

Damien Grant: Essential job skill common sense

By Damien Grant

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Twenty-one-year-olds should not write a "personal statement", says Grant.

It is the start of a new year; a time when many seek new jobs. My last job interview was in the 20th century but I've employed more than 100 people since then, so a few tips for job-seekers:

First, put your name into Google. If the first and only thing that comes up is a picture of yourself vomiting in Queenstown, set your Facebook profile to private. It isn't the vomiting, it is the lack of judgment inherent in posting the pictures.

In addition to little Miss Vomit, I once discovered a prospective employee's Twitter account. Six thousand tweets in three years! He tweeted about the interview while he was meant to be working. Epic fail.

Dress appropriately. Ties for men, tongue piercings removed for the women. If you do not make an effort when representing yourself, you are unlikely to do so when representing your employer. You would think this was obvious. It isn't. Tattoos are not a problem if you can cover them, but if you have stretched your earlobes, get used to delivering pizza.

Never criticise a former employer and remember that if you go to the Employment Court the results are online. Even if you win you are unemployable.

There is no use having an A in arithmetic if you cannot pronounce the word. Your English need not be perfect but if you are not getting second interviews invest in an immersion course.

The CV. Unless you are applying to be CEO of Westpac, four pages is two pages too many. Twenty-one-year-olds should not write a "personal statement". At 21, you know nothing. A cover letter adds no value except as evidence of written English skills. But if you must write one, keep it to three paragraphs and get the firm's name correct.

Work experience has a five-year half-life. Anything you did 15 years ago is irrelevant. If you went to a posh private school, keep that information to yourself. Including it shows a sense of entitlement.

If you plan to embellish your work history, match the timeline to your LinkedIn profile. If you do not have a LinkedIn profile, get one.

Three to five years in the armed forces shows initiative and discipline. Twenty years suggests you are institutionalised. If this is wrong you need to demonstrate this.

If you are over 50 you will be overlooked. Unless the job seeks specialist skills, employers do not want overpaid baby boomers hanging around the office complaining. Your best option is to seek a sales job where your age and experience are advantages, a government job, or perhaps keep the one you have. Happy New Year.

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