into the presentation you have spent so much time honing. Once you have finished, it is a good idea to say something like, “I think I have touched upon everything that I wanted to. Thank you for your time and for listening so patiently. Does anyone have any questions?”

Using this practice in all presentations shows that you are a clear thinker who believes in setting yourself goals and fulfilling them.

“ *The audience only pays attention as long as you know where you are going.*” (Philip Crosby, *Businessman and Author*)

The other element of coming across as proactive is bringing your past efforts into your presentation, a great way of showing what you have already achieved and that you can achieve what you are proposing to them now. However, keep it brief. After all, you are going for a new job and they don't want to hear entirely about your old one. That will be covered in an interview.



# KEEPING IT SIMPLE

This is one of the most important parts of preparing your presentation. You need to be able to centralise your presentation around one theme, one main idea.

Make it easy to follow and grasp. If you make it too complicated, it may be messy and make your audience feel stupid for not being able to understand. You want to impress people with your intelligence, not to bemuse them.

## BE DISCIPLINED WITH YOURSELF

Picture a big party with a Halloween theme. If you stick to cobwebs, flying bats and skeletons you will be fine. If you start chucking in some tinsel and glitter balls you will muddy the waters and your guests will get confused.

### The answer – stick to one theme

Don't worry about being overly original, it's more important that they understand what you are trying to get across.

## REMEMBER YOUR THEME

You need to be able to have one sentence that sums up your idea or one slide that will represent the whole presentation. That way you can say to the audience, “If you remember only one thing about this presentation, remember this ...” show the slide, say the sentence. This will really hit home that you are a clear thinker. It may seem dramatic, but you are performing, you are in front of an audience and a vast proportion of what you are doing is theatre.

*The 2008 series of the Apprentice, apart from attracting the most viewers yet, showed a prime example of how situations that become too complicated can seriously trip you up.*

## The Tissue Episode

*The two opposing groups, which were made up of three and four candidates by this point, were summoned at some ungodly hour to meet Sir Alan Sugar. Their task? To create a brand of tissues and then produce a TV advert for them.*

*They were given a budget, of which the first group, Renaissance, splurged a massive amount recruiting Sian Lloyd to play the mother in their advert. They then proceeded to write and direct an elaborate advert, featuring music by Ronan Keating, but with no brand name in sight or, for that matter, many sightings of a tissue.*

*The other team, Alpha, made things obvious by producing a 70's colour-themed advert of a little girl who was ill but could, in fact, go to school because she had some anti-bacterial tissues given to her by her dad. Dad then proceeded to mention the brand name and the anti-bacterial qualities of the tissues several times before waving his sick child off to school.*

*Renaissance's creativity and directorial masterfulness were completely irrelevant because no one knew what they were selling and if they did know, they would not have known who was actually selling it.*

*Alpha won game, set and match for keeping it simple and sticking to the point.*

# POSITIVE THINKING

Just as it is easier to say something horrid about someone than something nice, it is much easier for someone to say 'no' than 'yes'. So part of a great interview presentation is about turning a negative into a positive.

*Being of a positive disposition is a great advantage and will also mean your audience associate you with feeling inspired and excited.*

The night before a big race, a runner will envisage the finishing line and themselves crossing it. Visualising a goal is always a good way of increasing the likelihood of achieving it.

*There is no room for negativity in success.*

Picture how you want your presentation to go for you. Maybe it's standing at the front of the stage or a boardroom impressing everyone with your speech. How do you move? How do you speak? What do you say? Visualise exactly how you want things to proceed.

“ *If you can imagine it, you can achieve it. If you can dream it, you can become it.*” (William Arthur Ward, American writer)

*Tiger Woods swung his first golf club at the age of four. He had a lesson with Rudy Duran, then a professional golfer at Heartwell Golf Course in Long Beach. His first four balls streaked 60 yards down the middle of the fairway.*

*“All I could say is ‘whoa’”, Duran recalls of that first encounter with the current World Number One.*

*“One of the things I could do for Tiger was get him into some of the local country clubs, which were tougher courses than he was used to playing”, says Duran. “I remember it because he was 10 years old and we were playing the 10th hole at this club, a tough par4 and Tiger made a 10 on it. He hit it into the water, dropped and hit it into the water again and then he three-putted. His reaction epitomised what he is today. He wasn’t thrilled about making a 10, of course, but by the time he got to the next tee, the bad shots had gone from his mind. When he needed to play the next shot, he was 100 percent focused. He didn’t carry over a bad hole to the next hole. That’s what he does today; he doesn’t carry something bad over to the present. He isn’t happy about a bad swing and he shows it, but it never affects him in the future other than making him more focused on the next shot.”*

*Rudy Duran knows that although Tiger Woods has always had the talent, it is his positive mindset that has helped him get where he is today.*

If you dwell on the negatives, that will only come out in your presentation. Most units have got enough negative thinkers on their teams already.

One thing to bear in mind is that positives can be taken out of every situation. Even if it seemed like a bad experience at the time.



# GETTING STUCK

When we know we've got an impending deadline it can hinder the imagination and lead to a stressful kind of stasis. There are some things you can do to remove this kind of obstruction.

## SUFFERING FROM WRITER'S BLOCK?

There are two things that you can do which really work.

Just write. Write anything that comes into your head and don't be put off when all that is appearing are terrible ideas. The flow will come and even if it doesn't, you will come up with at least one decent idea in this time which, let's face it, is better than sitting in front of a blank screen and coming up with nothing.

The Impressionists of the 19th century would often look at their painting upside down or in the mirror to get an alternative perspective on work. One way to do this in writing is to imagine what the most obvious and best solution is to your problem/stimulus. Now think of the more random solutions. You may not use them, but the act will get you thinking.

## FIND DIFFERENT WAYS TO GET YOUR CREATIVE JUICES FLOWING

If you are a visuals person, then draw a storyboard of your ideas. If you are more of a listener, then buy yourself a Dictaphone and record your ideas so that you can listen back to them. If you are better at simply writing things down, then do just that. Tap into the way you work best.



## BE INSPIRED BY YOUR SURROUNDINGS

Don't be afraid to change your working environment. If you find that you are not making progress in your bedroom, try relocating somewhere else. It's a simple method, but you would be surprised at how often it can kick start your creativity.

### DO IT NOW!

Note down some places where you have worked well in the past. It may be a library, a coffee shop or just from the comfort of your own bed as soon as you've woken up. Change about from day to day – variety can stave off a period of staleness.



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Chapter Three

**YOUR  
PRESENTATION**



# YOUR PRESENTATION

## SHAKE HANDS

Obviously if your audience is comprised of ten to 20 people, then shaking everyone's hand will be time-consuming. But if there's only one or two, definitely shake their hands. It is a very professional way to meet people as is introducing yourself and not waiting for others to introduce you.

## SMILE THROUGHOUT

By smiling, you look as though you are happy to be there and not completely petrified. A smile also has a great impact when you meet people.

## WORK ON YOUR POSTURE

The way you carry yourself can make your confidence levels soar. If your confidence levels are high, you will carry yourself well.

Not only can posture affect the way you feel about yourself, it can also impact on the perception others have of you. If you hold yourself in the correct manner, you will exude authority. If you slouch and slump, the effect will not be as persuasive. Remember that first impressions are often the most important ones.

Stand up tall, hold yourself confidently and proudly with your shoulders back. Your voice will project better. They are looking for proof that you are comfortable in this kind of environment.

## ACTIVITIES

The great thing about this is that you don't have to be an employer to know what impressions make an impact when you first meet someone. As a human being you will understand.

Next time you meet someone, assess what things you notice about them straight away – the way they are dressed and what it tells you, their handshake, whether they make eye contact, how they smell. All these things are examined more forensically when someone is determining whether you'll be a good employee.

Now map out in your head or, even better, stand in front of your wardrobe and put together your 'presentation outfit'. Something you have worn before and know you feel good in will probably be best. Try it on in front of the mirror, wash and iron it and put it out of your mind. That's one thing sorted.

### NOTES

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# USING POWERPOINT

*PowerPoint* is a highly useful tool. It is the conventional means of making a presentation, but you have to be careful to use it to your advantage.

## USE IT SPARINGLY

Don't use it for every sentence. Remember you are simply summarising a few important points.

## DON'T BE LED BY IT

Use it after you've said something, don't say something after you've used it. It is not a prompt, it is a way of backing up a point that you have already made.

## DON'T PUT YOUR NAME IN THE TOP CORNER OF EVERY SLIDE

This may annoy the interviewers. They should already know your name so there's no need to reiterate it countless times during the presentation.

## DON'T TYPE YOUR PRESENTATION STRAIGHT ONTO IT

Do your first draft on paper, a second draft on Microsoft Word and then, and only then, can you write onto *PowerPoint*. If your presentation still contains glaring errors at this stage, you need to work harder at eliminating mistakes.

## BE CREATIVE BUT KEEP IT SIMPLE

Don't get too carried away with fonts, colours and pictures. Be imaginative but don't underestimate the appeal of simplicity. The most important thing is you and the content of your presentation – not your visuals.

## EXPERIMENT

It is estimated that people use a mere 2% of the functions that computer programs can provide them with. *PowerPoint* is a very powerful tool. Assisting with presentations is what it was designed for so spend some time getting to grips with it. Many of you will already be proficient in creating presentations with *PowerPoint* but, if not, experiment, use the guidance given with the program or, if you think it would be useful for you, there are courses available.

## PROOF IT

Get a few people to proofread your presentation for spelling and grammatical errors.

### **Good tip**

*In PowerPoint, you can make notes that will pop up on your screen and act as a prompter to you but that your audience won't be able to see.*

“ *If you can imagine it, you can achieve it. If you can dream it, you can become it.*” (William Arthur Ward, American writer)

## Anna Lavery

### Account Marketing Post (Graduate Scheme)

*My first job out of university was great, but I did have to go through one hell of an application process. I had to do a first interview, come back for a second with more people and then prepare a presentation. To get through the process, I had to research why I should work for that particular company.*

*I spent a long time in the beginning researching the company's history which, during feedback, they told me they'd really got a sense of and appreciated. I then found out what they do now and related it to my own experiences. I spent a day actually preparing the presentation.*

*I used PowerPoint and one-word bullet points noting things like 'time management' that I would then expand on using my notes. One negative that was pointed out in my feedback was that I should have known what I was saying on my notes off by heart. I can understand that – it makes for a much more fluid speech. They also said that they appreciated having their company logo on every slide along with the fact that each slide was different, clear and simple.*

*They said that they had found my confidence endearing. I wasn't that nervous because I had prepared so much and therefore knew exactly what I was doing. They mainly wanted to see how well I'd do under that type of pressure because the job involves presenting proposals and, generally, not being a shrinking violet.*



# PRACTISE MAKES PERFECT

Being practised in your interview presentation will not only ensure that you nail it, but it will also fill you with self-assurance about your abilities and your knowledge.

Here at GraduateCoach, we are well aware of the importance of rehearsal and practise when it comes to making a presentation which is why we never tire of hammering this message home.

The concept of an athlete or dancer competing without practising first is a ludicrous one and so it should be for you as well.

“ *There’s a myth about highly talented people – it’s that they are simply born that way. But the truth is that nobody reaches their potential unless they are willing to practise on their way there.*” (John C Maxwell, author of *Talent is Never Enough*)

## Jonny Wilkinson

from his latest book *Tackling Life*

*I have kicked a lot of balls in my life, perhaps over a million. The average number of goal-kicks I take per game is maybe four or five, depending upon team tactics. The number of punts adds up to just a few more, something like seven to ten. A single dropped goal and roughly four restarts would be about right, too. In total, I might kick the ball at most 20 times.*

*Each week leading up to the big day, however, I hit about 400 to 500 practice place kicks alone. I average 200 to 250 punts using my left foot and exactly the same number using my right. A daily total of 20 dropped goals with each foot and 15 to 20 restarts, six to seven times a week, would pretty much constitute a solid build-up for me. That makes a total of about 1,000 kicks to prepare for just 20. That's near enough 50 rehearsals for each single defining event. To me, that has been a totally acceptable ratio.*

*My longest session on record ran for a hefty five hours and then another hour and a half later that same evening. I have been totally obsessive when it comes to getting things right, never stopping until I was happy.*

To be the best you need to practise like Jonny Wilkinson. Why shouldn't the same amount of dedication be applied to every profession?

Once you have your presentation, you need to rehearse it until you feel completely confident and sure about it.

*Luck is when preparation meets opportunity.*

To test your progress, try the presentation out in front of friends or family. You need to trust them enough to tell you the truth.

Recite it at a slow pace so they can jump in without feeling like they are interrupting your flow.

Before you start, ask them to tell you if they don't understand anything or if it doesn't sound quite right.

Also ask them for general comments such as how you look when you are giving the presentation.

You may find this embarrassing, but it's important to get it out of the way – you are going to be showing it to a much more important group later down the line anyway and that one won't be a rehearsal. Don't get defensive when they point out things that are wrong – you're asking them to!

After the rehearsal, get some feedback and do some self-analysis to find out what parts of your presentation work and what doesn't.

## TIME IT

Make sure you time how long you are talking for. Bridge the gap between being too concise and skipping points and being overly thorough and killing your audience through boredom.

After that, make the necessary adjustments and practise by yourself until you are happy with your performance. By yourself, you can do it a thousand times and there's no one around to get bored with it ... apart from you.

## PREPARE FOR THE WORST

In training, Tiger Woods is known for burying his golf balls in bunkers with his foot and trying various shots to get them out because this might happen in a game.

In presentation terms, this means prepare for your *PowerPoint* going wrong by having an alternative medium – a handout, a flipchart that you can draw on, etc.

### **Good tip**

*Something that employers find simply irresistible, but only if you feel confident and know your piece through and through, is to draw or sketch the point that you're making during the presentation.*

*It makes the audience feel as if they're part of the creation – there's scope to develop it and take it forward together. You could start a drawing during the question time to explain and emphasise your point.*

- Prepare for every single question that will be asked of you.
- Prepare for forgetting your words by having a prompt for each subject that you will be touching upon.









# WHAT NOT TO DO

There are many catastrophes you can avoid by knowing what not to do at your interview presentation. These factors can prevent a satisfactory presentation being a great presentation.

## The presentation of my presentation doesn't matter

A recent study has shown that 55% of a presentation is based on visuals so it is important to use them. Be careful not to bombard your audience with them, however. Be simple and creative and have a look around on the net or take some photographs yourself.

## Always use ClipArt

Wrong! Never use ClipArt. It is one way to make your presentation look dated and seem as if you couldn't be bothered. There are so many other pictures that you can use and although cutting and pasting something from the Microsoft Word bank of art may seem like an easy choice, it looks dreadful and may infringe copyright, leaving you open to possible legal repercussions.

## Cram your presentation with every detail you came up with in your planning

Keeping it simple is a vital part of giving a good presentation. No doubt there will be many minor details that you consider very important. Instead, put them in a handout for your audience to go over later or bring it up in the questions and answers section. Don't just throw in everything because you're not sure what they'll want to know and what they won't. You're in control of your own presentations.

## Don't use PowerPoint

Do use it – it was invented exactly for this purpose. However, don't overuse it and spend some time getting to grips with its features. It does a lot more than you think it does. Also, be prepared for it to break down.

## Keep a poker face

Use your facial expressions, hand gestures and a change of voice tone. You are trying to keep the interviewers interested, – not trying to send them to sleep.

If you are energetic about your project, they will be, too.

## Overload your slides with information

Select one or two words that sum up what you're saying on each matter on a slide. They won't pay attention if you try to include too much.

## Lights out, run slides and speak over them

Don't hide. You are the main event. They may well not use the idea or solution that you are presenting, but if you present it well, they will use you.



# SUMMARY

## YOUR PRESENTATION

- Shake hands, smile, think about your posture.
- Use *PowerPoint* sensibly and sparingly.
- Practise, Practise, Practise.
- Get people to check your *PowerPoint* slides and try your presentation out on friends.
- Anticipate questions you may be asked at the end and think up answers.
- Prepare for your *PowerPoint* presentation to go wrong.
- Try and enjoy it. If you're having a good time, this will be picked up by the people you're presenting to.

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**ALSO  
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## OTHER COACHING MANUALS, BY GRADUATE COACH IN THE 'ESSENTIAL SERIES'

Every coaching manual in the series splits each part of the job hunting process into easily managed chunks with easy to follow step-by-step instructions. They are filled with activities, checklists and contact forms that you'll find easy to manage.

These coaching manuals will give you the tools you need, to get the job of your dreams.

The following pages include some sample chapters for you to read





## The GraduateCoach Essential Guide to COVER LETTERS AND CVS

In an increasingly competitive jobs market, it is essential to know how to make yourself stand out, not easy when the only materials you have are your CV and your covering letter. With GraduateCoach's Essential Guide to Cover Letters and CVs writing an eye-catching CV and a perfect cover letter is well within your reach. Following our tips will give you the edge that you need to get ahead.

This complete coaching manual breaks each step of writing your CV and Cover letter down into easy to complete parts.

“ *This is a really interesting book. Following the tips in this book won't guarantee you'll get a job but it will definitely increase your chances.*

*The book teaches you how to select the right information and how to display it correctly in your CV. It also teaches you how to write a good cover letter with direct tips such as 'do's' and 'don'ts'. It provides lots of examples and a space to practice. It is really useful.”*





The GraduateCoach  
Essential Guide to

# COVER LETTERS & CVS

# WHY ARE CVS AND COVER LETTERS SO ESSENTIAL?

“ I think luck is the sense to recognize an opportunity and the ability to take advantage of it ... The man who can smile at his breaks and grab his chances gets on.” (Samuel Goldwyn)

When an advert for a well-paid job gets posted online, the employer will receive a multitude of CVs in no time. Rifling through them, the person overseeing the initial stages of the recruitment process starts to become more ruthless than Alan Sugar: one whiff of a bad CV and it's on the 'reject' pile. This happens countless times in countless offices across the country every day.

The average CV gets just 15 seconds to make an impression. Chances are, if you think you can do the job well enough to apply for it, you probably can. It is convincing the person in charge that is the hard part and that starts with getting noticed.

Ideally, you'd be able to ask each employer exactly what they wanted to see. Some believe the cover letter is more important than the CV, some don't. It is impossible to know in advance.

The CV shows your experience and qualifications; the cover letter demonstrates professionalism, your ability to write and your salesmanship skills. Both are equally important so it is vital not to favour one and neglect the other.

*A job advert won't tell you how to sell yourself – but we will.*



# HOW TO APPROACH COVER LETTERS AND CV WRITING

## THE FIRST STEPS TO WRITING YOUR CV AND COVER LETTER

“ Any human anywhere will blossom in a hundred unexpected talents and capacities simply by being given the opportunity to do so.” (Doris Lessing, Author)

### What is a CV?

A summary of a person's education, professional history and job qualifications for a prospective employer.

### Things to consider when applying for a job

Always remember that with a CV and cover letter you are introducing yourself and your abilities to the employer. You are saying, “I am just what you are looking for! Here's why ...”

Both the CV and the cover letter need to show confidence and enthusiasm. If you think that you really are the best person for the job, this will come across. So convince yourself that you are.

### You're the best!

You might find it hard at first to write about your best qualities, abilities and skills, but throwing modesty to the wind is essential. You've been to university and that's a major achievement in life. And when you start thinking about it, you've also done a whole lot more ...



# WHAT TO EXPECT FROM EMPLOYERS

## BACKGROUND ON THE RECRUITMENT PROCESS

Finding the right person for the job is a long and expensive process for companies. If they use a recruitment agency, they will have to pay 10%-33% of your annual salary for the agency's services – usually over £1000.

Imagine that you are offered a salary of £20,000 per annum. As soon as you are hired, your employer will have to pay the recruitment agency £2,000 or more, with the possibility that you may not like the job and leave after three months. How can they avoid this? By hand-picking candidates that come across as reliable, trustworthy and able to fit well with the attitude of the company.

*Nearly half of all newly-graduated employees will leave their jobs within five years.*

This is another factor in why employers are so picky about who they employ. It's no small matter to invest in and train a graduate and the prospect of them only staying for the short-term is one that many companies are wary of. You need to be able to convince the employer that you are willing to commit yourself to a position. If you can't, they will choose someone who can.

*UK employers spend £1.4bn per year on recruitment advertising.*

If the company does the recruiting themselves, it's just as expensive and much more time-consuming. A job description needs to be thought about and written in a way that ensures the right people apply. The advert also has to be displayed in the right places and paid for.

*A 2009 survey conducted by the Association of Graduate Recruiters found that an average of 48 university graduates compete for each graduate job on the market.*

As soon as a job advertisement is placed, CVs start flooding in. Time and people need to be allocated to look through them. But these people are few in number and short on time. It is really important that you grab their attention and get to the point quickly.



## The GraduateCoach Essential Guide to **INTERVIEWS**

Arguably the most daunting of career-hunting tasks is the interview. GraduateCoach will arm you with the knowledge and techniques to help you sail through these frequently intimidating encounters without breaking a sweat. The guide is split into three parts before your job interview, at your interview and after your interview. With chapters such as; essential interview techniques, the best answer format, common questions you might be asked and tips on answering difficult interview questions you'll have everything you need.

“ *This is probably the best book that I have ever read about how to behave during an interview. It covers everything from the preparation before an interview to what to do after an interview.*

*It explains what is going on in an interviewer's mind, so it teaches you not just what to say but how to say it. The part I liked most was the tips about the questions most companies ask, because even though they are common, I was unsure about how to answer them.”*





The GraduateCoach  
Essential Guide to

# INTERVIEWS



# ESSENTIAL INTERVIEW TECHNIQUES

*Did you know that some interviewers will give higher points to the candidates that ask for a question to be clarified?*

These are the kind of insider tips that we as employers can let you in on. We will cover everything from the vital initial first impression to how to sell yourself without blowing your own trumpet too loudly.

Interviewers will always pose some tough questions. They will probe your weaknesses and question your abilities. Our job is to ensure that you walk into the room with the confidence to come through this test of character with flying colours.

Feeling nervous before an interview is human nature – even the most experienced of people get butterflies in these situations. What we aim to provide you with is a grounding of self-confidence that will impress your future employer and give you the opportunity to let your qualities shine to their full potential.





# GETTING AN INTERVIEW

*Dictionary definition: Interview – a meeting in which one or more people question, consult or evaluate another person.*

Congratulations. CVs and applications are rejected by the bucket-load so getting over that first hurdle should be a boost in itself. You should process this fact and use it to build up your confidence. Being granted an interview shows that it has been accepted that, on paper, you are equipped to do the job. Now it is time to prove it in person.

You need to sell your personality and your skills and to do this you must market yourself as a package. Be prepared, well-presented, motivated and self-confident and you have the perfect opportunity to prove that you are a ‘must have’ for the job in question. If you can impress here, there’s no limit to what you can achieve.

Be warned, however, interviews are tough. They can be tense affairs and interviewers won’t go easy on you. Don’t expect friendly smiles and easy conversation, expect to be quizzed and cross-examined. Just remember the key phrases: preparation, practice, confidence and self-belief.

Stars from the world of sport have to have an enormous amount of self-belief. They don’t just say, “I hope I win this one,” they say, “I’m going to win!” Muhammad Ali pumped himself up by saying, “I am the greatest, I am the double greatest!” He believed in himself and by combining this belief with his natural ability, he fulfilled his own prophesy.



# AVOIDING INTERVIEW PITFALLS

## DISPELLING THE MYTHS ABOUT A TYPICAL INTERVIEW

We never really know what questions are lurking at job interviews. There are, however, plenty of pointers to keep in mind that will save you from tripping up almost immediately.

### First impressions don't count

You may think that the shoes you are wearing won't affect whether you get the job or not, but you would be surprised how often they do. Making a good first impression is vital. You need to look and feel the part.

A trend for the rest of the interview can be established at the very beginning. If the interviewer takes an immediate dislike to you, it can be tough to get things back on track. Instead of having to redeem yourself after making a bad first impression, you have to ensure that you have given yourself the best possible start. Presenting yourself impeccably is a must.

### You are there to make up the numbers

Interviewers have enough work to do. They would rather not interview people that they already know are unsuitable for the job from their CV. You are there because they want you there.

### All interviewers ask the same questions

Never predict that what goes on in one interview will definitely occur in another. Different jobs require different information. The more you prepare, the better off you will be. You can try to predict what questions will be asked of you by referring to your CV and the job description.

## Your interviewer will use trick questions to catch you out

Try not to think of your interview as something that is being done to you. The sole purpose of an interview is to establish whether you're right for the job and not to trick you.

## You are inferior to your interviewer

There is no need to be submissive as the interviewer will not want to employ someone who thinks of themselves as 'unworthy.' Look at it as more of a meeting of two adults that are both looking for the same thing and seeing if they are right for one another.



## The GraduateCoach Essential Guide to **WORK EXPERIENCE**

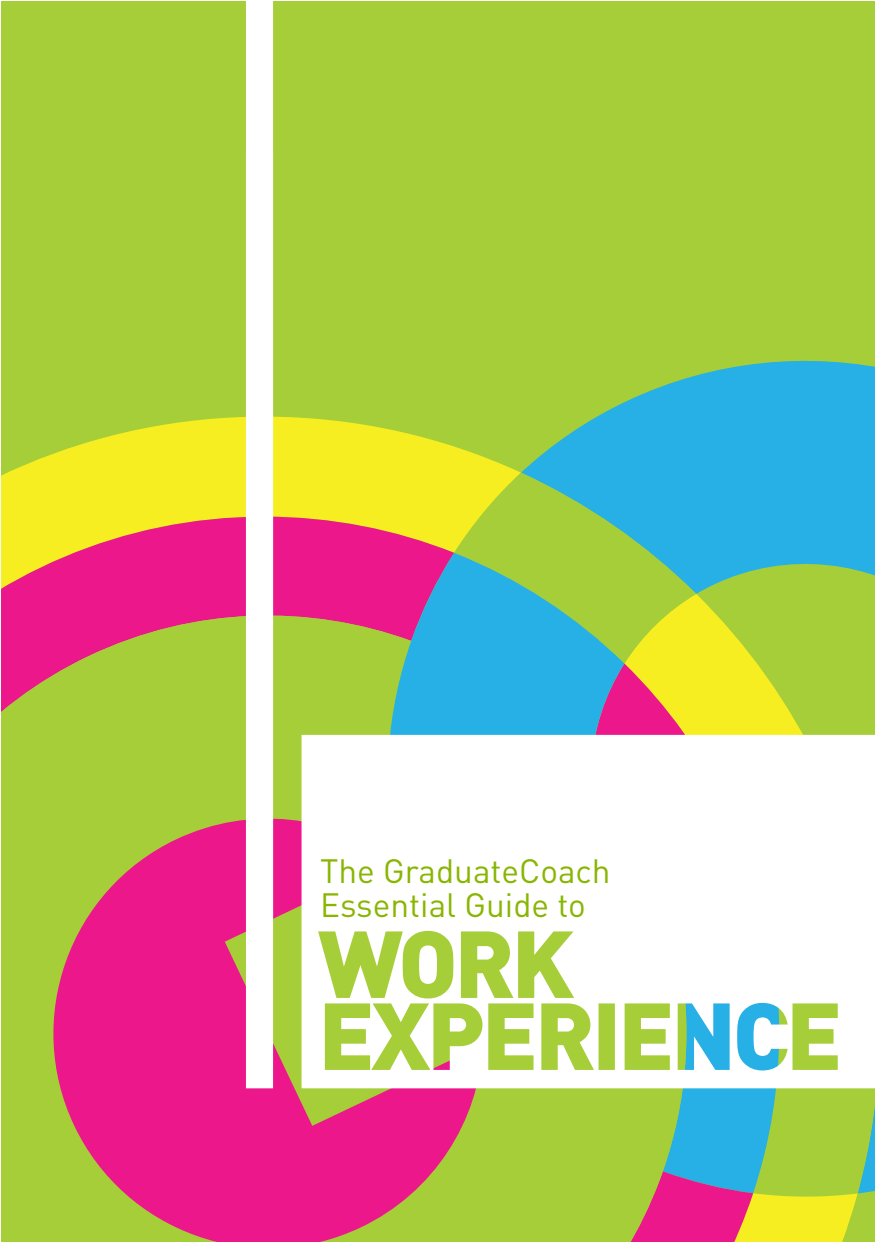
Work experience is a brilliant way to show employers that you have the initiative, ambition and determination that they are looking for. This guide will show you how and where to secure a work experience placement and how to ensure you get the most from it.

With sections covering; how and where to get a placement, using contacts for networking, CV and cover letter tips, the myths about work experience placements and after you've finished your placement and much more. It covers everything you need to know about work placements.

“ *The most practical guide about work experience you can buy.*

*It explains where to find jobs, contains example, has a guide about 'myths' and 'truths' and gives basic ideas about everything that is necessary to get work experience. I consider it a complete guide to work experience. All you need to know, you will find in the book”*





# WHY IS WORK EXPERIENCE SO ESSENTIAL?

“ *Experience: that most brutal of teachers. But you learn – my God do you learn.*” (C.S Lewis)

Work experience placements and internships are the best way to give yourself an edge in the jobs market. Whatever industry your experience is in, you'll gain important skills that will help you in any career. At the very least, you'll have something to talk about in interviews.

One in five people that complete a work placement are offered a job in the same company. But if you are thinking that you just need to turn up and make the tea to get ahead, you might want to think again.

Every employer is looking for talented, enthusiastic people to take on. Work experience is one of the best ways of discovering whether, after a bit of scrubbing and polishing, you will slot nicely into one of their swivel chairs. It is easy to work this situation to your advantage if you know how. You can show any employer that you are the perfect person for the job if you secure the right work experience and complete it in the right way.

*This guide will show you how to do that.*

As well as tips and exercises to help you find work experience and make the most of it, this guide contains success stories from candidates who have landed jobs through work experience placements. You'll get inside knowledge on how and where to get a placement and how to ensure that you emerge with your prospects enhanced at the end of it.





## DO WORK PLACEMENTS REALLY HELP YOUR CAREER?

If you are new to the working world, you'll soon realise that many industries are like a closed book. Some – in fact most – of the companies that operate within these industries are nearly impossible to get into – unless you are related to the CEO. The rest are only accessible if you work for them for little or no money. These are your windows of opportunity. It can be a disheartening position to start from, but it's important to persevere as you need to start somewhere, at some time. Given the current economic climate, it is best to start as soon as possible. It may not pay, but you'll gain enough experience and know-how to make up for what you lack in money.

A few weeks' free experience gives you an essential advantage when it comes to applying for jobs. Your skills and knowledge, not to mention your confidence, will immediately place you above many other candidates, so you'll have a much better chance of earning a larger salary in the long run.

*Three weeks of work experience will prepare you for a job more effectively than three years of university.*

There really isn't a downside to putting a work placement on your CV. If it is in the same industry as the job you are applying for, it will show initiative, commitment to the profession and passion. Even if the placement is undertaken in a completely different industry, it's a demonstration of how quickly you can learn and how proactive you've been in sorting out your future.

If your placement turns out to be the worst two weeks of your life, this is a small amount of time to spend discovering the path you shouldn't take – especially if you compare it to the long, miserable years you could have spent proceeding up a blind alley.

The trick is to make the absolute most of any placement and complete tasks that will look good on your CV. This is precisely what GraduateCoach can help you do. Some of it is about luck (where you get a placement, when and what you end up doing), but hard work and effort can get you a very long way, too. Rather than waiting for chances to fall into your lap, you can create opportunities for yourself with our guidance.

Sometimes you'll need to just knuckle down and get the job done and it might be tough. But if there's one thought to sustain you, it'll be that in completing a few days' worth of work experience, you'll be taking one huge step closer to your dream career.



# SUMMARY

## WHY WORK EXPERIENCE?

- Remember, everyone with a job needs to start somewhere ... and you do need to start as soon as possible.
- Getting work experience to put on your CV shows that you have initiative, commitment to the profession and passion.
- No matter how disheartening it may seem, work experience is worth it.
- Try to remember that you'll get enough experience and know-how to make up for what you lack in money.
- Two weeks could rule out a profession that you could have spent long, miserable years in.
- Don't be discouraged by a miserable outlook or lack of contacts: luck and timing is a part of it, but with hard work you can create opportunities for yourself.
- Always remember to make the absolute most of any experience you do get. Pour yourself into it – it's not forever.









