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The European Academy of Direct and Interactive Marketing



# HOW TO GET A BETTER JOB

Where most people go wrong  
and how to get it right



- ✓ 6 mistakes even experienced people make
- ✓ 7 crucial lessons you cannot ignore
- ✓ 2 bonuses
- ✓ 12-point interview checklist
- ✓ 7 things you can't miss in your letter

Drayton Bird

# HOW TO GET A BETTER JOB

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On a TV show a few years ago Sir John Harvey-Jones, the colourful (and very funny) ex-chairman of a very large British corporation visited two schools: a public school, and Clifton, a private one, to discuss careers with the kids.

None of the Cliftonians, with all the blessings money could buy wanted down-to-earth jobs like manufacturing or engineering. They wanted to work in advertising and “the media”.

I can't think why: the competition is fearful. One of my sons' girlfriends fought with three hundred others for two trainee positions at a direct marketing agency I used to run.

## It's never been easy

If you're reading this I imagine you already work in marketing and want a better job, a promotion, or to start your career. Or perhaps you know someone in this position.

Well, it's always been hard to get jobs in this field. 49 years ago when I began it took me six months. Besides taking a course and reading everything I could get my hands on about advertising, it took a number of ingenious tricks to get an interview, let alone a job. Even when I did, I had to rise at 5.30am and travel 2 hours to earn the enormous wage of £11 a week.

Now, probably, the times have changed a bit. And perhaps, unlike me at that time, you don't have a wife and 2 kids under the age of 3 to feed. So maybe you are not as desperate as I then was.

So much the better. It means you can profit from my advice, avoid the mistakes I've made (or seen others make) and take the job you really want – not the first job you are offered.



## **Lesson # 1: Getting a job is a marketing challenge, where what you have to sell is yourself.**

Yes, to get the job you deserve you have to do exactly what you must do to sell anything else – and avoid the same common mistakes.

You have to create and carry out a marketing plan.

What are the 5 things that matter most in marketing?

1. Product and positioning
2. Research and Testing
3. Targeting
4. Incentives
5. Creative

And let me stress this: the order I have put those five factors in, is just as important as what they are, which leads me to the first mistake most people make (in marketing and in job search).



## **Mistake #1: getting the priorities wrong**

Just ask yourself: what is the first thing people do when they decide they need another job? It's usually one of these two: they either go on a job search website or they start writing their CV.

It is the same as saying that you have decided to sell shoes and the first thing you do is check the press advertising rates or, even worse, start creating your ad, rather than asking yourself why anyone should want to buy your shoes in the first place.

So, let's get our priorities right and start from the first, most important thing.

## **Product and Positioning when you are selling yourself**

As you know, the main question you must ask before selling anything is: why would anyone want to buy it?

Why should anybody choose this, rather than alternatives? What is your product going to do for them that another won't?

No business stands a real chance unless it answers these questions convincingly. And certainly no business can do brilliantly unless it answers these questions from the point of view of the buyer.

The same applies to selling yourself. In a way, this should be easier than selling anything else. You know yourself very well, for a start. But there is a "but" – and it is quite a big one. One of the most dangerous risks in business is getting too close to what you are selling.

It happens all the time. People are obsessed with their products. They think they are marvellous. They love them. They find it very hard to be objective.

Now, how do you feel about yourself? Unless you are rather strange, you quite like yourself. In fact unless you *do* like yourself, you are going to be a very unhappy individual.

So it's absolutely natural to get far too close to what you are selling when the product is you. And this is why so many – in my experience almost *all* – people looking for jobs commit mistake #2.



**Mistake #2: talking about features, rather than benefits;  
about *themselves*, rather than *the employer***

You know it's a mistake. And even if you are not quite convinced, just ask yourself why you bought the last thing you bought.

We don't buy things because somebody wants to sell them to us. We buy because we need them and because, after considering alternatives, we are persuaded they are the best our money can buy and they will do something rather special for us.

Nobody will hire you because you want a job. Or because you say you are great. They have a problem and will only hire you if they think you are the best, most cost-effective solution they can get.

The best, out of the many other "solutions" they will have seen, all saying they can do the job.



**Lesson #2: spend a lot of time thinking what makes you different. What you can do for your prospective employer that nobody else can. What benefits they would get if they hired you.**

## Research and Testing when you are selling yourself

This has happened to me in business so many times you won't believe it.

A client comes to see me. He has a great new product. So great, he is totally in love with it. So great, he thinks everybody should have one, just because it is so great.

Then I ask him "Have you done any research?"

It is at this point that he looks at me puzzled, as though I'd asked him an obscene or very stupid question.



**Mistake #3: assuming that just because you are great, anybody would want to give you a job – and they will**

So what can you do?

The answer is simple: read as much as you can about the market – trade publications, both online and offline are the best source.

If you want to work for an agency, for instance, it is more likely that one which has just won a large account would be hiring, rather the one that lost it.

Also, check how much your skills are worth in the market. Talk to people who are already doing the kind of job you wish to apply for, ask them how they got the job and what their background is.

Sites like [www.payscale.com](http://www.payscale.com) can be useful. You can see what the average salary is in a particular country, for a particular job.

But the most important thing you can do is what you are about to read.



**Lesson #3: spend a lot of time thinking what are the characteristics of the company you'd like to work for. Is it large or small? What is their culture? Write it all down. Then, make a list of your best prospects.**

In short, study your customer/your employer. Will you be a good match?

Only go for jobs you think you can do or learn very quickly at places where you want to work.

I know you may be desperate for any job anywhere – I have been. But don't write to *everyone* for *every* job. That's bad marketing – like junk mail, really. And anyhow, it's no use getting a job you can't do.

But that's not all.

It is very, VERY short-sighted to go for a job at a place you will hate. Go to the right firm for the right job. Go for jobs where you think the people and atmosphere will be pleasant. And try to find a place where either they are so good you will learn a lot or they are in so much trouble they need you desperately (and know it) and will pay a fortune.

Avoid places where they need you desperately but don't know it – even if they do offer a fortune.

### Targeting when you are selling yourself

As in any other kind of marketing, you have two routes to the market. The first is to get interested people to raise their hands, the second is to talk to the people who have expressed an interest.

In job search terms, this obviously means both replying to job ads and sending speculative applications.

Unless the market is totally dead, this means you are quite busy. And sometimes when people are busy, they tend to take shortcuts.

This is probably the reason why so many people make this mistake.





## Mistake #4: using the same material to apply for every job

Just remember: the positions you are applying for might be similar, but all the companies are different.

And, especially if they are a good company, they will be receiving hundreds of applications. Someone is reading them. How long do you think it will take him or her to get bored of the “Dear Sir or Madam” letters?

Let me tell you a story.

Last year, my Personal Assistant resigned – any normal human being would give up after working for temperamental, disorganised, frantic me for 15 years.

We needed somebody good and who would put up with us. We ran the following ad on a free website.

The screenshot shows a Microsoft Internet Explorer browser window. The title bar reads: "You'll love this unusual Pa Secretary job if you're an unusual person London Work wanted Office - Microsoft...". The address bar shows the URL: "http://www.gumtree.com/cgi-bin/add\_posting.pl". The page content is a job advertisement with the following text:

**You'll love this unusual Pa Secretary job if you're an unusual person**

**Date posted:** Thursday 5th June

**Location:** London

\*\*\*\*\*

You'll love this unusual PA/Secretary job – if you're an unusual person

\*\*\*\*\*

We don't care how old you are, your creed, colour or background if you think you'd enjoy handling this:

- Manage the diaries of two people who run around a lot
- Arrange a lot of travel (US, Italy, Ukraine, Romania, Slovenia, Czech Republic in the next 3 months)
- Deal with suppliers - IT, stationery, plus boring essentials like office supplies and biscuits in the meeting room
- Help with personal stuff which is almost as complex as a TV soap
- Find all sorts of things on the internet (please be good at that!) and in the office
- Organise speeches and put together PPT presentations
- Write, add, multiply, divide and subtract
- Be absurdly charming – to people ranging from publishers to Marketing Directors, on the phone and in person
- Inhabit a very fast-moving world with occasionally (i.e. frequently) excitable colleagues
- Work odd hours and do unusual things sometimes
- Comprehend what on earth our IT support people are talking about
- Ignore bad language – which comes with the business at no extra charge
- All this without getting paid a fortune – just a reasonable rate for the job plus a bonus. Disgusting, isn't it?

Our name is known internationally. We create marketing material for clients whose names you will immediately recognise. We do speeches and presentations, even write books. And all from a small office near Oxford Street with a multi-national staff of 7, plus a few out of town colleagues who pop in regularly. Nearly all of us are young.

We have fun doing it all – the lady you'll take over from has put up with it for 15 years without complaining more than 15 times a day. And we need someone like her who is in for the long haul, not looking for a stepping stone.

Please write a fairly detailed e-mail to [marta@draytonbird.com](mailto:marta@draytonbird.com) saying why you think you might be the right person - and when you are available. We really need to find somebody asap, to start in max 6 weeks (preferably much earlier) - and spend a few weeks with the lady you'll take over from. References absolutely essential.

And if you have any question – just give us a shout!

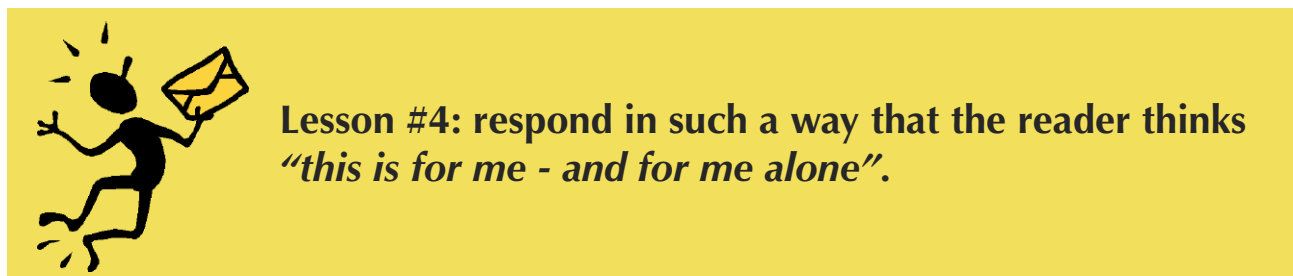
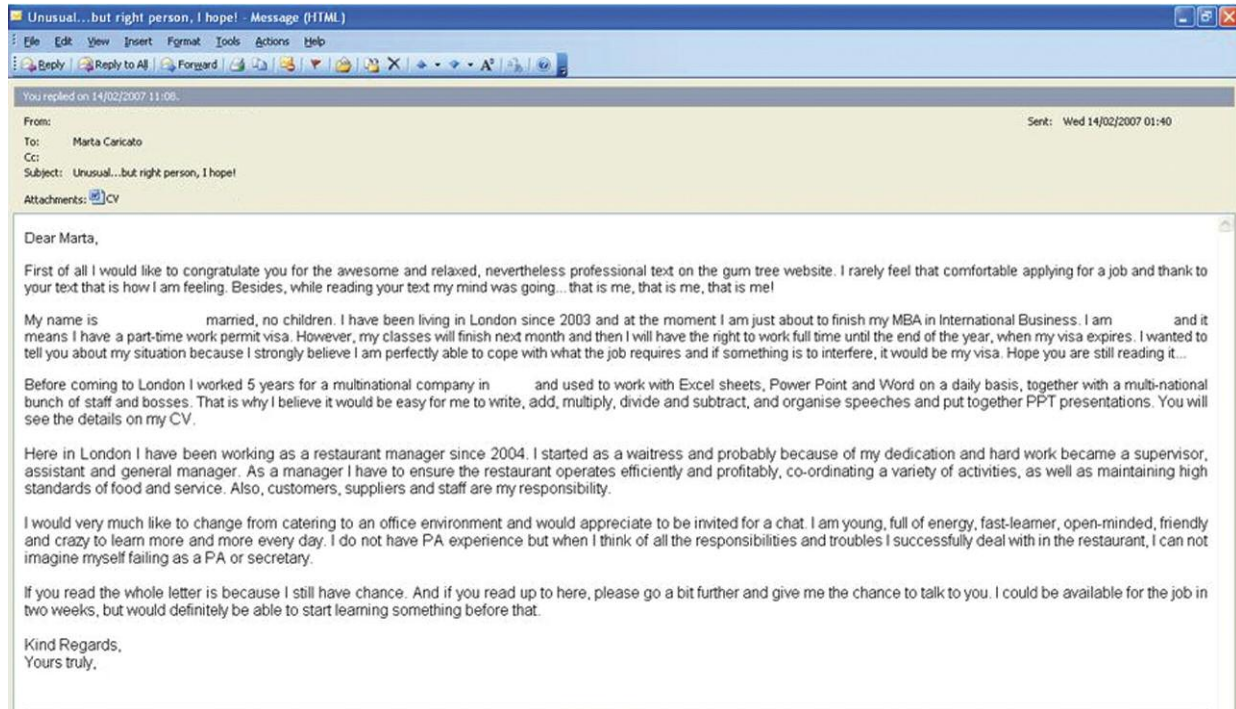
**Contact details**

Email: [Click here to reply to this ad](#)

Within the first 2 days we got 86 replies. The third day we stopped showing the ad.

We interviewed 10 people and we hired one of them (she is still here).

Just have a look at the email she sent in reply to the ad: it teaches a very important lesson.



You have probably noticed this is stolen by Peter Drucker's definition of the perfect advertisement "one of which the reader can say 'This is for me – and for me alone'."

It is not a coincidence. The perfect advertisement is one that stands out from the rest, gets the reader's attention, stimulates interest and gets an action. And, above all, makes you think the product matches you and your particular needs.

Wouldn't you say that this is exactly what your reply to a job ad should do?

So, don't write to 'human resources' or an anonymous 'managing director' or 'personnel officer'. Find out



the name, and write to them personally. It shows you have initiative.

If you can't find out who the right person is, write to someone senior – also by name. Then even if they don't do the interviewing or hiring, they may send your letter to whoever does, with an endorsement: 'she sounds interesting – what about the so and so job?' The junior person will never ignore this.

The boss may know more about what's available than the personnel people, and might see possibilities for you they might not. This doesn't mean, though, that you should write to the chairman of a vast organisation for a beginner's job.

A little bit more about that in the next section about creative.

## Incentives when you are selling yourself

Make an offer. It could make all the difference when people are not sure.

One young man offered to work for me free, just to learn the business. We weren't looking for anyone – but what could we lose? We took him on and paid him a pittance – we were too embarrassed to pay nothing – then a little more.

He has just sold his business for several million pounds.

I once told a prospective employer to take me on for a month – then fire me if I was no good. I wanted more than he wanted to pay, but he found that offer just too attractive. That offer I made transformed my advertising career because it was my first job as a creative director.



**Lesson #5: Make it very difficult for them to think of a reason why they should not hire you.**

## Creative to sell yourself

Believe it or not, despite my temper and despite the fact I've only advertised vacancies once in the last 15 years, I receive an almost constant stream of letters from people who want to work with me.

And you know what I find most irritating?



## **Mistake #5: Get the basic details wrong**

Some hopefuls don't even get my name right. Quite a few address me as "Dear Sir/Madam" despite the small clue my name and my picture on the website give.

If you get the details right at least I don't throw your message in the bin straight away.

But in order for me to read – and keep reading – you have to do more.

First, you have to do what a surprising number of people don't do.



## **Lesson #6: Never send your CV without a letter.**

The relationship between letter and CV is very like the relationship between brochure and letter in direct mail: usually the letter is the more important element.

The letter is your opportunity to talk to me. Don't miss it.

And as you are in marketing, you will know that not all letters are the same. Not all letters get read. Not all get an action.

The most famous job application letter ever written was from Leonardo Da Vinci to the Duke of Milan. You may think Leonardo was a pretty good painter and sculptor, but those skills were not what he focused on in his letter. He concentrated on two things he knew the Duke was more interested in: grandiose display and war.

So Leonardo described himself as an expert in designing bridges and palaces, good at siege engineering, well versed in manufacturing cannon, ships and armoured vehicles, and a master at hydraulics. As an afterthought, he mentioned he could sculpt and paint.

In short, he looked at it from the customer's point of view, not his own. He started by asking himself what the Duke wanted, then promised he could deliver it.

Almost all the job applications I receive are about what *they* want rather than what *I want to know*. This is simple. What can you do for me? And if it's something no-one else can, so much the better.

I've made this point earlier, but I think I should repeat it, since even experienced people seem quite unaware of this.



## **Lesson #7: Don't write what you want to say – write what people are interested in reading**

I can't tell how you, with your particular skills, should write your letter. But let's look at what you should consider.

First, start by talking about the reader.

In my case gross flattery about my books, how they changed your life, my articles, and how perceptive they are, go down well. I believe almost anything they tell me – though unfortunately you have to read some of the stuff I just mentioned in case I ask questions.

If you also show that you've taken the trouble to learn about my business, who our clients are, and what we do for them and refer to this knowledge, you will automatically attract my interest and impress me with your diligence.

### **The elements of one successful letter**

I never kept this letter. But here are the main ingredients and structure. It was a letter to get a job with perhaps the most famous advertising man in the world at that time: David Ogilvy.

I wrote to Mr Ogilvy himself. I got his attention by saying 'You have never heard of me, but I have a quality I know you prize. I know how to make people buy.' And I named some of my previous clients, pointing out that they all relied on measurable results.

I thought this would interest him and make him want to know more. It is very hard to get good writers, and every intelligent senior advertising executive is keen to find them. Mr Ogilvy, being one of the best in the world, would surely be no exception.

But would he believe me? To ensure that, I did two things. I sent him five pieces of my best work – five because I had seen an advertisement for creative people he had run years before. In it he specifically asked respondents to send in five pieces of work.

I told the exact context and the results of each advertisement to heighten his interest. And to convince him I really was a good bet, I got two people who had worked for him in New York to write brief testimonials for me.

I ended by saying that I had read his book *Confessions of an Advertising Man* several times, and always wanted to work for him. These statements were both true, as well as being mildly flattering. And I included a resumé or C.V.

As a result, he wrote to me suggesting I meet his international president who was visiting London. So the letter did the trick. In fact, for personal reasons, I never went to New York, but years later by a happy coincidence I sold my business to his firm and got to know him quite well.

### **So, what did that letter do? 7 things you'd better not miss in your letter:**

1. I wrote to someone I really wanted to work for, for whom I thought I could do a good job
2. I conducted research and used the knowledge I had gained
3. I talked first about the interests of my prospect, not my own
4. I referred to my special skills, and related them to the needs of my prospect
5. I put an impartial proof that what I said was true. Hardly any letters do. Almost invariably when somebody writes to me for a job, I ask them for comments from previous employers, as well as samples of their work
6. I included a resumé that gave every reason why I should be hired
7. I made it clear that I was eager to work for Mr. Ogilvy and admired him and his agency to the point that I had read his book several times

What else should you do to get a reply? The answer is something most people don't do.



### **Mistake #6: End the letter without asking for a reply**

Don't just say something like "I look forward to hearing from you". Ask forcefully (though politely) for a reply.

If you do all these things, I promise you will have done more – a lot more – than about 95% of the people who write looking for jobs.



## \*\*\*\*\* BONUS #1 \*\*\*\*\*

Two letters I wrote for a friend of mine in the U. S. to help him get a job.

A friend wanted to close down his company in California and get a job. His application made every mistake in the book. The letter was brief, simply introducing his C.V. instead of selling him.

### I drafted this for him

*"John has a rare talent.  
In a world of promises,  
he actually gets things done."*

**Drayton Bird,**  
*Former international Head, OgilvyOne*

Dear Mr. XXXXXX:

Your posting on Craigslist tells me ((company)) needs to get a lot done.

By now, you'll have had plenty of replies from people who think they fit the bill. Here's why I could be a good bet for you — and at the very least worth an interview. There are 4 good reasons. I've...

1. ...worked for some of the world's most demanding clients (AMEX, VISA) in some of the world's trickiest markets, often with some pretty difficult people;
2. ... worked for what many consider the world's best agency networks, (OgilvyOne and J. Walter Thompson Direct);
3. ... been entrepreneurial enough to have set up and successfully run my own agency in two markets. In other words, I'm a hands-on self-starter;
4. ... seen that most Internet and email content/creative is filled with incredibly boring copy and confusing layouts. It's a shame, because both are pure direct marketing plays. I know the best of both.

I *do* make a difference. But please don't take my word for it, here's what a former client has to say...

*"Testimonial"*

**John Doe,**  
*Director of Marketing XYZ firm*

I know this business well, from media planning and production to competent copy in all media, on-line or off (when you run your own shop, you have to be adaptable.) I know how to persuade, in print or in person, clients, suppliers or colleagues.

I don't ever get hysterical, agonize or panic. And I have a sense of humor.

Do those qualities sound good to you? If so, email [john.doe@ISP.com](mailto:john.doe@ISP.com) saying "yes" now. Why not make it the very next thing you do? Good people are hard to find.



## Then I did him a follow-up letter

Yes: it's me again...

I wrote you ((date)) to apply for the ((job)).

So why write to you again?

Because McGraw-Hill research years ago discovered it takes on average 6 contacts to make a sale, and I am selling myself. I am REALLY interested in this job and would love to hear back from you.

Just in case you thought I made up the testimonial I sent you, here's another one from one of the world's most demanding clients — American Express.

**"John Doe is one of the best direct marketing people I have ever met and worked with. As Director of Marketing at American Express, John and my team worked together on hundreds of local, regional and national marketing, advertising and online efforts.**

**"Where others are tempted to sacrifice the American Express name to get results, he has an uncanny ability to balance the importance of the brand while getting the results we want."**

*Jane Doe  
Director of Marketing  
American Express*

So if you haven't filled the vacancy – or just in case whoever you chose doesn't work out I've attached my resume again.

By the way, I don't want to pester you. So if you think I am not right for you, just email me at [john.doe@ISP.com](mailto:john.doe@ISP.com) saying "No". I will vanish from your life like a shadow in the night. Promise.

My friend got 5 job offers within 48 hours – when he'd been trying for weeks without success.



## \*\*\*\*\* BONUS #2 \*\*\*\*\*

Before and After:

How you can take a very ordinary letter and transform it into a very good one.

### Original letter:

**Dear,**

I wish to be considered for strategic marketing positions within your organisation.

**To be utterly honest, I know Marketing, although I may not be perfect, I can rise to the greater challenges and deliver results.**

One key skill I can bring to your company is I know how to make customers buy and deliver margin for you. Today's companies depend upon measurable results where the importance of implementing measurable activities is key to winning. I've developed an understanding and track record for delivering such profitable campaigns in major blue-chip companies.

Currently I am the Marketing Controller for XYZ Breweries, responsible for developing and driving brand and trading strategy the largest pub contracts in the UK market.

With my background experience of brands and trade marketing working alongside the biggest customers, I've achieved consistent success surpassing annual volume, share and margin objectives leading to successive internal promotions.

However, if this letter interests you, then please read the attached, this is what people think of me.

Looking at your activities, you are a fine FMCG company, I suspect I could do a fine job for you, if not then I thank you for your time.

I feel that it would be mutually beneficial for one of your executives to meet for 30 minutes to discuss how I can add value to your business.

**Yours Sincerely,**

Attached : Curriculum Vitae, testimonies

## My re-draft:

**Dear,**

Do you need someone who really understands marketing – strategy *and* tactics – and

- Knows how to make customers buy
- Gets measurable results and add margin
- Has proved it repeatedly with major firms

I am writing because I have been looking at your firm, and suspect I could do a fine job for you.

I am currently Marketing Controller at XYZ Breweries. My job is to develop and drive brand and trading strategy for the largest pub contracts in the UK. I deal with major customers.

I've consistently surpassed annual volume, share and margin targets and been repeatedly promoted. Previously I got similar results at Cadbury Schweppes, Gerber, Vent-Axia and Sodastream.

I have worked successfully in most marketing disciplines, above and below the line. I communicate well with colleagues and customers – and I enjoy a challenge. To put it in a nutshell, I really know marketing, am highly practical, and I get on with people. I don't make a big deal of it, but I always rise to challenges and deliver results.

If you read the attached, you can judge for yourself, but I believe it would be worth you investing 30 minutes of your time – or that of whoever you delegate – discussing how I can help your business. I promise it won't be a waste of your time.

**Yours Sincerely,**

Attached : Curriculum Vitae, testimonials

Can you see the difference? The second letter does a far more complete selling job, which makes all the difference.

## How to nail the interview

There are many books on this subject – and even more articles on the internet.

But I still think it is useful to give you some pointers.

### Before the interview checklist

- ✓ Find out as much as possible about the firm and the person who is interviewing you
- ✓ Think of what their priorities might be and think of examples when you have successfully dealt with similar problems
- ✓ Find online what the most common questions are and prepare an answer
- ✓ Picture the interview, play it in your mind – and concentrate on what you want your interviewer to think about you after you leave
- ✓ Don't leave practical details to the last minute: calculate how long it is going to take and how you are getting there, decide what you are going to wear, what you are bringing (examples of your work, testimonials – anything that might help)

### During the interview checklist

- ✓ Get there on time (stupid, right? Yet I've lost count of all the people that kept me waiting)
- ✓ Listen carefully before answering
- ✓ Be honest. Any lies you tell will be found out sooner or later
- ✓ Ask questions yourself – about the company and about the job
- ✓ Show that you have done your research, but without overdoing it. The line between flattering somebody and being excessive is a thin one

### After the interview checklist

- ✓ Follow up – it could be anything, from a note to say thanks for the time, to an email to attach a copy of your references
- ✓ Even if the interview wasn't successful, keep in touch without pestering. If you have made a good impression, they might have a job for you in the future. But whatever you do, never enter in arguments. It's a small world

## The most important piece of advice

During my career I encountered three types of people.

Those who are in marketing – but could be doing anything else, because all they want is something that pays the bills and, let's face it, marketing is more glamorous and better paid than McDonald's.

If you were one of them, you shouldn't be reading this. To succeed in marketing, you should want to be in marketing.

Those whose main talent is at getting good jobs. I see them all the time in the trade magazines. They sail from one highly-paid job to the next. They are true political animals. As soon as they are found out, or they get a better offer, they move to the next job.

They make lots of money – in some cases more than I could ever hope to make.

But they are not the ones I consider the true achievers. The achievers are the people who leave a mark. Those who love their job. Those who inspire the people who work for them, are admired by their superiors and charm their competitors.

I have been lucky enough to come across a few of these people during my career.

They are all different: different motivation, background, education, culture.

But they all have two things in common:

1. A burning desire to succeed and always improve (often paired by a fear of failure)
2. They know more and never stop learning

I can't give you the desire to succeed – it must be in you (although I suppose that if you are reading this, you are probably ambitious).

But I can help you know and learn more. This is precisely why my partners and I have created [EADIM](#). If you haven't already done so, have a look at the website.

Even if it doesn't interest you, please tell me what you think.

By the way, if you look at the teachers, you will see some of the people I described as "true achievers". They all thought EADIM was a good idea – and wanted to participate.

Enough from me.

I hope you've found this helpful. Email me at [db@draytonbird.com](mailto:db@draytonbird.com) if you have any questions.

**If I don't hear from you, good luck!**



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**EADIM**  
THE EUROPEAN ACADEMY OF  
DIRECT & INTERACTIVE MARKETING

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