

Transcript | AI Skills Lab: AI for Job Applications

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Hello, everybody! Hello, and welcome to this edition of the AI Skills Lab.

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covering AI for job applications. My name is Joel Smith, I am the Events Manager here at Apolitical.

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Uh, it would be great to hear from all of you, so please do post in the chat where you're joining us from, and what organization you work for.

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Uh, we'll get to that, and I'll have a little look through and read out some of the intros. Um, today we're going to be exploring how AI can help take the stress out of job applications and communicate.

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your experience with ease and confidence. If you've ever stared at a blank form wondering where to start, or agonized over every line of a cover letter, then this session is for you.

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For those of you who may be joining us for the first time, first of all, a big welcome.

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Apolitical is the world's largest community for government, used by half a million public servants and policymakers, over 170 countries worldwide.

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Providing governments with the tools, skills, and networks they need to become more efficient and tech-enabled organizations.

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Okay, I can see the chat is already popping off, so I'm just going to jump in and see who we've got. Um, we've got Simon dialing in from a windy, cold, and wet Sterling, Scotland. Welcome, Simon.

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Julia from DFE Families Group. Uh, we've got people... oh, they're coming thick and fast now, um, lots of people from all over the UK, I see. Welcome, welcome.

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Terry and Victoria, British Columbia, Canada, welcome. Uh, it is also very wet and drizzly here in London, so, uh, yeah, we're right with you.

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Um, well, loads coming in, uh, really lovely to see. Too many for me to keep up with, but please do keep them coming. It's always lovely just to see where everyone is joining us from.

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Um, so, as I mentioned. Today's session is going to be a compact 30 minutes.

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tightly focused on building your AI skills for job applications.

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We know that as public servants, you are likely short on time, and we want these events to suit your learning needs and work with your busy schedules.

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We're going to get into the presentation very shortly, but just before we do, we're thrilled to extend an invitation to join over 10,000 of your peers in public service from across the globe in our career development community.

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This is an online community to share conversations, insights, ideas, and resources on career development.

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through connection and conversation with peers across the globe.

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And this space is open to all, so whether you've made several career changes, or are thinking about your first.

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The link is in the resources tab at the bottom of your screens, and I believe my colleague Natalia has just posted that in the chat as well, so we'd love to see your voices in there.

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Um, a couple of quick technical notes to get out the way before we dive into today's session.

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This event is recorded for on-demand viewing on the Apolitical website.

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Closed captions are available, and they can be triggered, uh, toggled on or off in your screen settings.

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Okay, on to the main event. It is my pleasure to welcome.

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Olga Popofseva, who is our speaker for today. Olga is a learning and development professional leadership and career coach.

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As the founder of the Coaching by AI community, she works at the intersection of AI and career transitions.

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Helping people to use AI responsibly and effectively in career decisions and job applications.

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Olga has worked in complex, regulated global organizations, including BP and GSK, leading reskilling and capability transformations during business and technological change.

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She focuses on enabling employability, future-proof skills, and career agility.

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You can read Olga's full bio by visiting the resources tab at the bottom of your Zoom screens and heading to the speaker section.

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Olga, it's an absolute pleasure to have you here with us.

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I'm going to hand over to you now for the next 15 minutes or so, and then we'll have a few minutes at the end reserved for a Q&A, so attendees, please do remember to get any questions into that Q&A tab at the bottom of your screen.

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But, Olga, the floor is yours. Welcome.

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Thank you, Joel, for the introduction. It's wonderful. It's a real, real privilege to partner with Aberlatico and to support people.

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working in public services, very welcome to everyone. You're joining this session from all around the world, I could see this in the chat.

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But, uh, we share one reality. The job market has fundamentally changed.

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And the economic pressure organizations are harming far more cautiously now.

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Technology is evolving so fast. that skills learned 5 years ago may already become.

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outdated. So, many roles now attract hundreds of applications in just days. Look at LinkedIn.

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And if your CV passes automated screening, it may get just.

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20 seconds of human attention. Look, the job search has never been easy.

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But today, it can feel like entering a dog maze.

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few doors, crowded paths. And almost no signposts.

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Even if you apply for roles, you know you can do.

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you still hit dead ends, lock doors, and silence in response to your application.

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And SII reshapes entire industries, the maze itself keeps changing, the rules keep changing.

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It's understandable if you feel uncertain or anxious. much of the job search, we should admit.

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is beyond our control. some lock as well, but not all of it.

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What if you could equip yourself. with a map, some milestones.

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And modern tools. To navigate this ace, my is just a bit more easier for you.

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Today, I will share a few examples of ready-to-use, simple tools.

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And also some more advanced, more strategic approaches. I will be referring only to free widely accessible generative AI tool models.

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So, everyone can take away something useful. something that you can implement and try and experiment straight away.

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There is far more you can do, but this is a short session, so let's take it as a starting point.

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Let's begin! Moving to the next slide.

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So, many people start job search by updating their CV.

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Treating it as a record of rules and responsibilities, your career history.

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That's not wrong, but when you try to compress years of experience into two pages.

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it becomes tricky. And I always ask my coaching clients, how do you decide what says and what goes.

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in your city. The first truth about updating CV is this.

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your experience is your past. while your CP should take you into the future.

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That's why I say change the starting point. Start with reflecting upon your career and skills, and AI can be a very powerful, powerful tool for that.

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Next slide, please. So, moving to the second truth, uh, about CV.

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Yesterday is not really about your experience, as you mostly think.

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It's about how are they specific. a hiring manager, a recruiter, even a screening system.

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You can use AI as a mirroring. It's a very powerful tool. Upload your CV and prompt AI to act as a job market analyst.

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Here's on the screen, you can see a ready-to-use prompt. I didn't plan to read it, and you don't need to take notes, of course.

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Uh, you will have the slides. What you get from this is that external perspective.

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You see what recruiter actually sees in you as a professional, your capabilities, your transferable skills.

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Even the types of organizations the recruiter would label you as a great fit.

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It's very powerful. And if you're ready to experiment a bit more, try, for example, Notebook Alam.

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And we'll upload your CV. And then, picture this. It generates an actual podcast about you.

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two speakers, discuss your career. your skills, your unique experiences.

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Is it surreal? Yes. Is it insightful? Absolutely. So, you might discover skills or experiences.

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that you hadn't realized were unique. And you are probably taking for granted.

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You might spot gaps. things your CV doesn't communicate well, and often you get a little confidence boost.

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hearing some great positive feedback. Moving next.

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So, here is an approach that can give you a real strategic edge.

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If you were walking... if you would be walking with a professional coach, this is the approach they would guide you normally through.

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But with AI, you can do a lot by yourself.

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Don't start with your... start your job search with your CV.

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reverse engineer your search. start with understanding of what employers are really looking for.

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Research the market signals. And this is where AI can do something that's almost impossible.

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for us to do, because AI has access to so much information.

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You can find the challenges, the in-demand skills, the places of hiring.

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Then you can map your experience to actual, real roles.

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and role clusters, where you are a strong match.

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This approach is specially available if you are applying for senior roles, or if you are in professional areas with.

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a wide range of transferable skills, like public services.

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You will need a sequence of connected prompts for this research, and in combination with tools like Aplexity Spaces or.

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ChatGBT projects, AI just becomes your powerful research partner.

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And helps you to connect the doors across multiple, multiple sources of information.

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In the appendix of the slide deck, you'll find.

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ready-to-use examples, uh, for the steps that marked with the red dots on the slide.

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Just play with them, experiment. you might get a lot of very valuable insights.

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Moving next to the next slide. So, how you can use AI to tailor your CV.

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for a role. Next slide, please.

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Before we dive into practicalities, I need you to hear this.

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AI anxiety is real. There are no clear rules yet. Some guidelines, but it's all changing. No clarity.

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So, just a few principles to hopefully help you.

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USAI, of course, ethically and responsibly. It is a tool. It can help you with efficiency, clarity, research.

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focus. But you should never make. you... it should never make you sound like someone else, or like a robot. It's not what you want.

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Always remember that judgment and ownership over the content and what has been produced remains yours.

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AI should assist you, not right for you, not to speak for you.

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I would say, as a coach, I would say the most effective approach is to prompt AI to be your mentor.

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Not a ghostwriter. It would mean it gives you feedback, insights, examples it teaches you.

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And you get the skills, rather than written-for-you content, then you will struggle down to explain.

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And just remember, at every moment. The credibility of your CV or application is never worth taking.

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a risk. Next slide, please.

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So, let me tell you what has changed in the job market.

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that's a big shift. A few years ago, you could deploy in volume.

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sending your CV to all possible roles, uh, that broadly match your experience. Statistically.

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The more you apply, the higher your chances are.

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That doesn't work anymore. Today, before your application reaches a human, a recruiter.

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It often goes through a screening system. This system assigns a match score.

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It doesn't reject what the science and match score.

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And applications with higher scores are prioritised. And here is the key point.

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While this system reviews used to be in full.

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Human recruiters scan in seconds. And recruiters are not expected to assume that complexity... that complexity of your work.

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They won't assume evidence of your match. If it's hidden somewhere among the generic statements.

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Which they actually call CV noise. You can be perfectly qualified.

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But if the evidence of fit isn't visible at a glance in your CV.

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you are effectively form invisible. So, it's better to assess your fit before you actually apply, and focus your time.

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on roles that genuinely make sense for you, for your career, and give you chances to be a good candidate.

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You can follow this, uh, sequence of prompts. Step 1, prompt.

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AI to extract what matters most to the recruiter.

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Pause and reflect. Take your time, don't fully trust what you see, what you get from AI.

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you need to have your judgment. is this role really worth your time?

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how close is your experience? And these are kind of questions that you would want to apply.

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If yes, step two is to assess your strengths and gaps in your CV, in your actual CV that you have.

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And at this point, you will know how much effort is needed to make the evidence of your fit obvious to a recruiter.

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And if it's still worth applying, then move to the next step.

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Tell your city, ensure... The evidence shines and can be noticed by a recruiter just at a glance.

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Moving to the next slide, please.

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So, I mentioned CV noise. that's my generic statements in your CV look good on paper.

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But tell Recruiter. nothing. Making it just sound like everyone else, like millions of the CDs that they get.

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Compare this to bullet points. Which one shows impact, scale, and accountability better?

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And I know it's not always easy to come up with.

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an impact statement. And actually, most achievements at work are shared, not necessary soloins.

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And here is how you can prompt AI to help you to turn a generic bullet point in your CV into an impact statement.

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That would show your skills and value delivered. Notice. AI isn't asked to write for you, it's asked to coach you.

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You give AI the substance, the content. And it helps to structure it.

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In this way, you keep your style and you keep your experience authentic.

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Moving to the next slide, please. So, this is another common example.

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Sometimes the job spec would use language you don't naturally use.

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Terminology varies across organisations. You say stakeholder management, they emphasize.

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cross-government collaboration. And if you do have that experience, you can use AI to help you.

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to breach that semantic difference. And ESV will just resonate better with people who are reading it.

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Moving to the next slide. So, once you land the interview.

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you'll definitely will. You can use AI to help you to prepare.

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And I would like to focus. just on two things.

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that everyone feels quite nervous about. The questions you're going to be asked, and your answers.

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What if we could predict the questions? and actually practice them before the interview.

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Let's have a look how practical we can do it.

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Moving to the next slide, thank you. Let's take the first interview just as an example.

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Often it's with a recruiter, so it's a very short interview. It's not about depth.

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But rapid signal extraction for recruiter. The recruiter basically has one thought in mind.

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Can I confidently present this candidate? to the hiring manager.

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First, you can prompt AI to extract the recruiter's decision criteria for this role.

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Then, with the next prompt and sequence, you're asked to predict questions specific to your experience.

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And you basically get an interview playbook. The questions won't be 100% exact, the ones that you will be asked.

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But my coaching practice shows that the probability is very, very high.

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And it gives you a real opportunity to get better prepared.

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Moving to the next slide. Finally.

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AI can become your interview practice partner. Use this prompt to set up an interview simulator.

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And if you use prompts in sequence or within, for example, ChatGPT project.

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or perplexity to space. there will be meaningfully connected to the outputs from the previous prompts.

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So your interview simulator becomes specific for this role, specific for your background and CV that you have submitted as part of your application.

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And also, at least ChatGPT and Gemini. Uh, Germany will let you speak... speak your answers instead of typing them.

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So it feels like a real mocha interview. And this is where the magic happens. You practice handling tough questions.

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Specific to the role requirements, specific to your experience, and you get immediate feedback.

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And you build confidence. in his face... in a safe space.

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So, the value for you from this exercise will really last.

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Because many of these questions will be reusable across interviews.

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It's truly worth your time. I really encourage you to experiment with it.

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Moving to the next slide, please. Oh, and this is the final slide.

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So, as a close of our session, I want to say the job markets will continue to be challenging.

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And I hope today you picked up some useful insights and also some.

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principles, how to approach to a job search, and how to use AI to help you.

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But even with the best tools. you still need resilience.

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agency, and lasting confidence to navigate that difficult maze.

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And this is where human support really matters. That's why I'm in the process of developing a framework.

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That combines human, highly personalized coaching with AI tools.

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And, uh, I believe everyone deserves a meaningful, fulfilling career, and in this way, I want to make career coaching more accessible and more efficient for people.

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So if this is something resonates with you, and you don't want to miss when it's ready, feel free to connect and send me a message on LinkedIn.

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And thank you very much for your time and attention today, and I will be looking forward to any questions you may share.

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Brilliant. Thank you so much for that, Olga, that was absolutely brilliant presentation with loads of, uh.

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really great insights, and I mean, we can see the emoji reactions are firing off, so, uh, the people... the people loved it.

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Um, remember, please do keep sharing any other questions you have for Olga. We've got a couple in there already, and we'll try and get through as many as we can. We've got a load pre-submitted as well, but do get them in the Q&A tab at the bottom of your screen if you have a question.

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Um, just before we dive into the Q&A, I just want to let you know that we've also created a great follow-on resource.

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to today's topic that we think you'll find useful.

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teaser lesson from one of apolitical's most popular courses on how to write a clear and concise job application.

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Uh, to receive your link, go to the Career Development Community after the event, and leave a comment on the post that's pinned to the top of the page, so it's... I put a post.

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in the community. So if you comment on that, uh, we will send you the resource by email later this week. I believe my colleague Natalia's just posted that in the chat as well.

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Okay, on to the Q&A. So, um... First up, Olga, I have a question here. I suppose a lot of people might resonate with this, and the first said, to achieve these results, or get this help.

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They're asking, are we to put our entire CV into the AI agent? Uh, the... the... Questioner is a little uncomfortable about doing this for the sake of having their information out there without knowing or understanding the full range of how it.

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might be used. Do you have any kind of tips on how to get these results without necessarily putting all of your data.

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You know, and I think it's a very, very important question, particularly in the context of public services.

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Enter.

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So, I would say remove all the information from your CV that might be sensitive or might be identifying your personal data.

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from name, address, and often even names of the departments.

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That he used to work, but... When removing your job roles or organizations you worked for, instead of name, you can have a description of that organization.

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So as AI could pick up the scale, the complexity of the... and specifics of the industry.

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Nice. So yeah, a little, I suppose a little more legwork from your side in filling out that information, but then, yeah, you can kind of, uh, not have to submit any sensitive data or information.

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Brilliant, and we've had a couple of questions on one of your slides. You mentioned, uh, the ATS perspective.

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Mm-hmm.

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Would you mind just elaborating on what an ATS perspective is, and how to create an ATS-compliant CV?

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Oh, yes, uh, it wasn't kind of the topic of this particular session, so I wasn't diving into it.

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Yeah, AHAS screening systems, one of the first tips, and definitely do it, use a very simple template.

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just one column template. Uh, that's the easiest, uh, what, ATS systems can read.

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images, you don't need them, uh, nothing complicated visually, no design.

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simple, uh, but you will still want... you will still want to make it your CV visually readable and easy to understand and follow for a recruiter as well.

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So for that, use bold text font, for example.

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play with the size of the text, play with the structure, but avoid, like, design, uh, design things.

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And, uh, in terms of the overall, you know.

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Depending on what ATS the employer has. Some of them just looking for the same matching combination of words.

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But many ATS systems now are moving into using AI as well, so they are more capable to really, kind of, interpret and connect the dots and so on.

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Definitely avoid any, like, tricks that some people try to do when you use white font.

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And you type in your CV, a lot of information, hopefully.

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that ATS will read it, but recruiter won't see it, so you kind of... even probably, you're trying with your best intent just to show all the relevant.

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But, you know, if the recruiter will read it, that would be overwhelming.

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The thing is, what ATS highlights. might end up in front of recruiters' eyes, and recruiter will be confused with the mismatch between what they see in the actual CV they are reading.

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And what the report from the ATS system provided for them.

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Brilliant. Hopefully that has clarified, um. Brilliant, thank you. Um, we've got one final question here from Gino, which actually I'm going to sort of roll into a pre-submitted question as well.

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Gino's asked for any advice on how to use AI for reducing word count content for job applications. Gino mentioned that they find it is a key challenge when applying for roles in the civil service, struggling to get the examples across in the maximum word count available.

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And I'm just going to roll that in also with a pre-submitted question around, um.

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using, kind of, AI without it becoming, like, generic. Do you have any tips on how to kind of reduce word count, but.

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AI can also outputs can veer towards being a little bit more generic. Have you got any tips on how to, kind of, reduce word count, but keep it with your character?

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Yeah. I would now be asking AI to write for me, because what I notice, it's so creative, it's so easy, starts to change my writing.

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What I ask AI gave me 3 examples how I can express differently, and then I become... pick up the bond that is the most close for my style, to my style and what I want to get across.

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I can ask for synonyms to play with. Uh, you can also play... it's always difficult to really come up with concise interview. You can also play with the, um, the flow of your CV, I can say.

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So, if you imagine you're describing your responsibilities within a company, what helps.

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If you have 3, 4 duties, that's what you normally see in most cities.

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And then, you would say, examples of projects, or examples of accomplishments, and then you have.

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for each job that you had, you have a library of the most things that you... the things you're proud of, and depending on what role you apply.

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Um, as part of examples related to that job, you just choose the example that is really a great evidence for this particular application.

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So in this way, you don't need to play so much and so hard, reducing the word count, what you play.

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is with picking up the right evidence points for your CV.

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And that evidence point will be different for different role. So, for example, in a... in a.

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do the one job, you would have, like, responsibilities.

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They will stay more or less consistent, they need to be quite concise, but you will also have examples of accomplishments, and that would be your main selling point, and that would be your differentiator, and that would be.

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how you can really make ATS system. to see that great fit candidate in you.

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Brilliant, thank you. Yeah, super, super helpful. Okay, I'm afraid that is all we have time for. God, this... flew by. Um, so I would just like to ask everyone to join me in giving Olga a massive virtual round of applause.

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Um, brilliant, brilliant content, some really useful tips in there. And most importantly, thank you to all of you, the attendees, for investing in your learning and being so engaged in this topic. And the team's just going to pull up a quick poll, if you can give us a rating on 1 to 10, that would be fantastic.

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Before you go, and while you're responding to that, I just want to share a few more events that you can register for.

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Um, and just a reminder, if you can't attend live, we will send you the recording of all of our events that you register for. So we've got hacks for working with spreadsheets coming up next week, where you'll learn some clever tricks to stop spending hours formatting spreadsheets.

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And at the end of February, we've got our next installment of the AI Skills Lab, AI for Research, where an expert will help you speed up your research with AI.

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Okay, that is really all we have time for today. We hope you found it helpful. Another huge thank you to Olga for coming and taking us through all of that brilliant content. And, uh, thank you to you for taking time out of your busy days.

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Keep an eye out for the email coming your way with today's recording and resources, and we hope to see you at another apolitical event very soon.

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Thank you very