

<https://www.nab.org.uk/job-hunting-valuable-advice/>

Chris Waller shares his tips on Job Hunting with a visual impairment - Northamptonshire Association For The Blind

Chris Waller, a successful data analyst in the City of London who also has Stargardts, shares his valuable advice on looking for a job when you have a visual impairment.

Chris says "A large computer monitor, the right magnification software and an empathetic group of colleagues can put you in a position to do any task someone with 20/20 vision can do!"

Finding the right job can be a major challenge for most people, so it is especially difficult when you also have to overcome problems with a visual impairment. Simply searching for a job that you want and applying for it is not always easy, as there are many additional hurdles to overcome. "What jobs can a person with a visual impairment do?", "what adjustments are reasonable?" and "when should I disclose my impairment?" are all major questions which do not always have straight-forward answers.

The first thing to consider when looking for a job, whether you have a disability or not, is what sort of work you think you would have the most passion for, but also the skills and qualifications necessary to successfully do such a job. If you are an extrovert who likes their work to be very active, a job in child care or teaching may be suitable. If you see yourself more as someone who is a problem-solver but still capable of communicating their work to others in an accessible way, office-based work, such as in finance or law, may be for you. The key thing is to be honest with yourself about what you really want and also allow yourself the flexibility to try different things and see what works for you. Seldom do you see someone in life who chooses a career at twenty-one and sticks with it for the rest of their working life.

The added complication of a visual impairment is that there may well be a profession you have your eyes set on, but you are justifiably sceptical as to whether you could do such a job effectively. This is where the incredibly grey area of "reasonable adjustments" comes into play. If you want to work as an accountant, you may have already convinced yourself that the large

quantity of numerical data and spreadsheet work will make it impossible. I can say with confidence (given that I do data analytics myself) that adjustments can be made. A large computer monitor, the right magnification software and an empathetic group of colleagues, can put you in a position to do any task someone with 20/20 vision can do. However, if your dream is to become a jet pilot, it may be harder to justify to British Airways (and their passengers) that a blind man in control of a Boeing-747 is a good idea. Also, bear in mind that an employer is not doing you a favour by making adjustments – they are doing it so that you can do the best job possible for them. If you still are unable to do the job due to a lack of effort or sufficient skills, then you should expect to be treated the same way as any other person in that situation.

Deciding when to disclose your visual impairment can be tricky. If your impairment is not obvious at first glance, then there is nothing wrong with applying for a job, doing interviews and notifying them of your condition only if an offer is made. If your impairment is immediately evident, or the interview process requires you to do some reading at some point, then disclosing the issue as soon as you can would be advisable. If in doubt, just remember that it is illegal for a company to reject you based on your disability, provided the aforementioned reasonable adjustments can be made. There are some stories going around that many employers try to find excuses to avoid hiring someone with a disability as they do not want to deal with the hassle. I have, however, not found this to be true at all.

Finding a job is a big challenge in itself. Typical job search engines like 'Monster', 'Indeed' and 'Reed' have worked well for many people I have met. There are also charities like 'Blind in Business' that specialise in helping visually impaired people find work (as they did for me). They can give you a lot more detailed advice, as well as putting you in contact with recruiters and employers who can help find the right job for you. It is also worth researching recruitment companies that specialise in your own desired area of work. This can be the easiest way of finding out about interesting roles, as it is a recruiter's job to get you hired, so if they believe you are a strong candidate, they will do everything in their power to get you hired. For example, if you are looking for a role in banking or insurance, contacting companies like High Finance Group can help a great deal.

Performing well in interviews is also a big part of the process when getting the job you want. The structure of interviews can vary greatly between employers, with many preferring the traditional approach in which a series of standard questions will be thrown at you. Example questions you should prepare for include:

- Why do you want this role?
- Name three of your biggest strengths.
- Name three of your biggest weaknesses.
- Where do you see yourself in five years?
- When have you worked in a team, what role did you play and what were the results?

The trick is to be as succinct and sincere as possible, while still answering the question properly. Your answers should not be too short, but also not last twenty minutes. The best approach is to answer the question with a short point, e.g. 'my strength is communication', followed by an example, e.g. 'I have delivered many presentations at university in which I have explained difficult concepts in layman's terms to new students', capped off by a result, e.g. 'these students told me how much better they understood the concepts due to my explanations and I obtained a very high mark'. Of course, there are an unlimited number of questions you could be asked, so you might be surprised at just how often these cliché questions crop up in some form or another.

In conclusion, finding a job with a visual impairment can be challenging but still very achievable. It is important to remember to find the job that is right for you, be honest with yourself about what you can and cannot do, and to be as dedicated and hard-working as you can be when you get the job you want.