

TRADE SECRETS: CORINNE MILLS

The managing director of Personal Career Management and author of the best-selling *You're Hired! How to write a brilliant CV* (Trotman, £9.99), on how to develop your career

Continually develop your skills

Whether you're employed or seeking to return to work, your skills must be up to date. Use in-house training, and invest in external courses if necessary.

Get noticed at work Put yourself forward for projects at work or organise a fund-raising event for charity. This will heighten your profile and enable you to talk to people you might not otherwise have access to.

Try voluntary work Voluntary work can enhance your CV. Develop your management skills by running a charity committee, further your marketing experience by helping with campaign publicity or acquire people skills by mentoring a young person.

Cultivate your network Your grapevine is one of the most important career management resources you have. The wider the circle the better, so make an extra effort to talk to new people, whether at work, in your industry or through involvement in your local community.

Do your research Get a realistic view of what's needed to help you develop your career. Check out job adverts for your target role, talk to agencies or people you know in this field to find out what worked for them.

Learn how to market yourself You need to be able to confidently explain to a prospective employer why you're the best person for the job. Your CV,

interview and networking skills should be carefully crafted and impeccably presented. Get help from a specialist career coach if necessary.

Ask for feedback It's hard to be objective about yourself – it's just too personal. Ask for honest feedback from others about your work performance, job applications and career goals and use it to improve.

Know what you want Smart career decisions are well thought through. Be clear what you want and why. This will make it easier to plot your route.

Sources of help Get a career coach, buy books, use free career resources, such as www.learndirect.com, or get volunteering information at www.timebank.org.uk.

