

Top Tips for acing the interview & landing the right job

- In both finding and landing a job, time spent in reconnaissance is seldom wasted and the harder you work the luckier you get
- Many people will hold the military in high esteem, but may have preconceived ideas about hierarchy/rank and how the military does business. Breaking these military perceptions is important; consider dress, ice breakers and your use of military jargon and how they might fit in a commercial organisation
- Your CV is critical – follow the tips in the ‘CV Help’ link
- Map your skills to opportunities and then translate and demonstrate them in a way that will resonate with an employer
- Do your estimate and hierarchy of needs: what do I need to earn, where, importance of job satisfaction, career progression/opportunity, work life balance, costs (commuting/relocation etc.)
- Work experience is key to this and helps fill the vacuum of commercial experience and understanding how an organisation works and the issues they face; this will assist in mapping your own experiences and skills to what you are seeing in the work place
- Networking is critical. Develop your pitch when going to see someone (their time is valuable and you have an opportunity to impress): who you are, skills you have, what you want to achieve and what you are looking for by going to see them. Remember courtesy – thank them for their time; many don’t do this and it leaves an impression
- Your networking should build connections and assist your own development – ask for further contacts/introductions, learn from conversations and ask for feed-back (how do you come across, strengths, weaknesses, what could you improve?)
- Research and preparation for an interview is key: PPP prevents PPP – learn and practice. Answer the question: in theory, highlight a practical example and then link it to the actual organisation you are interviewing with (if you haven’t done sufficient research you won’t be able to do this)
- Utilise CV and interview workshops and other veterans’ transition opportunities
- Be comfortable selling yourself. Getting a job is about marketing and it is simply that you are the commodity. Do not undersell your achievements because that is what would be expected in the military. Getting a job is a competition where you have to be No 1 to succeed
- Make it clear what you have done not the collective ‘We’. Often military leavers cannot break the habit of referring to team successes
- Do not assume non-military/civilians will really understand what the military entails. When giving an example from your past draw a clear picture for them. Stimulate their imagination, do not rely on it
- Consider the details of your skill set – a sniper is not just capable of taking the shot. They need patience, concentration, self-discipline, decision making, ability to work under pressure, ability to work in small teams, motivation, analytical skills, professionalism and leadership. Don’t just focus on the obvious

Landing the job:

- Nothing is usually as good or as bad as it first seems. Take advice on negotiating your salary and package
- Set out and agree mutual expectations, with your boss/team – agree mission statements, deliverables and timelines (30, 60 and 90 days)
- Ask questions, seek advice – do your estimate - present findings back to your boss (keep communicating with them and stakeholders, update, but don't over communicate)
- Get good at the stuff that is important, but know what are not your strong points: accounting, balance sheets – find the people that would love to help you
- There is no such thing as a stupid question; ask while folk still recognise that you are bedding in
- Avoid using military jargon, unless you explain it. 'Flash to bang' and 'RV' mean nothing to someone who has not been in the military and make you look odd
- Make allies and find the natural historians that will help you navigate your way through the organisation
- Be the good corporate citizen, guard against military impatience, seek and take on board feedback, but show that you are collaborative, a good stakeholder manager and someone who delivers
- Read - First 90 Days by Michael Watkins (it's also good for preparing for an interview)
- You will miss it, but avoid looking back on your military career with rose-tinted spectacles. The commercial world can be like a jungle, complex, unfamiliar and challenging, but it is neutral – the better you prepare, the more you learn and adapt – the more successful you will be
- Don't forget who you are: a leader, and decision maker (use the estimate), but accept that these will have to be blended into the environment in which you find yourself, learn to lead by influence rather than by direction
- Have a sound personal philosophy (what you are doing, what you want to achieve and how you are going to do this). Recognise that you have to be your own MS, there is no postings branch
- Keep up your fitness