

Careering

These pages do tend to focus on the exams, with less emphasis on career development. To redress this balance, this month's article is the first in a series of three bi-monthly guides taking you through each stage of a career move.

In other news, the prize for the most convincing argument for abolishing the communications paper goes to Christian Olsen: 'Students have so much "study leave" that anything resulting in them spending a little more time in the office must be a step forward. That would allow them to do more work. More work increases GDP. In turn that allows us to give more to worthy causes like eliminating poverty.'

'By logical deduction, that means that the communications paper is actually causing poverty as we speak.'

And they say that actuaries lack compassion! Christian's prize is a Make Poverty History wristband and a makeover by Bob Geldof's personal stylist.

Tristan

Please send contributions to the student page to
TRISTAN WALKER-BUCKTON
Watson Wyatt LLP, Watson
House, London Road,
Reigate RH2 9PQ
T 01737-274556
F 01737-241496
e tristan.walker-buckton@eu.watsonwyatt.com

Start with the end in mind

In the first of a series of articles on taking the mystery out of your next career move, Drew Grosskreutz discusses the first steps.

YOU WAKE UP ONE MORNING with a new perspective on life. You need a new challenge. In short, you want to change your job. But what? A different role, a different company or even a different location? The options can be overwhelming and the decision made now has far reaching effects for the future. Careful consideration needs to be given to the following:

- ◆ **Location** – consider the time and cost of finding somewhere new to live, family considerations, whether to go overseas, etc.
- ◆ **Specialisation within your field** – to specialise and become an expert in a particular area is attractive, but could you be creating a pigeonhole for yourself? Will you be able to change easily in the future and still be marketable? Or are you happy to be a specialist in your chosen field?
- ◆ **Type of company** – as students, smaller employers may provide experience in a wider variety of roles, whereas larger organisations could offer greater salaries or kudos.

Once you've answered these issues, then it's on to the CV!

Speaking frankly, the CV should be the easiest part of your move. All actuaries have to complete exams, and generally have studied a numeric degree. So on this basis, and on work skills developed in your post so far, the CV should be straight to the point and focused. If you are using a recruitment consultant to help with your move they will advise to their preferred specifications, but here are some tips:

- ◆ **Keep the CV factual and direct** – there's no need for a flowery, heartfelt profile. A good consultant will meet you face to face where possible, and add value throughout the process by doing so.
- ◆ **Highlight your industry strengths** – your university degree, actuarial exams taken so far, and software skills should be close to the start. The people responsible for assessing individuals, whether it be a HR representative or an actuary themselves, receive many CVs, so getting straight to the point ensures they read on.

- ◆ **Sell yourself** – no one knows what you can do better than you. This includes knowing your current salary and package details, specialist skills gained, etc.

Once your CV addresses the points above you may feel that your work is done... Wrong!

I know what you're thinking – 'I've got a first-class degree and a ton of exam passes. Is that not enough?'

No, you need to differentiate yourself from the rest, and know how to highlight this at the right time. When you know what you want, you need to make yourself the ideal candidate.

Which of your skills and attributes will take you from the top quartile up to the top 10% of candidates applying for the position? Two things to consider are the following.

- ◆ **How will I add value to the new company?**

Research your target company thoroughly. Know its market specialisation and what you can bring to the role. Also find out why it is recruiting. This is essential – whether it is growing organically or replacing a leaving employee will influence how you approach your application.

- ◆ **Exam pass rate**

You alone know what you can take on. If you are like me (we all have had to study at one point, and recently I failed my taxation exam) who has to study a certain way to make things stick, taking on three exams in one sitting because 'everyone else is' is not the answer. Rather, concentrate on passing. Give your all, and if that is one at a time in September and two in the April sitting, then so be it.

If this all sounds too extreme for an actuarial vacancy then welcome to what the top 10% do day in, day out!

Next time we shall be looking at how to succeed in the interview...

Drew Grosskreutz is in the actuarial team at Hanover Search and Selection, specialising within the life and general insurance sectors

60-SECOND INTERVIEW



Phil Sturgess made the move from Norwich to London and now works for Milliman

What were you looking for in a career change?

I had only worked in a life office, so I wanted to try my hand at something different, such as a reinsurer or a consultancy. Working in London had also been on my mind for a while.

What sort of company were you

looking for?

Somewhere offering a wide variety of projects without a heavy bias towards audit work where I can develop skills I haven't had to use before.

Did using a recruitment consultant help?

Having a middleman relieves some

of the pressure of the move and you have access to a wider range of companies.

Any tips for the interview?

Prepare everything before you go. Know a bit about the company and have some questions ready. Find out the names of the interviewers and why the position has arisen.