

This E-book has intentionally been put together for people who are searching for their first job, however if you already have a career and are seeking a new job opportunity it may help you too. The content and exercises of this book are uniquely based on my own learnings, real advice and feedback from trusted peers. I see the daily struggle of people searching for full time jobs, while some people I help directly, there are many that I can't, hence the reason I decided to write this E-book. Please excuse grammatical errors, I have not used AI to edit the text - I wanted to eliminate potential influence of reshaping ideas and content. However, I did use AI for the images.

I'm hoping that this E-Book will provide you with valuable insights that can help you in your professional journey. If you are struggling at the moment, I really do hope you find something very soon, God willing.

The general theme is focused on self development, my intention is to highlight potential areas of improvement for better awareness. You may already be conscious of the subject matters within the content.

A bit about me - I've hired around 200 people during my professional career. I have not counted the exact number of people I have interviewed but it would be close to 500 people, for small and large organisations.

Before reading it's best to have a CV, and also a pen and paper handy to take notes. Yes, I know it's 2026. The exercises within the main section could take a few days to complete, it really depends on your availability and determination.

The structure is, as follows;

1. Work experience

Prior to going directly into the main content I have shared part of my work experience, focusing on my teenage years as it was the foundation to my career, developing skills in sales and customer communication. Do feel free to skip directly to the 9 practical exercises.

2. 9 practical exercises

In no particular order, for each exercise there is an introduction into the main subject matter. The exercises are for your own awareness, understanding and knowledge building.

3. A hiring managers perspective

This section provides insights into my own perspective as a hiring manager and also feedback collected from my network of peers, colleagues and other professionals that shared their insights.

Note: The content of this book is my own views and opinions, if you do not agree with them that's okay. I have provided a google form link at the end of this document; if you wish to provide feedback.

A surprising story to share with you - on a couple of occasions while facilitating interviews, the candidates hardly spoke during the interview, they gave the bare minimal responses and

ended up getting the jobs! They simply let the interviewer do all the speaking and remained silent during the entire interview.

I would like to thank my family, friends, and professional peers that have participated in providing their feedback and inputs.

Work experience

I was brought up in Middleton, a small area in Manchester in the UK. One of the primary goals my parents had was to teach me about work ethics, from an early age, to give me a head start and equip me with some experience while under their roof. I wasn't a good student, on the contrary I was a pain in the ass.

I got my first job when I was 12, delivering newspapers - A few mornings every week before school started, I would get on my bicycle, ride to the local newsagent (small super market) pick up a batch of newspapers and ride through the local area delivering the newspapers to the shop's subscribers. If you ever watched an American movie showing a paper boy throwing newspapers on lawns then it gives you an idea of what it was like however in the UK you stop your bike, walk up the lawn and post the paper, not as fun... Sometimes I couldn't be bothered and my mother drove me around to encourage me not to give up. I used the money I earned to buy the latest Nike or Adidas trainers to wear during my summer holidays when I would visit Tunisia.

The second job was working on a market stall selling sports clothes during the weekends where I would make up to 50 pounds, 25 pounds a day! I would wake up very early in the morning, around 4 am. The first task was to set up the market stall - standing up metal structures, boxes, mannequins, and clothing stands. We would dress the mannequins, place clothes on the hangers, and arrange the clothes. I was purely following instructions, and very rarely contributed ideas.. I was 14 and had more interest in going home to complete the latest GTA game with my brother. During the day I would call out to people walking by, 1 hat for a fiver, 3 for ten pounds! Helping potential buyers to try on different items and securing sales. At lunch time, I would eat a fresh Tunisian sandwich prepared by Saif (a friend of my father) which I still remember as being extremely delicious. I did this for a few months on and off, the primary purpose was to buy the clothes I wanted to wear, the latest VCR movies (chipped), and playstation games I wanted to play. I bought my first phone, an NEC, one of the first camera phones - the camera was rotatable too!

Around the age of 16 I had a part time job in a professional sports wear shop in Bury mall, commuting by tram and bus a few times a week. A cousin of mine was working as the shop manager and he kindly gave me a shot. A more professional environment than the previous job; we wore company branded clothes, and all staff had a specific duty depending on their shift and the volume of work in the store. One day you would be working in the shoe section, another day on the tills, some days in storage. During this work I started to make some good money, I could go out with friends, buy the things I wanted. I recall feeling very lucky because some of my friends were posting their CVs everywhere without response, later on in life some of them have become extremely successful - everyone has their own path.

After deciding to take a gap year (after an amazing summer) and stay in Tunisia at 18, my mother told me that I can forget about asking for money and I need to find a job (the usual).

Another cousin of mine from my fathers side mentioned that he saw an advertisement for a British company seeking a sales representative. I applied for the role, attended the interview and my professional career began in IT. Yes IT, not sales...

From there my professional career began in IT - from entry level support, to advanced technical expertise, to management in IT and Software and then leading a large organization of employees world wide for a multinational company.

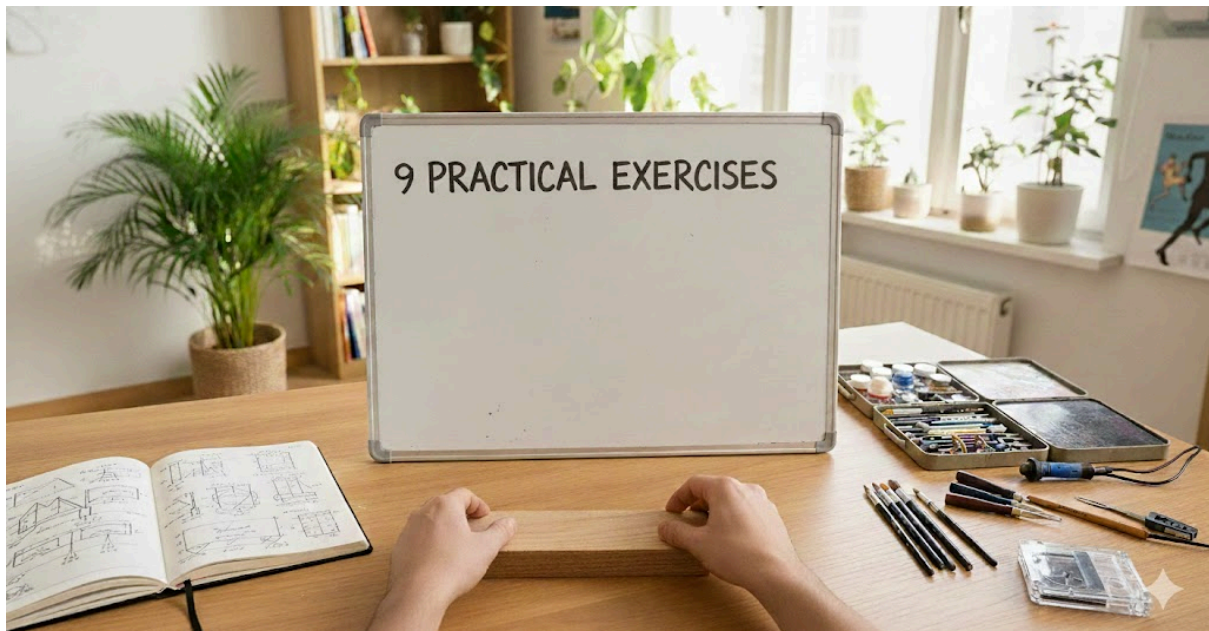
For each job I received help. Accepting help is the first step. There is no one on this earth that is fully self-sufficient, you may argue that you grow your own food, but I doubt you are bringing down the rain.

9 practical exercises

The primary reason most people work is to make a living, to bring in an income. We do not live in a free society, everything has a cost. Absolutely everything has a cost! Walking costs you energy yet walking makes you healthier.

Some people are ambitious, seeking ways to become financially independent and building wealth, others not as ambitious. Everyone has their own goals and motives in life, especially how they perceive work.

Below are nine practical exercises for you to help in your journey.



Exercise No 1. Theory vs reality

I'm sure the topic of professional work has been brought up with you, give me a virtual high 5 if you've been told what you should do! We live in a time where we are encouraged to do what we want.

The reality is, in order to do what you want you need to have the means to do so.

You can get by without money in many circumstances however let's be honest we're not living in a forest, money is required, it's the main mechanism of trade.

For the first exercise, I'd like you to ask questions and learn from those around you. There could be valuable information or knowledge already within your reach.

Find at least three older individuals, and ask the following questions;

1. Question 1: Did you do any jobs that you didn't necessarily want to do?

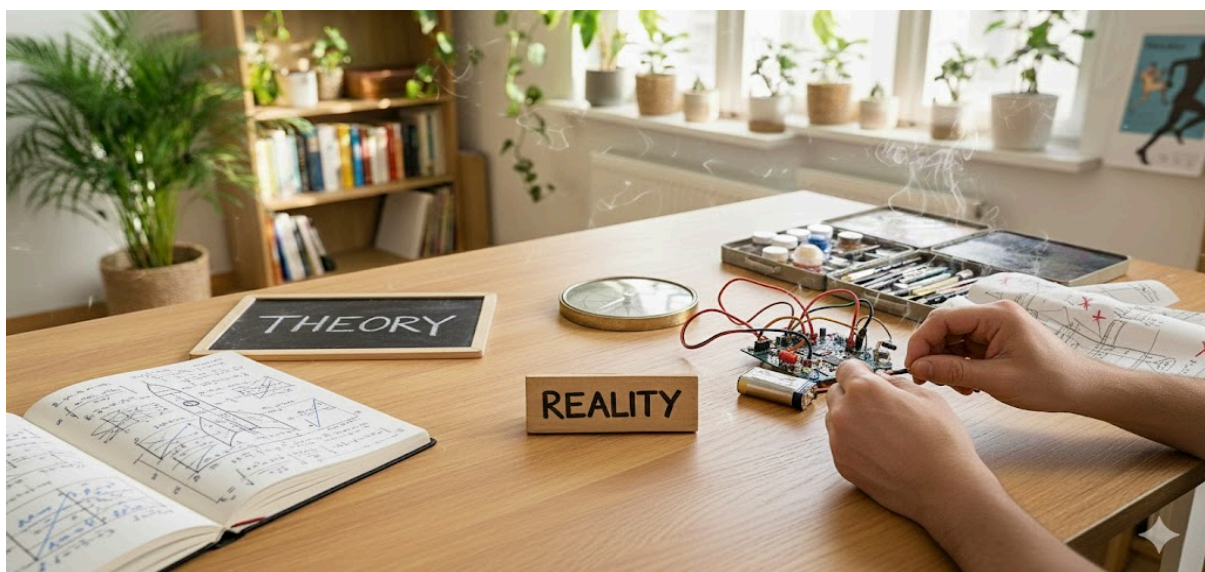
I can tell you that I have certainly done a lot of jobs that I didn't want to do. To find something that aligns exactly with what you want is not realistic, you could be the exception, and if you are well done sir! There will be parts of a job that you will like, and other parts you won't.

2. Question 2: Did you follow the standard path after your education? I.e. If you studied biology, did you work in biology?

I was on the path to becoming an architect (if I continued the educational path). I have had the opportunity to architect software and systems so I guess that counts, right? I actually wanted to be a football player for Manchester United... I held on to that dream for quite a while in my mind, maybe still holding on... you never know, one day it might come true...

3. Question 3: What have you learnt over the years that helped you be successful at work?

What works for others may not work for you, everyone's path is unique however there are common lessons to learn. Once you have collected the answers, review them - surely there must be good information there. If not, look I'm sure the folks you asked are chuffed.



Exercise No 2. Competition exists and it exists everywhere

You may have been told that you should only be in competition with yourself, while this is true competition still exists everywhere. When a company posts a job offering, you will not be the only person competing to work for that company, unless you are lucky! Companies know this.

If there are several people being evaluated for a job, a comparison will most likely happen. There are many ways companies evaluate candidates. I do believe it's impossible for any evaluation to truly capture a numerical assessment of one's skillset (we are humans not numbers!) yet it's the closest and most effective practice to weigh options fast and efficiently.

For the second exercise we will focus on identifying your core strength(s) and your unique value proposition.

1. What are my core strengths?

This is not an easy question - if you are finding it difficult to answer then I recommend you spend more time reflecting (looking back into your past). It could be a strength that other people have mentioned to you.

2. Do you have something unique to offer to the company you're applying to work for?

I've always found that if you give more than the job needs you will grow. Growth in experience, brings new knowledge and eventually more income. With this question you are looking for your added value.

3. Imagine you are hiring for the position you are interviewing for, and that you have 100 CVs in front of you to pick from. Which CV would you choose and why?

There is no right or wrong answer, this question places you in the hiring manager's shoes, looking at things from their perspective.

Important note - Don't take a rejection personally, even if it feels that way. Your inner value, self worth, self esteem whatever you want to call that feeling can take a hit if you hold on to the negative. The key is to reflect back on that event and ask yourself what can I learn from that experience? If the same thing is happening over and over again, you may have not learned the lesson, ask for help. It's okay.



Exercise No 3. Everyone has an agenda

Everyone has an agenda whether they are aware of it or not. Hiring managers too have an agenda, professional and personal. Some are just hiring to fill in an immediate need, others are hiring for future needs. I've met hiring managers that have absolutely no clue what they are hiring for - they have just been tasked with finding someone for a particular role.

For exercise three lets investigate:

1. What do you know about the hiring manager and the company that you are applying for?

Typically, companies are interested if you have done research about their line of work / business. Doing research demonstrates that you are proactive.

2. Ask the hiring manager questions in your next interview to know more about them. I recommend practising this with a friend. (Have a laugh)

An interview isn't one way, it's between two or more people (at least for the moment), when conversations are interactive it builds better **trust** between people. Ask questions to know more information about the company, the team, the requirements of the job. Questions that create meaningful dialog essentially adds value to the conversation. The interviews I recall the most, were the ones that were not scripted.

3. Define your professional goals, at least one..

Do you know what your professional goals are for the upcoming period? Just like personal goals, defining work goals brings something to look forward to. Try and visualize your goal, think about what a day of your life would be like in the future if that goal materialized.

Some employers may ask questions related to your future goals to establish if you are a good fit for a role, be attentive, there is no right or wrong answer. It's more about the conversation in that moment and responding naturally to the questions, go with the flow.



Exercise No 4. Nobody really cares about how good you think you are

Hiring managers post jobs because there is a need. Did you really care about my experience above?

If they believe you can fulfil their need, they will hire you. If they don't, then they won't. It's as simple as that.

They might be impressed about your record and achievements but it's generally not enough. It's not really about how good you are, so never tie rejection to your self esteem or worth, if you got rejected it's because the decision maker did not believe you are the **right fit**, regardless of the reasoning behind the decision. If you turned up for the interview, truly gave your best, then you couldn't have possibly done any better in that moment.

Yes, I have seen people reject candidates because they saw them as a threat. I have also seen people hire the least qualified person to do the job. You can perform an analysis on the data behind the decisions, and categorize those decisions; however it's a guessing game because each hiring manager has their own intention and motives (as you will see in the last section).

The primary goal in an interview is to persuade the interviewer that you can do the job.

For exercise four, let's focus on natural abilities and bring these abilities into your consciousness:

1. Define three **abilities that** you are naturally good at that align with the job you are looking for. If you can't find three then you haven't put enough thought into this.

This is a continuation from the first exercise but slightly different. The first exercise focused on your primary strength(s), now we are focusing on your abilities that can be applied to the job.

2. Identify at least one time that these natural **abilities** showed up and what the outcome was.

By providing a brief background into your previous experiences it provides credibility and demonstrates awareness.

3. Research online how your abilities can be useful in a workplace.

The intention here is to enhance your knowledge about your abilities; how to describe them, what they mean to others etc. The more you learn the better.

Give this a shot if you want; ask two people you know what the word "ability" means, and make a note of the answers - I doubt they will be the same.



Exercise No 5. Most companies prefer stable and loyal employees

When companies hire for full time roles that are core to their business most seek **stable** candidates. This is completely normal, their goal is to run a sustainable business for years to come. Going through the job requirements is crucial, yet there are job requirements that do not reflect the actual job.

It costs companies a lot to hire - time, effort and money. The more stable you seem the more chances you have. When you are hired for a position you also represent that particular company in one way or another, just like a family or a group of friends.

Loyalty is important too - the question of whether you would be a good fit or not, will most likely be pondered or asked.

From my experience hiring managers see stability as a major plus on a CV, people who have moved from one role to another in a short timeframe may raise questions. Be prepared if this is your case.

I'd say an experienced hiring manager has conducted well over 100 interviews, they have seen many different people, heard many stories and pitches. Some have gone through training programs to give them more insights into the psychology of humans to improve profiling techniques and assessing potential.

For exercise five, lets revisit your CV:

1. Does your CV indicate **stability**?

For example - A CV that shows 10 different jobs within 2 years could give an alarming impression for a hiring manager, they would be curious to know why. It's good to be aware of this later down the line, when it comes to job changes.

I've found that people who have been stable at the companies they have worked at are more likely to be selected, and those same people have grown within their companies into higher level roles, with much higher pay.

2. What's your intro? What are you looking for?

You may not be in a position with many choices at the moment but that doesn't mean you don't have one. Is money the motivation? Or is work life balance? Or is the environment and atmosphere? Is it your peace of mind? Knowing what you want is key to being at peace with your choice.

During my 20's, increasing my wage and accelerating my career was the only motivating factor for me (I was quite transparent about this back then). I would work and learn all the time - weekends and throughout the night. Offering much more than the job required.

3. Ask a couple of trusted friends or family members who have years of experience under their belt to read and provide feedback about your CV

Feedback is critical, intentionally seeking another perspective will bring about details that may be completely unknown to you. Feedback is fundamental in the world of business.



Exercise No 6. Referrals are your best chance

This is a difficult truth. I do know people that don't want help from others. The majority of people I know got jobs through who they know, through recommendations, there is nothing wrong with that.

If you had hired a plumber to fix your central heating, or a mechanic to fix your car, or hired a professional for any need and you were happy about the job they did, would you not recommend them to family and friends?

For exercise six, lets network - you may not need to look far, there could be someone in your inner network (family and friends):

1. Is there anyone in your inner network (people who are close to you) that can help you find a job?

Most of the full time employment jobs I have done came through referrals. If I look at my inner network, it's the same thing.

2. Is there anyone that you contact in your outer network that you had a positive interaction with, that could possibly help expose you to something new?

It may be someone that you exchanged contacts with over small talk, or someone you met at an event, a friend of a friend, a game of football etc. If you know someone that could potentially help, ask. You don't have anything to lose. Everyone needs help, don't allow your ego to stop you from asking when you need to. I don't recommend asking everyone for help or mass messaging contacts, I recommend being strategically intentional about who you ask for help.

3. Are you actively networking?

This is an important question to ponder. Networking opens doors, I highly recommend dedicating time and effort for networking.



Exercise No 7. Money will follow

To expect being paid the amount you want can happen but most likely not if you are unemployed. First time employees are labeled as juniors, freshers etc. Labels can be very annoying, they will die over time.

Every job has a budget associated with it. It doesn't mean that you will be stuck if you accept a salary lower than what you expected. If you are in a position where you have different offers on the table that's a different story, and if you do, I'm not sure why you are reading this, however please do continue.

Don't focus too much on average rates. Think of it as a market - similar products, different prices. You never know, you may get offered a lower salary than you hoped for and six months later the tables turn and you are earning double or triple that. The point is, it's good to plan for the future and have goals to look forward to yet ultimately no one knows what's going to happen in the future, let alone tomorrow.

For exercise seven, some questions to ponder that may be sensitive:

1. What do I actually need to cover my livelihood? Not what I want, but what I need at this particular moment?

Aiming high to live a top life is the dream for many but is it realistic when you are struggling to find work? Step by step. If you are in a tough situation, such as not finding a job in the domain you are seeking, options become very limited, very quickly and maybe the only way at the moment is to do work in another field.

2. Is there anything that I can do to make an income while I'm searching?

You can earn money while you are seeking full time employment, you need to be prepared to do work that you didn't have your eye on. If worse comes to worse you will have limited choices - getting paid for doing something that wasn't in your plan is better than not doing anything at all. There are part time jobs, jobs that pay per hour, or by day or by task, you could learn a new skill and work with it.

3. Take a look at your spending habits. Do you have control?

Living life above your means puts you in a difficult position; especially when you are not working. I have been guilty of this many times, again during my 20's...

There's a ton of financial advice out there, having money saved and a balanced spending habit works wonders for rainy days. If your rent is taking 80% of your pay check, the issue isn't the pay check. I know many people that were paid lower than their peers and eventually built more wealth over time than their peers - mostly due to spending habits; sacrificing immediate gratification for a wealthier future.



Exercise No 8. Listen to your external environment

Has anyone approached you recently for a job, but you brushed it aside because it's not what you are looking for? I recommend revisiting that scenario as it may be in your entry into something much bigger.

As we have already covered, not everyone pursues a path in what they want to do, not many people know what they want to do! It really depends on what your intentions are - If you are searching for experience you will attract experience, if you are searching for money you will attract money, if you are looking for something part time you will attract something part time, so on and so forth.

Sometimes it may come to you in a way that aligns with what you are looking for, sometimes not - listen and observe to what has already come your way.

Active listening is a skill that is overlooked. Being present in the moment and actively listening to what is being said. We tend to get distracted when we are not really interested in what's being said, switching from actively listening to passively listening. Listening is a skill that is very much underrated.

For exercise eight, a trip to the past and intentionally listening:

1. Go back into the past. Has anyone provided you feedback before? Try to go back to those moments and make a note of what has been said. With an open mind, think about what you heard.

Important note: Criticism can be harmful, intention has its role to play. If the person delivered the feedback to you positively then it may be worth hearing them out. Review the circumstance, not only what was said.

2. Feedback may also be given through other communication channels, it could be through email, or instant messaging.

Might be worth having a re-read of specific interactions, you might pick up on something you overlooked. Avoid over thinking, it's not going to help you at all.

3. An exercise to try - while conversing try to listen and only listen.

You may have the urge to speak, but just try and listen without judgement, without formulating a response, without being distracted, just be present and listen.

Back in my 20's (again), a boss of mine told me in a cool way that I needed to work on my listening skills - My ego took a slap, and I said to myself what he is talking about? Smiling on the outside, fuming on the inside. It stuck with me for a few days until I eventually considered the feedback.

He was right. I needed a lot of work on my listening skills.



Exercise No 9. Your reputation and image

Some people will do background checks on you, not everyone, but some do. In today's world our lives and experiences are part of the digital ocean of social media. When people are making decisions on who to hire, like it or not they may check who you are in your personal life and make a judgement call to whether or not you will be a good fit. At the end of the day they are not just hiring you for a job, you will also impact the work environment. It might not be any of their business but that's not going to stop checks from happening.

Look around you, if you see most people wearing a suit to work in the company you applied for and you decide you want to wear a wizards cloak to the interview then you're kind of setting yourself up for a rejection, unless they see the talent behind the cloak. Now if you want to wear a wizards cloak and do your own thing, no one is going to stop you!

We must accept that if you want to work for a company you need to follow their rules.

For the last exercise, visibility and integrity:

1. Have a browse around your social media - do you have any content that shouldn't be public?

Again, there will be people that judge you. It's easy these days to do background checks on potential candidates. Give your social media a review, not everything needs to be public.

2. First impressions do count

I recall a period post covid when remote work became the new norm for IT companies, and a lot of the interviews were done fully remotely. Poor internet connection, laptop issues etc.

Technical issues in general can be pardoned, however performing interviews in public areas where there is a lot of noise and distractions are not going to work on your side!

3. Be honest on your resume

Be honest about your experience, if you don't know something say you don't know. Lying is bad. If you are asked questions about your experience that you can't answer then don't put that experience on your CV. Using AI to make a web application doesn't mean you are an expert in making web applications. Using AI to write emails and posts doesn't make you strong in content writing. Your CV is the first impression about you, it speaks on your behalf to an unknown audience, it's better to give an honest image than a fake one.

1. Does your CV reflect real experience?
2. What parts of your CV can be extended to provide more detail into your experience without exaggerating?
3. Do you have any proof to back up your experience?

This concludes the exercises, I hope they have been beneficial.

To summarize into one quote:

Be the best version of you!



The hiring manager

To give you perspective and insights from a hiring manager; managers in organizations have to juggle different responsibilities, hiring being one of them. If there is a huge demand for hiring then there will be a time constraint. Imagine, if you have to hire 30 people within 3

months, how many interviews can you actually conduct without impacting your other responsibilities? Not to mention that your credibility to hire is also on the line too.

Going back to the previous exercise - If you received a 100 CVs, can you actually go through them all, especially if you do not have the right tools? Would you skim read them, or take the time to go through them all, to give everyone a fair shot? Or would you handle this task in a completely different way?

In today's age there is a lot of automated filtering that is happening before the hiring manager actually sees your CV. It could be in the form of online tests, questionnaires, software tools or AI. Anyway, you get the picture. Once a CV actually makes it to the hiring manager, it really depends on how that manager interprets the CV. Even though there are common practices hiring managers use to evaluate candidates, the uniqueness of every individual contributes more to the decision making than the practices to help make those decisions. For example - you could decide to perform a weighted assessment. Weighing specific skills as "must have" compared to "nice to have". Yet after comparing five different profiles and scoring them, you decide to go for the person who came into second place because your gut told you too. Others may completely disregard their gut feeling or emotional state and take the decision based on the data. Do we really know where the inspiration came from during that moment?

I've seen many people hired into roles that do not possess the required skills, this typically happens when demand is low, or through a referral. I've seen those people excel and become leaders or experts within that domain. When demand is high, skills and other factors are typically matched to resumes to select a short list of who should be interviewed. Some jobs require several interviews, whereas others could conclude within a short period of time.

Truth be told, there isn't a magic framework or practice that guarantees you will get the job you applied for no matter how good your CV is. Spending countless hours on perfecting your CV in my opinion isn't going to give you better luck or more chances, I believe if you shift your focus to self improvement, and having a strategy on how to be seen is more **practical**.

Hiring Manager feedback survey

While writing this E-Book I conducted a small case study to provide you with insights from other people that have performed hiring manager roles. A simple online survey that asked 5 generic questions.

I directly reached out to people within my network - mostly close contacts, and a few professionals outside of my inner network. So far, there has been a good response rate - I'm grateful that more than half of the people contributed their insights, which tells me that people are willing to contribute their time if it serves the greater good!

Once I finished writing the previous sections (except for minor edits) I used Gemini to analyze the data and produce the report, here it is;

Summary of Data

Metric	Value
Combined Hiring Experience	~2,600 People
Top Priority Factor	Attitude & Coachability (57%)
Primary Advice Theme	Continuous Adaptation & Soft Skills

1. The Priority Shift: Character Over Credentials

While many candidates spend years perfecting their technical resumes, the data shows that managers are looking for something else entirely.

- **57% of managers** cite **Attitude, Trust, and Personality** as their absolute top priority.
- **Only 24%** stated that Technical Experience was the primary factor.
- **Key Insight:** Managers view technical skills as "trainable," whereas character traits like proactivity and honesty are seen as "intrinsic."

2. The "Shortlist" Funnel: How Candidates are Filtered

With an average of dozens (or hundreds) of applicants per role, managers use a multi-stage "filter" to narrow the field.

- **The Initial Screen:** Managers look for "**consistent development**" (mentioned by 38%) rather than just job titles. They want to see that you have grown in every role you've held.
- **The 70% Rule:** A recurring pattern in the feedback is that you don't need to be a 100% match. Experts suggest that if you meet **70% of the requirements** but demonstrate a high "learning velocity," you are a top-tier candidate.
- **Modern Literacy: 50% of managers** mentioned that being comfortable with modern tools (including AI and automation) is now a "baseline" expectation for the younger generation.

3. The "Intuition" Gap: Why Seniority Matters

There is a distinct statistical difference in how managers make decisions based on their career stage.

- **Early-Career Managers:** Only **8%** rely on intuition; they prefer rigid scoring matrices and formal checklists.
- **Veteran Managers (100+ hires):** Nearly **45%** admit to relying on "**Intuition**" and "**Gut Feel**" during the final selection.
- **Key Insight:** As managers gain experience, they look less at your "stats" and more at your "story." They are testing for maturity and how you will fit into the existing team culture.

4. Final "Credibility" Checklist for Candidates

Based on the direct advice of these experts, here are the figures you should keep in mind to boost your success rate:

- **Preparation: 100% of respondents** noted that "showing you have researched the company" is the fastest way to build trust.
- **Honesty:** Roughly **1 in 5 managers** specifically warned against "lying on your CV." They value a candidate who can admit what they don't know but explains how they will learn it.
- **Flexibility:** Experts advised young seekers to "**grow laterally.**" This means taking roles that offer new knowledge or soft skill development (like communication and emotional intelligence) even if they don't offer a higher title immediately.

Final Summary: Across 2,600 hires, the data concludes that **personality and coachability** are the ultimate deciders; focus on perfecting your "human" skills (communication and trust) to stand out in a market where technical skills are constantly evolving.

Final remarks

Thank you for reading. If you would like to share your feedback please navigate to the link below. Responses are anonymous.

<https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSfV7HrcLpjsIWDsYzGN1fQ8FkjehP0OehKxnpZgV8PpHzUepQ/viewform?usp=publish-editor>

If you would like to contact me directly, please send me a message through my website <https://wissamayadi.tn>