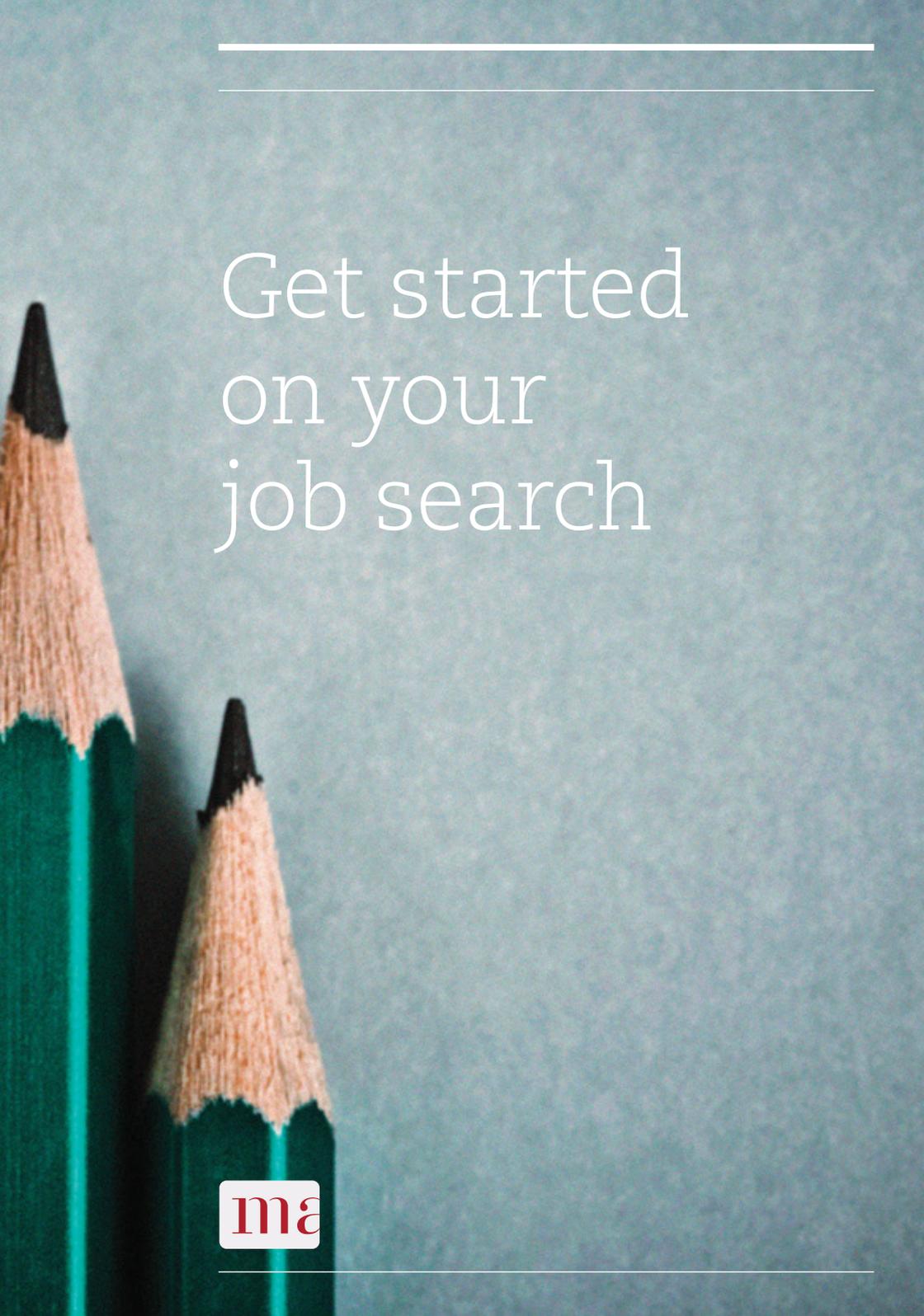

Get started
on your
job search



ma

Content

The content of this pamphlet is also available online at **ma-kasse.dk**.

Furthermore, we highly recommend the wide range of tools and resources for job seekers found at **candportalen.dk**.

04 FROM GRADUATION TO JOB

07 PERSONAL COMPETENCE ASSESSMENT

10 THE GOOD CV

13 THE FOCUSED APPLICATION

17 THE JOB INTERVIEW

20 BEING TESTED

23 NETWORK YOUR WAY TO THE JOB

From graduation to job

For most people the transition from being a student to the first good job is a process. The often insular and abstract perspective of the undergraduate days has to be transformed into a more extrovert, tangible and operational perspective: What is it I am able and willing to do, and what direction should I choose?

Look for information

One of the first steps to getting the job is to get out into the real world and actively search for information about the field you would like to be a part of. Meet up with former classmates who are employed, talk to people in the business, use your network, join company visits, and participate in the workshops and theme events that MA offers about the labour market. Get as much input as possible from as many sources as possible.

Be creative and open to alternative opportunities

When searching for a job you need the same type of energy you felt when you had your diploma in hand after completing a long and demanding education. Be open to alternative possibilities and think creatively in your job search. Say you have studied English: you probably know something about classic

authors and history. But you also have a general knowledge of communication. Maybe a sales or marketing job would be a possibility for you? When you read in the paper that a company is about to expand or move parts of its production, find out what new tasks or competencies this might require. Are your qualifications needed in this process? If you have been in contact with or worked for (maybe voluntarily) a smaller organisation, check out if this organisation has any needs that you may be able to help with, such as fundraising, marketing or contacting sponsors.

Structure your job search

Make a schedule for your job seeking activities. Set yourself tangible, personal goals and make deadlines for your job search. Plan your working week and decide to commit to some fixed working routines.

Establish a job-seeking network

Find some like-minded people to meet and discuss with, for example in a network. It could be old friends from the university, people you have met at an event, already established networks in MA and other places. Besides the obvious advantages of participating in a job-seeking network (mutual

feedback on applications, sharing of knowledge, advice and support), the networks may also provide you with valuable, personal contacts you can use when seeking employment and when you are in your first job and in need of competent feedback.

outdoor oriented kindergarten, or by arranging guided tours of the countryside. Finally, the stepping-stone job could be outside your professional field but exist in a certain business or company you are interested in. Once you have gotten in on the act in a company and have shown

Are you aware of your competencies? Have you assessed them?

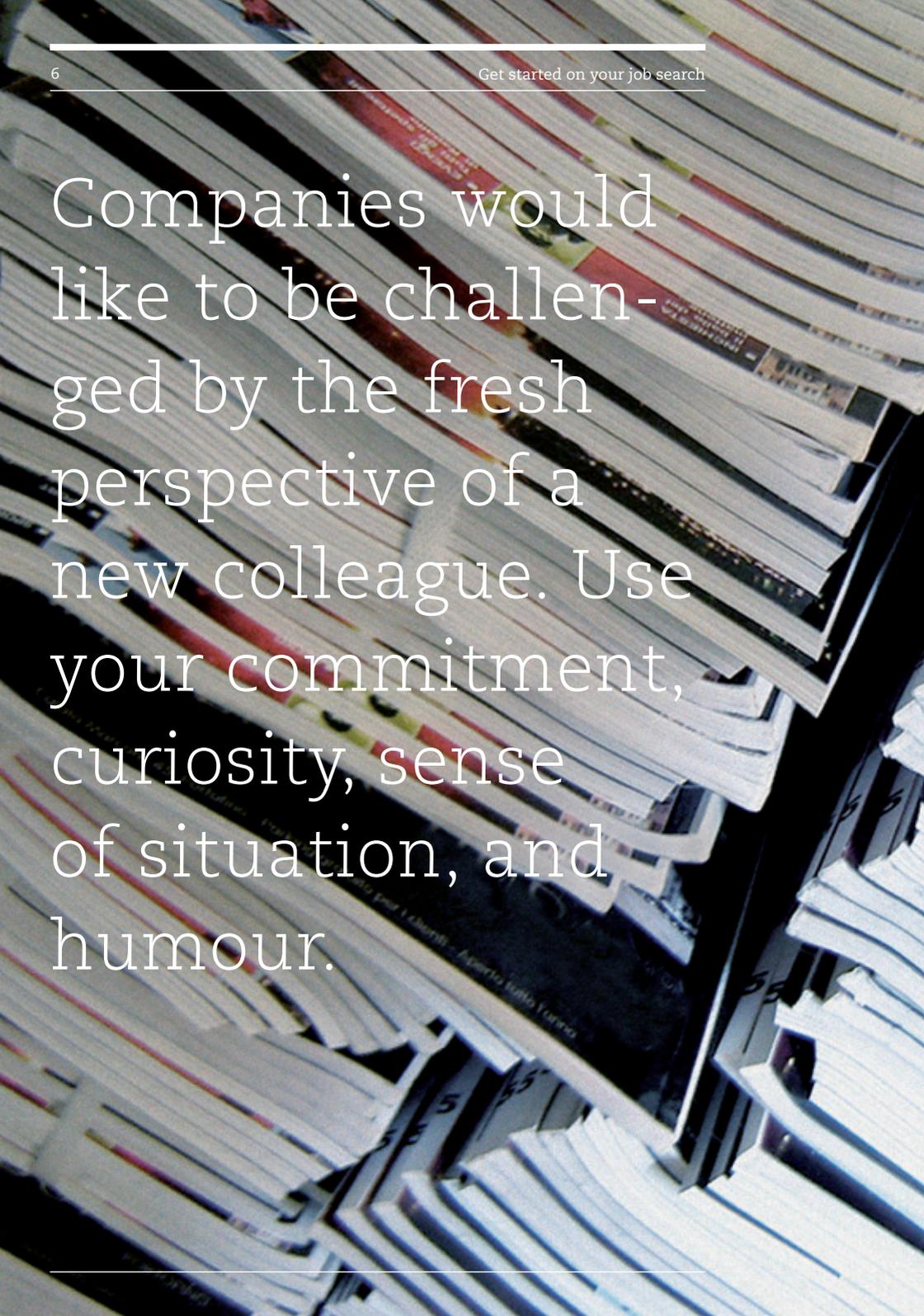
Stepping-stone jobs

Consider the possibilities of a stepping-stone job. That is, a job which is not ultimately your dream job but may lead you to such a job in the long run. A stepping-stone job may be situated in a remote area where the competition for work is less fierce compared to the university cities. It could also be a job that holds little professional interest for you but provides you with the opportunity to gain valuable experience. Say you would like to become a communication consultant. You could consider an administrative position with communication tasks. If you would like to be a nature guide you could gain pedagogical experience as a substitute teacher, nursery assistant in an

your worth, you will have significantly improved your odds when your dream job (or a job closer to the dream than your current position) is advertised. Most often the company is aware of your academic degree and career dreams and realise that if they do not offer you new opportunities they will risk losing you and all your talents to another employer. In short: Seize the opportunities where they – and you – are.

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Would you like to hear how other people got their first job?



Companies would like to be challenged by the fresh perspective of a new colleague. Use your commitment, curiosity, sense of situation, and humour.

Personal competence assessment

Regardless of where you are in your career, it is highly recommended that you start your job search with an assessment phase where you consider questions like: What am I able to do? What can I offer an employer? What competencies do I have and how do I best utilise them?

These questions are relevant for both new graduates who are just entering the labour market and for experienced candidates who have already been a part of the labour market for longer or shorter time periods.

When you start to assess your competencies it is essential that you view your qualifications from a holistic perspective, instead of keeping a narrow focus on your education and work experience. We develop useful competencies in almost all aspects of our lives, which is why the art of competence assessment lies in your ability to put words to your abilities that employers understand and want. A simple way of assessing your competencies is to brainstorm and classify your competencies in three categories:

1. Your personal competencies - Are you creative, good at networking, meticulous, stable, enthusiastic, thorough, problem-solving, reflective, methodical, anarchistic...??

2. Your professional competencies - These are usually the easiest to put into words. Remember, however, to be specific and include details.

If you have just graduated and find it difficult to identify your professional competencies it can be useful to think your education through. What courses did you participate in? Which professional methods did you learn? Did you apply different study techniques (group work, special exam forms, field work etc.)? Write it all on a list to sort and structure subsequently.

If you have work experience, you can apply the same method. For every position you have held, ask yourself several questions:

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Have a before-and-after look at an application.

/ What sort of tasks did you undertake in each job?

/ What kind of problems did you solve?

/ Which working methods and techniques did you apply?

/ Which professional fields did you gain knowledge of?

/ What results have you contributed to?

3. Your general competencies- Among these could be:

/ **Language skills. What languages do you know? What is the extent of your skills: do you read, write, speak and understand the language and on what level?**

/ **IT. Which programs do you know and on what level?**

These need not be the only general competencies you can hold. A way of putting your general competencies into words could be to produce a list of the leisure activities you engage in. This could be sports, hobbies, memberships of interest groups, politics, board services etc. etc. Take a closer look at what you are really doing when engaged in these activities. It is often something that will provide you with a variety of general competencies: planning, management, financial skills, presentation techniques...

It is not important whether you place the skill in the "correct" category. The division of skills in three categories is solely for the purpose of helping you remember all types of competencies.

Unique selling points

After creating a gross list of all of your competencies, it is worth spending a few minutes viewing it from an employer's perspective. What is it that makes you special and what skills do you bring to the table? What abilities, insight and experiences do you have that differentiate you from the crowd?

You may have a rare knack for writing or have a large network within a certain professional field. Maybe you have a flair for political insight, or possess great people-skills. You could also hold a vast body of specialist knowledge, be extremely analytical, have state-of-the-art knowledge about scientific research (this may be relevant when you are a new graduate) – or anything else that your employer will find useful. Your unique selling points do not have to be something you are aware of in everyday life. They are second nature to you and you may not even consider them "something special". Nevertheless, they could just be the thing to get you the job – hence, spend some time identifying them.

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Have a before and after look at an application.

Employers are more interested in work experience, social skills and personal interests than the title or grade of your master thesis.

The good CV

Your CV is supposed to provide a quick overview of your experiences and competencies gained from both work and study but also give a glimpse of your personality. It should be focused and clear. Today, most CVs also list what competencies you have gained from the different activities. The CV is both a résumé of the past and an illustration of your capabilities at present.

Many employers look at the CV before they even read the application. Therefore, it is important that your CV is self-sufficient and inspires the employer to read the application as well.

For every job application, you will need to create a specially tailored CV. In the tailored CV you can enhance the most relevant experiences for the position in question. When writing your CV you need to understand the organisation and its demands in order to emphasise both professional experiences and personal qualities that could be relevant to a potential employer. Furthermore, your CV must be of a form and tone that speaks to the organisational culture.

Competencies in the CV

You can write about your competencies in the CV in several different ways:

1. In a chronological CV, you divide your competences into categories as described above. The activities in each category are then listed in reverse chronology, meaning the most recent are listed first. In the work experience section, each job is described in terms of tasks and responsibilities. If it is in any way possible to put your results into words it will indicate your awareness of reaching goals and getting results.

A chronological CV can begin with a competence profile or a résumé.

The competence profile can take many forms, for example as three competencies relevant to the job in question, listed as bullet points at the beginning of your CV. These could be “analysis”, “project management” and “communication”. Each topic can then be elaborated in terms of how your particular strengths in this area are manifested. Alternatively, you can compose a short text explaining the common thread in your CV. The advantage of starting your CV off with a competence profile or résumé is that you focus the reader's attention to your competencies when reading the rest of the CV.

The drawback of this method could be that the résumé or description of your competencies may appear as unsubstantiated claims which fail to convince the reader if they do not enjoy an obvious link to specific experiences.

2. Instead of a competence profile or job description, you can also choose to begin your CV with a list containing descriptions of your previous tasks and responsibilities, along with several competencies that you elaborate on.

This way your CV will consist of a brief chronological overview and a page with your tasks and competencies listed according to headings in the same style as mentioned earlier; “analysis”, “project management” and “communication”.

This is a CV classified in terms of competencies. The advantage of this style is that the employer has a complete summary of your skills. On the other hand, the list may seem like an endless listing of your presumed abilities with no link to particular activities.

3. You can divide all activities in your CV into a number of headings. Under each competence-headline you can list the activities that have contributed to you gaining this competency. The advantage of this style is that you have great control of how you portray yourself.

However, the downside of this style may be that the alternative design of the CV makes it less structured for the employer, resulting in more confusion than clarity.

An extra piece of advice to avoid identity theft: Do not state the last four digits of your cpr-number in the CV – your CV is perfectly capable of accomplishing its purpose without this information. This is especially important if you are uploading the document online or sending a large number of applications.

Your CV should contain the following information:

- / **Personal information**
- / **Competencies**
- / **Practical experience**
- / **Continuing education**
- / **Language skills**
- / **IT skills**
- / **Organisational experience or work of the society**
- / **References**
- / **Leisure activities.**

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Get inspiration from how other people design their CV.

To differentiate yourself from other applicants, you must make it clear that you have understood the job, its content and the organisation's culture.

The focused application

The most important purpose of your application is to earn an invitation for an interview. Therefore, you should compose an application that catches the attention of the reader, makes it clear that you have understood the organisation and its needs, shows how you in particular can satisfy these needs, and makes the employer want to know more about you. Remember: The employer first of all reads the application with a view to his/her own requirements. Tasks need to be solved. Which applicant seems to be the best to do this?

Do you have enough information about the organisation you are applying to? You may have several reasons for wanting a particular job: It suits your need for commitment, puts your career on the fast track and provides a challenge. Or maybe you just need a job? Such motivations may be interesting but they are secondary to the employer. These personal motivations are not relevant until the employer consider you a serious candidate and start to think of how to attract and retain you.

Hence, base your motivations in your application on how you can fulfil the needs of the employer – not how the job can fulfil yours.

Research

In order to tailor an application to the reader, you should collect as much information as possible about the company. The more you know about the job, tasks and organisation, the easier it will be to imagine yourself in the position and describe how you will solve specific tasks. To differentiate yourself from other applicants, you must make it clear that you have understood the job, its content and the organisation's culture.

Begin with scrutinising the job advertisement and write down what requirements the job poses. The requirements in the advertisement are usually graded and described with expression like "knowledge of", "extensive knowledge of" and "several years of experience with". The more the company stresses experience, the more crucial it is that

you relate your previous experience to the tasks in question.

Even if you do not fulfil every single requirement in the advertisement, you can still apply for the job. The requirements should be considered as a wish list and the applicant that gets the job is not always the one that satisfies most of them.

From your scrutiny of the job advertisement you will know what you do not know, and probably have a feeling of what you need to know. Look for information about specific tasks in the job, the department or organisation as a whole, management style, organisational culture, values, employment practices, closest collaborators/competitors, or educational background of your closest colleagues.

The actual application

Use the space in the headline. Instead of writing "Concerning the position as information officer" you could write "Master in English with writing experience seeking the job as information officer" or "Experienced biologist with a wish to improve waste management".

Be aware of what your most valuable competencies are in relation to the job in question and put this first in your application. Your introduction should entice the employer to read the rest of the application.

You should portray how you are going to be as an employee and colleague in this particular job – not account for your past. Experience from your education and previous positions have to be related to the requirements in the

Do you have enough information about the organisation you are applying to?

advertisement. Only write about previous experience if you think it will help create an image of how you would accomplish tasks in your new job.

A way of relating yourself to the tasks and problems in the job advertisement is to suggest a forward-looking manner of solving problems. It will leave a better impression if you describe concrete ideas for problem-solving, rather than just describe yourself as "innovative" or "inventive".

Use your knowledge of the organisation actively. Show them that you know what problems they face and which results they want to achieve. If you can demonstrate your knowledge of them, they will feel recognised and get the impression that you know who you are addressing.

Check list:

- / **Name, address, telephone number and e-mail should be visible for the employer on both CV and application, in order for them to reach you easily.**
- / **Be thorough in your proof-reading – ask a second person to proof-read as well.**
- / **Strive to keep the application to only one page.**

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Are you networking with other people in your profession?

Did you research the values and culture of the organisation?



The job interview

You have been invited for an interview because your future employer has found your professional competencies interesting and wishes to test them in a personal dialogue.

Preparation for the interview

Being well prepared when you attend a job interview can be crucial to whether you are offered the job or not. You will appear motivated and well-organised to the employer if he/she feels that you have thoroughly acquainted yourself with the job and organisation.

Besides, being well prepared can also help you manage nervousness, as you know what the organisation is about, what tasks will be discussed, what type of customers the organisation has and what the job in itself involves. Your research on the organisation is now in your favour.

You can prepare by asking yourself the following questions:

- / Do you have a clear feeling of what the job is about?
- / Do you know how the different tasks are weighted and prioritised?
- / Do you know what values the organisation stands for?

Considering these questions can also help you phrase relevant questions for use in the interview.

You can prepare possible answers to some of the typical interview questions with advantage. Check out the box with the most common questions on the next page.

Before the interview you need to thoroughly consider which of your abilities and competencies are crucial to the position and how you bring them into play. Your preparation should address both your professional and personal skills. The employer will most likely ask about both, however it is very common that the interviewee is either reluctant to talk about themselves or or think his/her professional skills are a given and has difficulties expressing them.

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Try a job interview with Christian Stadil or Gitte Seeberg.

The actual interview

Following a presentation of the organisation, and possibly an elaboration of the job content, you will often be asked to present yourself. Your presentation offers insight into what you consider relevant about yourself in relation to the job and how you prioritise your competencies in this context.

You will be asked a variety of questions throughout the interview and when you answer you should attempt to give specific examples and relate your answers to the organisation in question. Be creative about how to engage with the tasks and how your situation will be.

It is also very common to be given a case that you are supposed to discuss solutions to. Ponder the case and ask clarifying questions - it will give an impression of your abilities in terms of perspective and contexts.

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Do you know the most important questions in the job interview?

Keep these things in mind during the entire interview:

-
- / **Be engaged. Be yourself**
 - / **Maintain eye contact with everybody in the room – also the more silent participants**
 - / **Show your motivation and interest in the job**
 - / **Be honest but professional – choose the most positive representation of you and your competencies**
 - / **Bring CV, application and any relevant exam papers**
 - / **Express your excitement about hearing back from the employer if you are still interested in the job**
-

Common question in the job interview:

-
- / **What are you like to work with?**
 - / **Which part do you most often play within groups?**
 - / **Why should we choose you?**
 - / **What are your expectations with regard to your manager?**
 - / **Which competencies would you like to develop?**
 - / **What did you like best about your previous job?**
 - / **How do you manage pressure/stress?**
 - / **What do you do in your spare time?**
 - / **Where do you see yourself in three years?**
-

It is ok to be nervous at the job interview. Your body language can convey other, positive messages.

Being tested

Testing is increasingly common for positions in all levels of an organisation. However, a test can never stand alone. It is a supplement to your application and the job interview and you have a right to a thorough feedback where the test results are clarified, and you get the chance to question their interpretation and add your own comments. In order to demystify the use of tests, it can be a good idea to try out one or more of the tests that are available online or any free offers.

Three types of tests

There are basically three types of tests:

- / Intelligence or IQ- tests
- / Proficiency tests
- / Personality tests

Proficiency and personality tests are the most common types in relation to recruitment.

In a proficiency test, your skills regarding different professional tasks are measured. An example could be

your written communication skills and your ability to translate from a foreign language. This could be done by confronting you with a specific case or posing a problem during the interview. For instance, in relation to a position in communications, you could be asked to produce a press release concerning a new (fictive) product. In regards to an administrative position your ability to compose an informative and friendly answer to a citizens' request may be tested.

The purpose of a personality test is to provide knowledge about your behaviour, cooperative skills, strong and weak points, how you react under pressure etc. The personality tests can be roughly divided into two categories: The dialogue tests (such as the Reflector test, the Thomas test and the OPQ32 test) and type indicator tests (such as the Belbin, Enneagram, MBTI and JTI tests). Furthermore, psychological tests also exist but the two above-mentioned types are the most common in interviews. You can do your own type indicator test at www.jobindex.dk/cgi/typeindikator.cgi.

Ethical considerations

If you are asked to complete a test, it is common practice to let you know what type of test is used, how the results will be used in the recruitment process, and how you will receive feedback. Of course, you always have the right to decline the test - however, it will most likely also mean that you are not offered the job. You can find more information about the ethical considerations and guidelines on www.personvurdering.dk.

How can you benefit from a test?

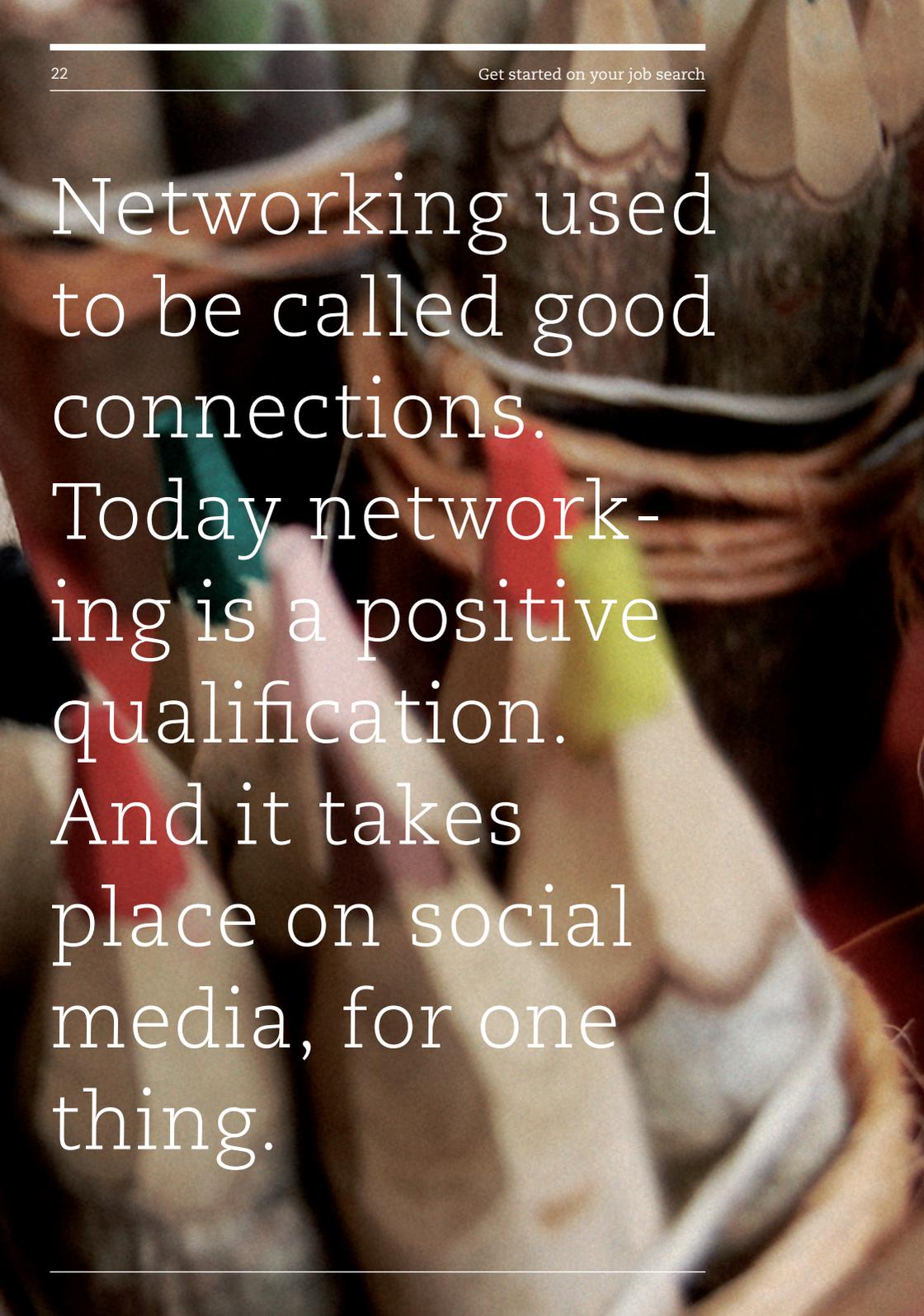
If the test is conducted in relation to a job interview, it is obviously because the organisation wishes to assess whether

you are suited to the job and company. Conversely, you also have the possibility to use the interview and test feedback to consider if the organisation is a place you would like to work. In addition to this, you can also view the test as an opportunity to get feedback about you as an individual: Competencies, preferred work style, strong and weak points etc. are things the test consultant can identify. This is valuable information you can use in your future career.

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Check out where others with the same education as you are employed.

Your type is not a static thing. It can change over time.



Networking used to be called good connections. Today networking is a positive qualification. And it takes place on social media, for one thing.

Network your way to the job

Every single year thousands of positions that have never been advertised are filled. That is why it is important to keep yourself updated in terms of hidden job opportunities. This is where your network comes in as a valuable tool in the job search. You can utilise your personal network, both to find positions that are not advertised, and research the content of specific jobs. Using your network in your job search not only makes the search more efficient but also more enjoyable, as you will communicate with others about your job options.

Here is an example: A former project manager and innovation consultant decided to expand her network. She described her qualifications and the problems she would be capable of solving in the most specific terms possible and briefly added her previous responsibilities. She wrote it on an A4 piece of paper and distributed it to all her friends and acquaintances in her network and asked them to e-mail it to their acquaintances. Within a month,

she had two part time jobs at hand that could be combined to a full time position.

This example goes to show that it pays to explain what type of tasks you are capable of handling, and that you can expand your network rather quickly if you put in a focused and deliberate effort.

Ask yourself if people in your network even know what you do and what skills you have. Consider how you can expand your network, and consider who in your current network could help you in the job search.

A good idea is to formulate questions and ask for favours that people in your network are able to help you with. Avoid asking: "Do you have a job for me?". Most people will have to answer negatively to that even if they really would like to help you. Instead, you can tell them that you are looking for a job and ask other questions like: Do they have any ideas about how to pro-

ceed? Do they have 15 minutes to tell you about what they do? Tell them you are interested. Maybe they have time to give you feedback on your CV?

Networking can also be used to facilitate your research for a particular job you have already decided to apply for, whether it is an advertised position or you are planning to send an unsolicited application. Ask around in your network if anyone has knowledge of people who work in the organisation.

The more you know about concrete tasks and responsibilities in the job, the easier it will be for you to imagine yourself in the position - you have understood it and are therefore able to describe how you would solve the problems.

The more accurately you can phrase your knowledge of the employer's requirements and your understanding of the problems that need solving, the more interesting you will become to the employer.

And the better you can convey that you have thoroughly acquainted yourself with the organisation and culture, the more you stand out from the rest of the applicants.

Use the social media in your job search

You can use social media strategically in your job search. You can make yourself visible in the right places and conversely gain knowledge about what is going on in certain fields and industries.

The most interesting and relevant social media, with regard to job seeking, is LinkedIn which is the world's largest professional network. Companies' use of LinkedIn for recruiting new employees is increasing, but you should explore the sites and services on offer and decide which are most useful to you and your situation.

You can start by creating an account on LinkedIn. The more you display your competencies, the easier it is for companies to discover you. Be inspired

Try to focus on those of your professional and personal abilities on which you would like to be appraised

2/3 of job seekers get jobs via their network. Most of them through direct connections and their subsequent connections where the personal relation is less risky.

by similar profiles. Join groups and see which groups other users are members of - for example "Network where job seekers and employers meet".

You should illustrate the professional and personal abilities that you would like to be appraised and serve as the basis for new employment. Think of your profile as an unsolicited application or CV. If you have applied for a job and are invited for an interview, many employers will google your name. For instance, if you appear on LinkedIn, they will get a more in-depth impression of who you are.

Send invitations via LinkedIn to former study friends, colleagues and business partners/collaborators to be "connected" with you. This will give you the opportunity to nurture and utilise your network in a professional setting.

During your job search you will get in contact with potential employers, for example when you have been to a job interview. If you do not get the job,

Remember

Make a schedule for your job seeking activities. Set yourself tangible, personal goals and make deadlines for your job search.

then use the opportunity to send an invitation on LinkedIn instead, where you can voice your appreciation of a constructive process and hopes of being considered for a future job opening. Your profile will be more visible to the employers because of the relation on LinkedIn, than if your application/CV only appears in the organisation's job bank.

If you participate in conferences, fairs or community work, then use the opportunity to expand your network by following up on new acquaintances with an invitation on LinkedIn.



What is it that makes you special and what skills do you bring to the table? What abilities, insight and experiences do you have that make you stand out from the crowd?

Use us

Employees in MA have a very good knowledge of rules and conditions in the unemployment insurance field. We also have a vast knowledge of the labour market for university graduates, whether you are a bachelor, master or Ph.D. If you have any questions, you are always welcome to give us a call or drop by either our head-quarters in Copenhagen or regional offices in Odense, Aarhus or Aalborg.

Magistrenes

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The logo consists of the lowercase letters 'ma' in a red, serif font, enclosed within a white rounded square.

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