

Applications workbook

A campaign tracker, a worksheet to run per role, and the CV rewrites that separate a career changer who gets read from one who does not.

A job search is a campaign, not an event. Eleven applications, four live processes, one interview on Thursday — and no memory of what you told the second one about your salary expectations. Print the tracker once and the worksheet as often as you need.

1 · THE CAMPAIGN TRACKER

One line per application. Fill in Next action every time something happens — an empty Next action column is how a live process goes quiet.

ORGANISATION AND ROLE	APPLIED	STAGE	NEXT ACTION	BY

The weekly rhythm. Fifteen minutes, same time each week: chase anything where Next action is overdue, add two new applications, and re-read the debrief from your most recent interview. Consistency beats intensity — five applications a week for two months outperforms forty in one weekend and nothing afterwards.

2 · THE APPLICATION WORKSHEET

PRINT ONE OF THESE PER ROLE YOU APPLY FOR

Fifteen minutes here is worth more than an hour of rewriting your CV in the abstract. Work from their words, not yours.

ORGANISATION

ROLE TITLE

SOURCE AND DATE SEEN

CLOSING DATE

THEIR TOP FIVE REQUIREMENTS, IN THEIR WORDS — AND MY EVIDENCE FOR EACH

REQUIREMENT	MY EVIDENCE
1	
2	
3	
4	
5	

THE REQUIREMENT I AM WEAKEST AGAINST

WHAT I WILL SAY ABOUT IT IF ASKED

THREE CV BULLETS I WILL CHANGE FOR THIS ROLE

SALARY: MY NUMBER

SALARY: MY FLOOR

3 • THE BULLETS THAT DECIDE IT

The same four years of work, written two ways. Only one of them gets read twice.

BEFORE

Responsible for user account administration

AFTER

Ran joiner-mover-leaver for 400 users; cut orphaned accounts from 60 to zero in six months

The first says what you were given. The second says what changed because you were there.

BEFORE

Assisted with patching and updates

AFTER

Owned monthly patch cycle across 180 endpoints, raising compliance from 71% to 98%

‘Assisted with’ is the weakest phrase in CV writing. Own something, even something small.

BEFORE

Dealt with phishing emails reported by staff

AFTER

First responder for phishing reports, triaging ~15/month; wrote the triage steps the team now uses

Triage is security work. Name it as security work, and mention anything you left behind you.

BEFORE

AFTER

Good knowledge of SIEM tools

Built and tuned detections in Security Onion in a home lab;
six write-ups published on GitHub

‘Good knowledge of’ is unfalsifiable and every reader knows it. Evidence is falsifiable, which is why it counts.

BEFORE

Studying towards Security+

AFTER

CompTIA Security+ — exam booked 14 March 2026

A booked date is a commitment. ‘Studying towards’ could mean you opened a PDF in January.

4 • VERB BANK

Reach for the left-hand columns. Never the last one.

Ownership	Owned, ran, led, managed, introduced, rebuilt, established
Change	Reduced, raised, cut, eliminated, accelerated, automated, consolidated
Investigation	Triaged, investigated, traced, identified, escalated, contained
Building	Built, configured, tuned, scripted, deployed, documented, tested
Avoid	Assisted with, involved in, exposed to, familiar with, responsible for, helped

5 • THE CV ITSELF

Five sections, in this order. The order is the point.

For a career changer the strongest material is rarely employment history — it is the certifications, labs and self-directed work that prove you are serious. So security evidence goes above employment history, in the top third of page one, where a recruiter spends their first fifteen seconds. Almost every career-changer CV gets this the wrong way round.

- 1 Header
Name, town and county, phone, email, LinkedIn. No photograph, no date of birth, no marital status, no full postal address.
- 2 Professional statement
Three lines. What you are now, what you are moving toward, and the strongest single piece of evidence for it.
- 3 Security evidence
Certifications with dates, practical work with links, community involvement. This section is why you get the interview.
- 4 Employment history
Role, organisation, dates, then three or four bullets written the way section three shows. Numbers wherever they exist.

5 Education and training

Short, most recent first. A non-technical degree is not a problem and does not need explaining.

6 · BEFORE YOU SEND IT

Five checks that catch most of what goes wrong.

- ☐ Two pages, and the second page is not half empty
- ☐ Every claim on page one can be evidenced if asked about it in the room
- ☐ Their words from the job specification appear naturally, not stuffed
- ☐ Sent as PDF, named Firstname-Surname-CV.pdf
- ☐ Read aloud once, and read by one other person

7 · THE HALF OF THE MARKET YOU CANNOT SEE

A substantial share of UK security roles are never advertised — filled through internal moves, referrals, and specialist recruiters.

This is not a conspiracy, it is efficiency: hiring is expensive, and a manager who can fill a role through a trusted referral will. The implication for a career changer is that visibility is not optional networking advice — it is access to a market that is otherwise invisible to you.

- ☐ Approach two specialist cybersecurity recruiters — firms that do security, not general IT. Email beats a LinkedIn message for a first approach
- ☐ Attend one event this quarter — BSides, an OWASP chapter, an ISACA UK chapter meet, or a regional cyber cluster. You do not need to speak, only to turn up
- ☐ Tell four people in your existing network exactly what you are looking for, specifically enough that they would recognise it if they saw it
- ☐ Follow up every conversation within 48 hours while they still remember you

RECRUITERS I HAVE CONTACTED, AND WHEN

NEXT EVENT, AND THE DATE

WHO I WILL TELL THIS MONTH

8 · LINKEDIN, IN TWENTY MINUTES

Recruiters search it before they read your CV. Most career-changer profiles are still describing the job they are leaving.

- ☐ Headline names the destination, not just the origin — 'IT Support Engineer moving into Security Operations | Security+' beats 'IT Support Engineer'
- ☐ About section is the same three lines as your CV professional statement

- ☐ Certifications listed with dates, including the one that is booked
 - ☐ Featured section links your write-ups, GitHub or lab documentation
 - ☐ Open to work set for the specific role titles you are targeting, not 'any'
 - ☐ You have posted or commented at least once in the last month — a recruiter checking an empty profile learns nothing about you
-

Then comes the interview.

275 UK interview questions free and searchable, and a six-page preparation workbook alongside them.

ronanblake.co.uk/downloads

From The Honest Guide to Breaking Into UK Cybersecurity, chapter five, and Appendix B of The Honest Guide to UK Cybersecurity Interviews.