

Key tools for finding that job

By Ciara O'Kelly

Last week, we featured a letter from Marian Dalton, who wasn't sure how to show her years of work on the farm as 'work experience' on a CV. Irish Country Living got some advice for Marion from **Carol Hunt from Paramount HR.**

Dear Marian,

Many thanks for sharing your situation. Indeed, your letter may echo the sentiments of many in the farming community who are looking for alternative employment outside of the farm.

As you are well aware, exploring the job market can be a daunting task for even the most experienced and qualified. In a competitive job market, the key to successfully acquiring a position and making the transition from farming is effectively communicating your skills, knowledge and experience from the farm and highlighting their relevance and value to a potential employer.

Remember Marian, your farm is a business, and you will need to convey this when preparing applications to secure alternative employment.

The key tools you need to start job hunting are a curriculum vitae and cover letter. Remember that the number of applications to vacancies has increased dramatically over recent months, so your cover letter and CV should be as relevant as possible to the job and the company.

GETTING STARTED

- Make a list of the various skills and responsibilities involved in running the farm in 2010 - don't underestimate these!
- Categorise them into relevant disciplines - in your situation, this includes administration, accounts, sales, purchasing, livestock management, production, quality control, etc.
- You will need to formally document your skills and experience into a curriculum vitae. Try to keep this to two pages if possible. A good template for a CV is outlined in the example on the left.
- Remember that you will need to tailor applications for every vacancy - not one CV fits all jobs!

- A cover letter is an essential accompaniment to your CV, and it is your opportunity to tell a potential employer what relevant skills you have and why they should meet you.

Finally, all employers, especially in these recessionary times, will look for a positive attitude, a willingness to learn, flexibility and a good work ethic. Don't forget the determination, hard work and focus that you have learned over the years running your farming business, which will stand to you in the job-search process.

MARIAN'S RESPONSE

As well as writing to Marian, Carol also spoke to her on the phone. In response, Marian said: "I really found Carol's advice excellent for my future career plan.

"Before our chat, I was planning on doing another computer course. However, she advised me that really I had done enough. Now it was time to put my hard work and experience into action.

"Perhaps I was a bit fearful of taking that next step, and so I thought it was easier to do another course, but she advised me to start small - even if it was just doing some part-time work.

"I've now re-done my CV, which was a well overdue task. When I applied for positions in the past, I was simply changing the date on my CV and maybe adding a new course or two that I had done. After talking to Carol, I realised my CV hasn't actually changed in over 30 years! With the template she set out, I gave my CV a bit of a makeover.

"Carol also advised me that employers are getting so many job applications these days that if the cover letter isn't up to scratch, they often didn't even look at the CV. So I've tailored my CV and letter for each application.

HOPEFUL

"I'm very hopeful that I might be considered for a receptionist position in a veterinary office, especially as I highlighted that I would be very familiar with animal diseases, their injections and medicine.

"My work on the farm was also highlighted in cover letters to agri-businesses. When writing to doctors and dentists, I highlighted my receptionist skills more.

"I'm very hopeful that I might be able to get a position in the future, and I'll keep Irish Country Living updated on my process."