Hello, everyone. Welcome to episode two of our connecting to people series. We're continuing our interview with Stephen Hoban, the service director of commercial services group recruitment division. Last episode, we talked about networking. And there was some very invaluable information. So if you missed it, we highly recommend you go and listen now. However, we'll be moving on to the next chapter of our interview with Steven - CVs. Not every job can be attained through a network that you create, or sometimes your connection may like you, but not know of your expertise and skills. So they may still ask for a CV. That being the case, to you, Stephen, what makes a good CV?

I think you're absolutely right. And even if the network came through, and it's more likely that it'll generate an opportunity rather than, Oh, you know, Steve, and we get on so well on LinkedIn, could you just come and work for my company next Tuesday. So it's more likely that it would connect you to an open vacancy or make you aware of some recruitment activity there an organisation was doing, but I would still expect that you would have to go through a process, a process of application via online or And inevitably, at some point, unless it's a very rare occasion, at some point submitting the CV. So the question of what makes a good CV inevitably will come up. And this is, this is a very tricky question in a few ways, in a sense that it's a really subjective concept, the CV and in some ways, a little bit, potentially outdated. And I suspect in that over the next few years automation will, may diminish the role of a CV, but right now the CV is still a stalker and dread of looking for work. So to answer what looks good CV, there's some there's some really basic stuff, I think, you know, we have wonderful tools available to us now with it. But I still think in my experience, the best CVS aren't overcomplicated. They are concise. They are to the point, they aren't overly lengthy. I don't necessarily subscribe to the idea that you know, anything longer than two pages is, is a travesty. But certainly, you know, if you are very experienced, you don't want to be putting together a 13 page CV. But I think the key thing, if there was one factor what makes a good CV, then it is directly relevant to the role you're applying for. And I think that that is key, I think more and more as we've moved to, or as the role of the recruiter or the recruitment agency has risen. And I suppose more recently, online direct application to organisations through some sort of Portal or online application that doesn't involve speaking to a person, then the CV needs to be really honed to the actual vacancy, you can create a generic CV that I would call your starter for 10, if you like, and this mere form the foundation of the letter, more specific CVS that you apply to, and it may be perfectly adequate to start those first conversations with, with the agency that you're working for, while the agency they want to apply for. But it's important to recognise that when you're dealing through an agency, or when you're dealing through an online portal, it is absolutely key to be as relevant for that job as possible. If you have, for example, a certain skill set that this Job asks for all the agencies required on their advert. If it is tucked away in page four of your CV, then the chances are either through the time and attention that the recruiter will give it or some sort of semi automated algorithm, that it's unlikely your CV will be pulled out for that, that level of experience. So it's important to recognise the same as a word search and Google, you know, relies on certain algorithms to pull that webpage to the top. The same happens with your CV. Most recruiters, I can't remember statistically what the industry says but it's somewhere in the region of a recruitment is gonna give you a CV somewhere in the region of 1011 seconds of their time. And if they're not one of a better word hooked or engaged or bought into read further, then there's every chance that you won't progress past that stage. And similarly, you know, while some people may argue that an internal recruiter As an organiser for an organisation will do a more thorough job. Even if you take that 10 or 11 seconds and make it 20 seconds, you're still only getting a little bit of someone's time to grab their attention. So to make a good CV, it needs to be tailor made for the opportunity, and specific to that opportunity. And that that is a good CV, in my view, anyway.

Fantastic. Thank you. So following that advice, people have got great idea of what they should be focusing on to make a good CV, at least in your mind. But when it comes to making their first CV, the starter 10 CV, as you said, the more generic one, do you have any advice on where to start when building that CV?

There's many templates available, if you just wanted to start you got a blank sheet of paper, you have no real idea how to start this you haven't you either haven't needed one for the 20 years of your career, or you're just starting out, and you really don't know where to start. And there's plenty of good templates available. But my key thing would be, start with something simple. There's lots of templates out there that will have some sort of graphic overlay, they will either navigate everything down the left hand side, they will navigate down the right they will turn it almost into a PowerPoint which you know, if you're applying for a role as a graphic designer and your your potential audience wants to see creativity and work, absolutely, they have their place. But for most people, most standard employees, a CV that isn't going to cause somebody a huge amount of trouble in terms of ordering through format or some bespoke software will be a must. So you can't really do and what's wrong with Word, you know, a standard word document. I think also, let's not get too creative with fonts, you know, it doesn't necessarily matter what fonts you choose, I wouldn't necessarily be overlap, but the standard ones probably in my view work best. But certainly, you might only want one font in your Word, you might want to use ITALIC and BOLD for highlighting certain areas where I'll stick with one font. And just to address size, while we're on that there is a kind of mythology that two pages is the optimum CV, I think really for for most people other than people really starting their career, very difficult to encapsulate all your experience on two pages, I think probably I would start to get a little bit weary or concerned if I was getting past four pages. But I think certainly somewhere between two and four is a very comfortable space for a CV, particularly for someone who is, you know, has been working for a number of years. So start off really, quite simply, really. So you start off with nem I wouldn't necessarily have education as the next thing. But what I may choose to do is in the top of the CV perhaps under the name, I mean mentioned certain really specific qualifications. So for example, if somebody was a qualified accountant, or you're applying for an engineering job, and somebody had the relevant engineering qualification, or likewise, if you had like the NBA or something like that, but very be, you know, really abbreviated in terms of initial only perhaps under the knee and then you'd be on may not want to put on your contact details, you may just want to include your number and email, I'm not really sure. At this stage, putting your address on you know, it also helps protect your your identity and your ID a little bit in terms of GDPR at that stage. But then I'm a big fan of a profile area. And I'll come back or if you can remind me Joe to talk a little bit more about the profile because I think it's it's important to, then really you work through your experience from most recent backwards. If you are relatively new to the job market and say you have 10 years work experience, then you may want to put every job on that one, you would want put every job anywhere, but you may want to have a descriptor for the last three roles you've had up to 10 years if you've been find yourself you have been employed for 25 or 30 years, then you may want to cover off the last one or two or the last 10 years work depending on how many jobs are involved. And then after that, I think you can really just you don't really need much more than just a job title and the dates of the duration of that work. I can't think off the top of my head, there may be some really specialist areas that you know people will be interested in your very early career, or I think really if you've covered off your last 10 to 12 years.

I think that's the experience that most employers are going to be are going to be looking at. And I think when you when you start right down what it is you do a good place to start is your job description. Of course, that's a nice little place to pull off some of the immediate tasks. But I think one thing that feeds into being specific is try to extend, dwell, there's two things you're trying to be specific. So where you can be specific and quantifiable, or qualifiable. I think that that is really important. So an example I would say there is you can put and manage a team. But there's a big difference between managing a team of two and managing a team of 55. So I would be specific. So you may want to say, I have extensive my management experience, I currently manage five direct reports and indirectly 42 staff across three divisions, that's a more complete answer. Likewise, you may be involved in a programme or project to save money. So then if you can go on to say, you know, I implemented a new project to implement a new procurement system. And that procurement system saved us 11.5%, equating to 1.2 million pounds, again, more specific. So when I started my career too long ago to dimension, but one of the sales tools that we were taught as a recruiter was an idea of what's called features and benefits. And I often while I think we've done it as a sales tool, I think it's always held its place, while trying to put together a CV. So everything I write down are what I encourage others to write down on their CV, I think features and benefits. So the features are what you did. So if I use the mind management example, again, the features I manage a team, the benefit is what are the specifics, and what is the potential benefit to the organisation. Now, sometimes there won't be a benefit, per se, and it will be a matter of fact statement, as in I managed for for direct reports and 45 indent reports. But then there's other things that you might be able to extrapolate it through to a benefit. So an example would be I have extensive experience of managing and motivating teams, I manage a team of five people five direct reports with 45, in depth reports, and over the last two years, I have increased performance of that team by 5%. And I've reduced staff turnover by 25%. So therefore, you're now giving whoever's viewing your CV, you're giving them a couple of things, you're given them some real specifics, that they can relate to their business, ie, well, this job managers, 2000 people, so is this person potentially at the level I need. Likewise, for this job only managers, one part time administrator, so again, we might not be on par. Likewise, if the job spec, for example, says one of the rules is to successfully lead and motivate teams, then by adding those additional bits of information, it really starts to bring that experience to life for the potential employer who can, you know, draw direct correlations between some of the things they're trying to achieve with this job, whether that be an improvement and staff retention, for example. And, and it just sort of allows them to, you know, start to compare apples and apples rather than apples and unknown. So I got a little bit off track there. But I think that sort of, you know, detail, when you start to put together is important rather than just pops right, every little thing that's on your job description, then you know, that you work through, obviously, you give a little bit less time to roles that are further on, and that's what will help keep your the length of the CV down. Then towards the end, obviously, I think it's really important to have those qualifications on there. So you'd have your education piece, and I think that's also a space that's, you know, isn't just about your formal qualifications, I think it's really important to put all the things on there that are qualifications, even if they're not relevant, even if they're not pure academic, for example. So if you've completed things like prints to or if you've completed managing successful programmes, or they're more industry specific qualifications or training courses, and then finally, and I mean, maybe I'm a little bit out of date here, but I do think the hobbies and interests area for CV still important. I think it adds, you know, a little bit of humanity to what people do. It creates an area for for common ground if you do, you know, move towards interview or certainly conversation with agencies. Again, I'll be very tempted not to go into war and peace and maybe you know, people aren't too interested in things that you've Don't when you were 14, like swimming badges or whatever. But, you know, people are probably interested to know if you, I don't know, if you're a black belt in a martial art or if you've completed a Duke of Edinburgh Award or, you know, if you if you're an avid skydiver, I think these things are still important. So I will follow that through. So go back to the profile area. So. So the profile area for me is key. So there's a couple of reasons, I think one is, it really helps with the idea of being able to tailor make your CV. So the profile area is where you would, you would write down all your experience, but the profile areas, maybe a paragraph, couple short paragraphs, or maybe even a couple of specific bullet points, where you can really address some of the key areas that the job description is looking forward. Or if you're just making that initial approach to an agency, it's where you can really highlight some of your skills and experience. So it may start for example, you know, Steven is an experienced manager with over 20 years experience in the recruitment industry, key strengths and experience include, and then you might have management teams of up to 50 people plus across three geographies or EMA, or whatever you want to put on there, then you might have, you know, extensive experience of driving sales performance, you might have extensive experience of managing large successful projects and programmes, including projects in excess of 12 million, whatever those details may be. And it allows basically, to go back to that 1011 seconds, you've got to get somebody to go, I want to read on. And that's where if it's the first interaction with an agency, and I'm happy to discuss how different agencies work, because you might pitch the CV slightly differently. But that first interaction, you're working to get the attention of the agency, there's no specific job, then really, what it allows you to do is input four or five bullets, the key things that you will be using, what what you are bringing to the market. If you're reacting to a job, specifically from an agency, then you've got their job description. So you know, the key things they're asking for in the first four or five bullet points of their job description. That's really where you'd want to be illustrating straightaway that you have that experience. Example being say, it's an in house talent acquisition role. And they may turn around and said, must have experience of managing multiple talent acquisition professionals across Europe, Middle East and Africa. So if you've done that, then you will want your first bullet point to be extensive experience of managing talent acquisition teams globally. Okay, recruiters now thinking we'll take one of the five boxes that I'm looking for, and then you work your way through the rest. Obviously, if you haven't got that skill, you can't do it. And you might want to put some skill on there that are skilled experienced, that you feel is comparable, you know, so an example might be must have somebody who has prints to the qualified, and you might turn out the you know, prints to qualified, but you have got managing successful programmes. So you would put on something that was comparable or related, you might not be, you might have a certain accounting qualification, they might have asked for another one. But you know, that that's the sort of field the idea was essentially that profile area allows you something that you can tweak quickly. So you can react to these different job scenarios without having to rework all of your CV, it's kind of more just bringing to the fore the experience that that is elsewhere your CV, but bring to the fore for the attention of the audience that you're submitting the CV for.

Great, thank you. So it sounds like you're saying that the most important element of a CV is really the content, providing it's tailor made to the employer and is relevant wherever it can be. You also touched on earlier that not many people include the hobbies and interests section of their CV anymore. And that's really quite an important way of humanising yourself in a CV. Arguably, you could say that it's a way of standing out against other potential competitors for a job. So would you say that there are many other ways that you can make your CV stand out from the others?

Yeah, I think it does humanise you and, you know, it's, but there's, there's actually, I'll tell you why I think it's really important as well. I think it's really important for people who are entering the job market for the first time or very early in their career because when when you think of a school leaver or even a graduate for example, and they, you know, they may have experienced that is in the doggone dock or they may have you know, have worked in Iceland or any of those things, which is, which is great, you know that, that showing you have hard and committed to a job, it doesn't matter the shooting think, Oh, well, you know, it's not I was only a shelf standard. It's not about that it's about showing that you held down and employed job for a period of time. But were they for whatever reason, either their studies or wherever they haven't really done that, then those interests in what they do, can really stand out. So for example, if you have somebody that has achieved very well in a sporting field, it might be that they ended up playing at a high level football or table tennis or whatever. Equally, someone I mentioned earlier, you're someone who's completed the goal level of Duke of Edinburgh Award or someone who's achieved a higher level of a martial arts or someone who has been a scout leader, anything like that, that someone has sustained and committed to over a period of time speaks to what an employer would want. You know, everybody knows that to get a black belt in karate isn't an overnight thing, it may have taken someone 567 10 years, everybody knows that you don't become a top sports person by, you know, not by lacking commitment and drive, and you don't get, again, you don't get a Duke of Edinburgh Award for going on a two day course. So all of these things a test to somebody been able to commit to something that they're passionate about, and steer the direction. And when you haven't got that work experience to fall back on those things can be really, you know, they can almost do the same job. I remember once but in my very early recruitment career, and I was speaking to a lady who, when I looked down she was she was customer service, individual customer service advisor for a bank, actually, but I'll never forget that I'm still I can still remember her name, but I was probably about 24 years old. When I read through her CV and got to the interests of turns outward, she had competed in the Commonwealth Games. And, you know, the list of accolades of British, regional British and international athletics was was hugely impressive. And it turned out this lady, you know, starting to look to move her career forward, because prior to that, she'd sacrifice no sacrifice to her career, but her employer, that very kindly allowed her to have that time off to compete. And as her athletics career was coming to an end, she was keen to sort of move her her work career forward. But I will never forget how impressive it was to see that, and you know, that someone who can achieve that has a lot to bring in many ways. So yeah, I think that that is another dimension of where they're, you know, particularly for those that haven't got 10 years work experience on their belt that they can really sell themselves. If I use day, use the term sell yourself in that, that into hobbies and interests area.

That's brilliant. I can't say that I would forget an application from a professional athlete in a hurry, either. You said earlier that you wanted to go over submitting your CV to an agency and how you can tailor it for them. So would you like to go over that now.

I think, you know, one thing about the saver that everybody kind of needs to remember and bear in mind is that the danger is that you think your CV your CV is selling you, of course it is. But when I keep mentioning relevance to the audience, there's no point selling x, if the audience is looking for y, if you know what I mean. So kind of to some extent, well, I'm brilliant at this, I brought in a footballer, what is already good if the person you're speaking to was looking for a footballer, if they're looking for a rugby player, it doesn't really do you any favours, which is why you need to be relevant. But also I think it is important to understand that the role of agencies as well. So one of the things that I've heard many, many times over the years is, you know, the agency I work was no good, they never get back to me. And all of these things might be true, you know, agencies like everywhere else have some, some good and bad recruiters, they have some better or could be improved practices and services. But I think it's really important to recognise that agencies are there to find the talent for the clients that pay them. So in many ways, I've always thought it's often forgotten there for more in most instances, it's a perfect it's an absolutely free service for the candidate. So the client is the recruiter to find good candidates. And that's not to say it will be in any recruiters interest not to give candidates a very good service. Because if they're not right for this particular job, they might still be right for another job. And also, they'll speak to the pain for various other reasons. But it is important to look at their role. Because if you are working from an agency that if you're a beat, if you're an entry level or in early part of your career, and you're submitting your CV through job portals, whether it be read, or indeed or whatever, and they're going to an advert that has been posted by an agency, then that recruiter is probably probably forced entirely on finding exactly what he needs to send to that client, to fill the job to earn his commission. So he probably is going to be quite brutal, he or she is going to be quite brutal in terms of ticking off the five boxes, or whatever that the client said they need, going back to the relevance of highlighting things. But you can also expect that if it's if you're working in a sector, for example, where there's very high volume of applicants, and you haven't taken the time to try and grab their attention, then you probably won't get a call back. Because they just don't have the time. I'm not saying that's right or wrong, I'm just saying that that's what it is, when you go about engaging with the agency a different way, which is trying to speak to an individual and explain to them that you know, you're not, you're not apply for this particular job, but you want to have a conversation with them genuinely about how you can help or how they can help you, then you can enter into more of a relationship with the agency. So they're now thinking about multiple jobs that you might be applicable for. And now they've had a conversation where you've had that opportunity to bring your experience to life and to about what sort of things you know, might be relevant, your geographic limitations, your salary limitations, and now your your kind of better consultant is now thinking about you potentially for all the walls that come through their desk that might be relevant to them. Now, this may reflect some experience of the level of experience of the agency and also what sort of sector they work in Serbia, you may find, for example, if they work in a very high turnover, temporary, industrial, white, blue collar setting, that they are not interested in having a chat with you, because what they do is they put, they just find x's, and they put x's in front of their boss, and they keep doing it. And I suspect you know, if you really want to be serious about your career, those places, those suppliers, agencies, wherever you want to call them, they have their players, which is you know, send your CV if you see an applicant or a job you're interested in, but kind of don't expect to hear back unless they're interested. The next level is obviously those that do want to engage in your conversation with you understand what you're looking for want to work in partnership with you. Now, you still might get well, you know, they might not be in touch every week. They probably say they will, but they might not be because they get distracted, but you're more likely still to be on their radar. And you can take a little bit of ownership by not necessarily hounding them, but maybe fortnight or whatever touching base and saying, you know, Mr. Recruit, I can remember we spoke about a fortnight ago, which will remind you about circumstances is still the same. And then as your career progresses, you can start to move up into what is an entirely different sort of level of consultant where you start to care in the realms of, you know, exec search, or senior level appointments, and nine times out of 10, they are really happy to engage even without a job spec in front of them, because the best ones are always looking to make relationships with talent in the market. And, you know, the life is changing for recruiters now, because certainly right now, applications are lower than ever post post Brexit post COVID, you know, the great resignation, whatever you want to call it. So they really do need to engage with talent, even when you know that talent might not be exactly what they have a job for right now. But they that their relationship is changing. But you know, you need to be speaking to that more in the US use the word professional because that's I'm not mean to imply the others aren't. But you need to be speaking to the agencies that are working in that space and want to work in partnership with the candidates they represent. And there are some agents out there that you just have to recognise are posting jobs and trying to fill jobs, and your approach the market. And when you go back to what we said about networking, and all that sort of stuff, then your approach to the market to look for work is a blended approach across all of those platforms. So I apply to these jobs every day, blah, blah, blah. I kind of know I might not hear back but I think I'm a good match for them. The caveat I would say is please do be a good match. You know, you don't expect to hear about if you'd have applied to be an astronaut and you're not an astronaut but you know if you basically have applied for genuine Hold, you might hear back, but you kind of mentally say to yourself, I probably won't hear from them unless they're interested. Then there's the next release zero, I want to have some conversations, I don't want to speak to every agency, but I want to do a bit of research, I want to find the three or four good agencies that either work in my specific industry or they've got a good brand reputation in the marketplace. And then you have a different type of conversation. And if you're the right level of seniority, then that's when he will say, well, actually, I'm gonna pick one or two executive partners that are going to go and actually speak to some people on my behalf, where they know, there might be movement in that organisation, but the job hasn't come out yet. Because you've got to remember, in the job market, there's a huge amount of jobs never never see an agency, you know, never come to an agency or even see the light of day because they're either filled internally, or they're conceptual in nature, that the manager, you know, was talking about this, maybe thinking about a change to his department, but he hasn't formally done it yet. And that's where those better relationships with agencies, they will know their markets, they'll know which of their organisations are above the cost of a relocation or a change that might prove to be relevant for you. So, you know, I think if you just perhaps want to have a better experience of agencies, you just perhaps need to recognise what which of those level of agencies store consultants you're speaking to, and then you'll get less frustrated? Because you're not, you know, you're not hearing back all the time.