Another Dutch saying states “asking is for free” – but don’t be mistaken, no matter how direct the Dutch may seem, asking directly for a job is considered a bit too much. Anything else goes, however: asking for advice, asking someone to check your CV, asking someone to connect you with another person, asking to ‘shadow’ a person for a day whilst they perform their job… the only thing that is considered not done is asking for the job itself.

Below a few hints and tips on job hunting in the Netherlands, to guide you through what at first sight may seem a minefield of being direct and being modest at the same time.

The Job Hunters’ Club

Autumn is an intense job-hunting season for many. Summer is over, companies are looking for new people to put all the fresh after-summer ideas into practice, some people have decided it is time for a career change, and of course there are also a lot of fresh graduates looking for work. To help you get to grips with the dos and don’ts, we have reviewed the best job-hunting practices in the Netherlands. So welcome to the ‘Job Hunters’ Club’. Membership is free but the competition is fierce, so here are a few guidelines to increase your chances of success in the wilderness of the Dutch labour market.

Practice Your Poker Face

To begin with, you are likely already quite familiar with the Dutch culture, but there is more to it than meets the foreign eye: being able to cycle your orange bike with a cheese sandwich in your hand is not going to be of much help in a job interview. What could help you jumpstart your career, however, is knowing more about the Dutch work culture. For example, in general, every team member has an equal say and is expected to contribute to decision-making processes, even new employees and interns. Note that this is not to say your suggestions won’t be publicly criticised… It is true that the Dutch are extremely direct. Yet, this should not be mistaken for rudeness (piece of advice: practice your poker face in advance). Another important aspect of the work environment in the Netherlands is the agenda – if a meeting is not on the agenda, then it can be considered non-ex-
istent. Also, keeping this agenda in mind, make sure to plan your activities well in advance and to keep meticulous track of the meetings, because consensus-building is key to the Dutch work culture.

**Understand the Dutch**

If the above comments about Dutch directness and the need for consensus-building sound unfamiliar to you, we advise you to become better acquainted with the Dutch and their work culture. Talk to your Dutch friends about work life or follow a course, such as “What Makes the Dutch Dutch”. Understanding the cultural DNA of office life in a country helps you anticipate and cope with what is required in the process of getting hired. For a Dutch recruiter, motivation, openness and a no-nonsense attitude are key requirements, for instance. Particularly motivation is considered important. You need to be able to explain why you want to work for their organisation, why you have picked this particular job and why you choose to stay in the Netherlands. Come up with good and accurate answers. Even if your reason for staying in the Netherlands is that the love of your life is Dutch and she/he is the reason for your staying in the Netherlands, despite the fact that you do not quite understand the Dutch people yet... try and come up with an answer that shows a bit more interest in Dutch society and culture. Dutch directness has its limits and it’s easier to catch a bee with honey than with acid, and the same goes for Dutch recruiters.

**Polish Your Best Weapons**

Although half of your (job) hunting success will depend on your being in the right place at the right time, having the right ‘equipment’ matters just as much. A checklist of your strongest ‘weapons’ should include a motivation letter customised to each company and position, and a concise one to two-page CV in reverse chronological order. As mentioned before, Dutch recruiters like a no-nonsense approach, hence CVs should be easy-to-read, concise, relevant and short. There is no need to list all your tasks, but it is appreciated if the CV helps the recruiter understand your main responsibilities. The Dutch are also quite keen on extra-curricular activities. It signals what defines you as a person and is seen as essential info for a job interview. Once you have all your job hunting gear polished and ready, you can find your target job position in Dutch
newspapers, through private and temporary recruitment agencies, on company websites, and at career fairs. More often than not, speculative applications prove to be an effective job hunting technique in the Netherlands. But don’t expect the Dutch recruiters to be easy – the job interview is the biggest hurdle in the process, so have your answers ready about leisure activities, strengths and weaknesses, as well as future goals, so that you can turn the interview into a success.

Play the Foreigner Card Right
Perhaps most importantly, you are not Dutch and instead of considering that a drawback, turn it into an ‘added-value’: you take risks, think outside the box, have gained independence, are open-minded and have strengthened your determination. Think of examples in your life as a foreign jobseeker where you had to use the above skills, and try and incorporate these into your CV and application letter. Help a prospective employer understand that leaving your comfort zone at home has made you a more adaptive and flexible person. Under no circumstances play down your unique foreign factor! That doesn’t mean that you shouldn’t make an effort to learn Dutch, but it does mean that you have something that local job applicants don’t have, such as a knowledge of a different language or of a different culture.

And one last piece of advice: it’s probably a good idea to read up on legalities concerning work permits in the Netherlands too, so that you have the information and answers ready for the recruiter (better safe than sorry!).

The Power of Networking
The good news is that you are not alone in the Job Hunters’ Club – don’t underestimate the power of networking with your fellow internationals and locals who know their way around the Netherlands. To make you a job hunting pro, we have mentioned a few further sources on the left and ELM offers a comprehensive career guide book Looking for Work in the Netherlands. Readers of this XPat Journal can get a copy at a 10% discount by quoting this code: Xpat2016. Enjoy the hunt!

MORE INFO
Workshop: “What Makes the Dutch Dutch?” for newly arrived expats & partners. This workshop gives you a head start when settling in Dutch society. Aimed at people who want to make the best of their stay in the Netherlands and who want to understand the Dutch and their society quickly. (www.labourmobility.com/workshops-corporate/expats/)

Career guide: Looking for Work in the Netherlands: job hunting tips and tricks for the Dutch labour market. It focuses on how to write a CV, what skills employers are looking for, and offers advice from other foreign job seekers and how they made it in the Netherlands. ISBN 978-90-5896-058-0 (www.labourmobility.com/looking-for-work-in-the-netherlands/)


ABOUT THE AUTHOR
Nannette Ripmeester, Expertise in Labour Mobility (ELM), www.labourmobility.com
WHETHER YOU MOVE ONCE OR MULTIPLE TIMES, WHETHER YOU ARE ABOUT TO MOVE FOR THE FIRST TIME OR HAVE ALREADY MOVED, THIS BOOK WILL MAKE IT POSSIBLE FOR YOU TO ENJOY THE MOBILE LIFE.

The Mobile Life
A new approach to moving anywhere
By Diane Lemieux and Anne Parker

Whether you move once or multiple times, whether you are about to move for the first time or have already moved, this book will make it possible for you to enjoy the mobile life.

Van Buttingha Wichers notarissen
Civil law notaries in international family law, corporate law and real estate law

Lange Voorhout 24
2514 EE The Hague
070 356 68 00
info@vbwnotarissen.nl
www.vbwnotarissen.nl

WWW.THEMOBILELIFE.EU