



Candidate Tips and Tricks

Energize your IT Security career

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Our business is based on building long-term relationships with people like you.

That's why we want you to have the very best possible chance of finding the right opportunity. This book of Tips & Tricks is written by the InfoSec People Team to help you secure your next career move in the security marketplace.

An (ISC)² 2013 Global Information Workforce Study revealed a continued global shortage of certified and experienced Information Security professionals, with this trend set to increase over the coming years.

Increasingly complex Cyber threats and a year-on-year rise in security incidents continue to put pressure on the industry. This, coupled with companies adopting innovative IT strategies (Cloud computing, distributed storage, Bring Your Own Device (BYOD), mobile working, etc.), has resulted in further demand for specialist security knowledge and expertise.

As such, it is an increasingly competitive climate for locating and hiring talented Information Security professionals, with consultancies and end-user businesses vying for the best personnel. All of which is good news if you work in IT Security!

But when you make the decision to move jobs, how can you best secure that dream career or new contract engagement? We hope you find these Tips and Tricks useful.

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The first thing you need to do is research what you really want to do, assess your skills and get moving.

Contract vs Permanent

If you cringe at the possibility of continually changing jobs or have a need to see the long-term impact of your efforts in an organisation, you would probably be better off seeking permanent work, either through a recruiter or on your own. But, if you like new challenges, and enjoy a change of scenery every year or so, contracting may be well suited to your lifestyle. The first thing you need to do is research what you really want to do, assess your skills and get moving. Some of the advantages and disadvantages of each option can include:

Permanent

Advantages

- Security and a sense of belonging – the opportunity to identify with the business.
- Predictable and steady income with some associated noncash benefits.
- Expectation of personal career development over time.
- Technical training and mentoring at the employer's expense.
- Long-term and satisfying relationships with workmates.
- Management opportunities and challenges.
- A measure of control over career development and progression.

Disadvantages

- There are good and bad employers with varying work conditions and management styles.
- At times promise of training and advancement is blocked by project pressures or budget constraints.
- Some companies are subject to intra company politics and other negative influences.
- Job security is not assured as it was in past times.

Contract

Advantages

- Freedom of choice and complete independence.
- Ability to move on from a project after a short period without negative implication.
- Opportunities to increase earnings through longer working hours.
- Variety of work and technical challenge.
- The freedom to break the work year without penalty.
- More freedom to manage career and financial affairs.

Disadvantages

- Contractors are the first casualties in downsizing.
- There are few opportunities for advancement into management.
- There are few employer sponsored training programmes.
- Administration can amount to a considerable burden.
- Continuity of work can be a problem at times.
- Contract rates can be revised downwards very quickly.

Compose a clear message to employers: what do you have to offer and what are you looking for. Your message is in everything you do and say. Make it clear and positive

“Employers interview you to ensure you offer their required skills and experience. It is equally as important to remember that you too should constantly assess all information about opportunities and prospective employers to ensure that potential roles and prospective employers are right for you.”

**Chris Dunning-Walton, Director
InfoSec People**

Tips for Job Hunting

1. Be proactive, not passive. Decide what you want to do, and make a career decision around clear goals rather than the first job to come along.
2. Work out your wish list: the skills you want to use, the environment you want to work in, the kind of problems you want to deal with.
3. Compose a clear message to employers: what you have to offer and what you are looking for. Your message is in everything you do and say. Make it clear and positive.
4. Don't accept limitations imposed on you by others, and don't believe myths about the job market.
5. Have confidence in yourself and your abilities. Employers buy confidence as much as experience.
6. Use a multi-strategy job search including direct speculative applications, job boards, recruitment consultants and networking.
7. Think about your career drivers – what motivates you in work? What are your personal values, and how do they match those of the organisation?
8. How much independence do you want to have about the way you work and make decisions? If you find it difficult to take instructions or you want to go your own way, maybe self-employment beckons...
9. Look at the skills you really enjoy using, when you are impossible to distract and rarely bored. Do you prefer to work mainly with things, concepts, information, or people?
10. What subjects really interest you? How can you translate your interests into fields of work?
11. Think “research” before job search. Talk to people about the jobs they do. Learn from the mistakes others have made. Get careers advice

Look for clues about a company around the SWOT model - the company's current Strengths and Weaknesses, and the Opportunities and Threats arising from the marketplace

How to work smarter rather than harder at getting at the hidden job market

“Be aware of your prospective employer's business and any news it is making. Keep up to date with both online as well as trade and national press. If you are able to discuss intelligently with your interviewer a piece of news or a new contract win that has recently been publicised you will present yourself as interested and informed.”

**Chris Dunning-Walton, Director
InfoSec People**

Researching Employer Information

1. Never speak to an employer without researching the basics – how big is the organisation, where is it going, what kinds of problems is it facing?
2. Ensure you do enough research so that you don't have to ask basic questions at interview that bore the employer.
3. Remember the hidden job market - up to 60% of jobs are never advertised. Don't just rely on printed advertisements or the Internet.
4. Make sure you know the names of the people who will be interviewing you. Practice saying them if they are difficult to pronounce.
5. Try to rely on human research resources, not just company reports or the Internet. Speak to people who have worked there or can tell you something about the way the company thinks.
6. Look for clues around SWOT – the company's current Strengths and Weaknesses, and Opportunities and Threats arising from the marketplace.
7. Search for news items about the company. Try to spot news of awards, new contracts, problems...
8. Try to identify the company's biggest headache. Offer yourself as a solution.
9. Use networking to get to speak to someone who can give you inside track information.
10. Use lateral thinking to find sources of information.
11. Remember that employers prefer to hire people already known to an organisation. Convert your research into a face to face meeting as soon as possible
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Preparing Powerful CVs, Cover Letters & Applications

1. Your CV only has one function: to get you an interview. It may only be read in about 20-30 seconds initially. Make it immediately interesting, but keep it concise. It isn't your life story.
2. The first page of your CV has the greatest impact. Think of it as a one-page advertisement, which should be strong enough to stand alone. Don't put anything on the front page that strikes a negative note.
3. Start with a profile - a short paragraph of no more than 5 sentences saying what sort of role you have in mind, your current role or position, your key experience to date, and what you can offer an employer in broad terms.
4. Remember your application will be screened into a "YES" or "NO" pile. Do everything you can on page 1 to end up in the "YES" pile.
5. Your communications should make claims about who you are and what you can do, and then provide evidence to back up those claims.
6. Translate what you know and can do into terms that will appeal to a recruiter and hiring manager - talk about solving problems, making a difference, contributing to a team, etc.
7. It's all very well being the best thing since sliced bread. Be specific: try to express achievements in terms of awards, money, time or percentages. Don't include empty adjectives. Almost everyone is creative, dynamic, and enthusiastic! Focus on what you can do well.
8. Include your qualifications section on page 1 if you know this is an important benchmark for an employer.

9. List your key experience and achievements briefly, using bullet points, and offering examples which you think will be most relevant to a future employer in your chosen field.
10. With applications make sure that you do not miss out minimum requirements used to screen applicants, e.g. specific qualifications, experience, technical skills, etc. If there is something you lack, don't just ignore the requirement, but explain why your experience is of equal value.
11. Use bullet points where appropriate. Remember that the completed form will be read at high speed. Emphasise key information.
12. It can be a good idea to telephone to confirm safe receipt of your application.

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Interview Preparation

1. There's no such thing as enough preparation for an interview. Find out everything you can about the company and what it makes or does. Look for current news – show you are up to date.
2. Why does this job exist? What problems will it solve? What are the Key Result Areas?
3. Remember: employers buy experience. Think about what evidence of achievement you can talk about in the interview; rehearse your success stories.
4. Work out what is appropriate in terms of everything you present, including yourself. Look the part, and you will feel it. Dress as if you are already doing the job.
5. Second guess the employer's "shopping list" from the job details – what skills / qualities / experience do you have to match?
6. Be your own worst interview nightmare. What is the most difficult question you might have to face? Practice the answer. Practice again.
7. Be upbeat. Employers latch on to negative messages, so don't give them any.
8. Prepare for rejection. On balance you will be rejected more times than accepted. Even if you don't get the job, you can learn a huge amount about your perceived market value. Remember - there's a job out there for you somewhere - more people are working in the UK than ever before.
9. Prepare for tough interview questions about your strengths, weaknesses, goals, and how you react under pressure. "Why did you leave.....?"
Employers will probe for reasons for job change. If you are currently out of work, they will probe this, too. Rehearse short, simple, positive statements to cover these issues.

"You will under-perform if you are under prepared. Before you attend an interview it is essential you know what your potential employer's do, how they do it, their business strategy and their expectations of employees. Above all, an interview is a two-way exchange. Use the opportunity to ensure if this really is the company you want to work for.

**Chris Dunning-Walton, Director
InfoSec People**

For **Competency Based Interview** preparation tips, see the InfoSec People CBI Interview Preparation Tips document

For a confidential discussion
about your next career move
or contract engagement in
the IT Security arena, call
InfoSec People on
01242 507100 where we will
be glad to assist you.

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Mission Statement

InfoSec People provide premier recruitment solutions within the Information Security and IT sectors through sustainable relationships, service excellence and true industry knowledge.

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