

## Against All Odds (The Job Search)

By

Kastuv Ray

[kastuv@kastuv.fsnet.co.uk](mailto:kastuv@kastuv.fsnet.co.uk)

You may write me down in history  
With your bitter, twisted lies,  
You may tread me in the very dirt  
But still, like dust, I'll rise.

Did you want to see me broken?  
Bowed head and lowered eyes?  
Shoulders falling down like teardrops,  
Weakened by my soulful cries.

You may shoot me with your words,  
You may cut me with your eyes,  
You may kill me with your hatefulness,  
But still, like air, I'll rise.

Leaving behind days of stress and fear  
I rise  
Into a daybreak that's wondrously clear  
I rise  
Winning first and then going to war  
I rise  
Overcoming all adversities and hurdles  
I rise  
Standing apart from the competition  
I rise  
I rise  
I rise

The above verses are excerpts from Maya Angelou's poem "Still I Rise" with some additional lines provided for the purpose of this article. The emotions and thoughts that a well-prepared candidate may be experiencing/thinking are covered by the above poem. The successful candidate is usually the one that keeps calm, is focused and fights till the very end.

Finding a job within internal audit at any time is not an easy task. This has been further complicated by corporate collapses such as Enron and major redundancies across all sectors. Therefore, the jobseeker is pitted against employees from Big 4 backgrounds, blue chip organisations or individuals with better qualifications and experiences.

## **Opportunities**

How does one find the position they are searching for?

Job opportunities don't come down from Mount Olympus. Individuals have to actively search for them. This may involve looking through the job pages of relevant accountancy/audit publications or newspapers, registering with a recruitment consultancy (they will search on your behalf) or being proactive and approaching companies/organisations that may have internal audit departments directly.

## **The CV**

Whichever route is chosen - the candidate requires a CV. The way the CV is presented may be the difference between being called for an interview and being rejected. The two CVs presented below are both for the same individual. However, the first CV did not make have any impact on the companies to which it was sent.

The presentation and layout of the second CV helped the candidate to be selected for a lot more interviews. In this example, they will be referred to as CV A and CV B. The content of the CVs has been reduced and personal details have been omitted.

CV A

## CURRICULUM VITAE

### PERSONAL DETAILS

Name:

Telephone:

Address:

Date of Birth:

Sex:

Marital Status:

E-mail:

Willing to Travel: Yes

Nationality: British

Willing to Relocate: Yes

### EMPLOYMENT HISTORY

Jan 2003

Gryphon Internal Audit Services

-Present

Position Held: Audit Consultant

Duties:

Researching audits in line with Audit Plan, preparation of audit scoping documents, planning and design of audit programmes.

Contract Management and Project Overruns – Financial Control.

Jan 1999 -

Phoenix Rising (Internal Audit Department)

Dec 2002

Position Held: Senior Internal Auditor

Duties:

Planning, design of audit programmes, report writing, staff supervision and providing business advice to client on areas of concern.

Areas audited:

Financial Regulations, Corporate Governance, Budgetary Control and Absence Monitoring (including Sickness Management).

Ad-hoc Consultancy:

Designing Model Policies/Plans for Business Continuity and Information Classification.

### EDUCATION

Professional Education:

Higher Education:

General Education:

### SKILLS PROFILE

### ACTIVITIES

Sports:

Social:

### REFERENCES

To be provided on request.

## CV B

# CURRICULUM VITAE

### PERSONAL DETAILS

Name:

Telephone:

Address:

Date of Birth:

Sex:

Marital Status:

E-mail:

Willing to Travel:

Nationality:

### EMPLOYMENT HISTORY

Jan 2003

Gryphon Internal Audit Services

-Present

Position Held: Audit Consultant

Duties:

Researching audits in line with Audit Plan, preparation of audit scoping documents, planning and design of audit programmes.

Core Management Systems:

Project Overruns – Financial Control.

Example(s) of risk(s) identified:

Contract variations are not managed appropriately.

Possible area(s) for improvement (example(s) only):

Enforced contract management procedures (including authority forms for contract changes).

Other:

Development of standard approach with respect to file structure.

Jan 1999 -

Phoenix Rising (Internal Audit Department)

Dec 2002

Position Held: Senior Internal Auditor

Duties:

Planning, design of audit programmes, report writing, staff supervision and providing business advice to clients on areas of concern

Areas audited:

Strategic Systems:

Corporate Planning/Risk Management

Example(s) of risk(s) identified:

Corporate Plan's/Risk Assessment assumptions based on inaccurate and inappropriate information.

Area(s) for improvement/Advice provided to mitigate against risks:

Assisting management in development of a Risk Register.

Core Financial Systems:

Treasury/Cashflow Management.

Example(s) of risk(s) identified:

Failure to invest surplus funds at best market rate leading to loss of opportunity to generate additional revenue for the organisation.

Areas for improvement/Advice provided to mitigate against risks:

Board approved investment strategy with investments being made with AA or AAA financial institutions with high rates of interest.

Core Management Systems:

Absence Monitoring (including Sickness Management)

Examples of risk(s) identified:

Different sickness policies for different departments and failure to report sickness levels to the Personnel Committee.

Areas for improvement/Advice provided to mitigate against risks:

Training regarding positive sickness management and arrangement of confidential counselling services on a free of charge basis particularly where stress is concerned.

Ad-hoc Consultancy:

Designing Model Policies/Plans for Business Continuity, Information Classification and a Specimen Security Policy.

### EDUCATION

Professional Education:

Higher Education:

General Education:

### SKILLS PROFILE

**ACTIVITIES****REFERENCES**

To be provided on request.

The difference between CV A and CV B is that the first CV is just a list. This will not help the candidate in the job market. With the current focus on risk, CV B breaks down the systems audited, gives an example of the problems and how they were solved.

A CV should be no longer than 3 pages. Here, education is after employment history. Most recruitment consultants state that a candidate's qualifications and education should be on the first page.

### **The Interview**

When invited for an interview, it is obvious that one has to be dressed smartly. Preparation and research prior to this event is critical.

Listed below is a sample of tricky interview questions that may be asked or statements that may be made to check the candidate's reaction and response:

- You have obviously sent your CV to a lot of companies and have attended several interviews. The reason that you are sitting here today is that you have been rejected from those interviews.
- Can you tell me the difference between negotiation and persuasion? Can you give work related examples where you have negotiated or persuaded individuals?
- (To an Asian candidate) How would you undertake a fraud investigation on an Asian company?
- If I pay the Agency £x amount, what do I get in return?
- By appointing you, we will be investing a lot of time and money into you, What guarantee is there that you won't leave us?
- Why did you not choose a career path as a policeman (as opposed to internal audit)?

The key to succeeding is to answer the question, be truthful but be diplomatic. In internal audit, auditees and clients can be difficult and you are expected to work under pressure. The interviewers are just testing your reactions.

### **Standing Apart from the Competition**

Strategy is about how you set yourself apart from the competition. It is widely believed that it's not just a matter of being better at what you do but also being different at what you do.

Everyone will have to answer the set questions. The place where the candidate can be different is in the questions that they ask.

Interview questions that may be asked are:

- How did the role come about?
- Do you view your staff as a valuable resource or as a commodity?

The above two questions are excerpts from Morgan West's interview guidance leaflet and can be found on their website ([www.morgan-west.co.uk](http://www.morgan-west.co.uk)).

- How is your internal audit department leading edge?

Chambers and Ridley, in their book *Leading Edge Internal Auditing* have stated that the following characteristics create effectiveness:

- Talented people
- Good career advancement
- Capable Leadership
- Top management support
- High visibility

These characteristics can be turned around and directed at the interviewer in the form of a question.

### **Summary**

The job search is a long and hard process for some individuals. Patience is necessary. You should remember that you only fail when you give up. If you do not succeed in the first job interview, you will succeed somewhere else. The interview is a battleground, where arrows are exchanged in the form of words. The key to success is being calm and thinking carefully before you speak. Unfortunately, in tough interviews, one minute feels like eternity.

Contributed by Kastuv Ray 6/03/03