



It is not unusual for Private Equity firms to receive thousands of CVs per year, and even more for the major funds. Similarly, investment professionals tend to get bombarded by emails and calls requesting information and help to secure an interview. So, how can you differentiate yourself amongst all those CVs?

1. A mere Oxbridge/Ivy League degree + work experience at top firms doesn't cut it

In Europe, Private Equity firms may only hire 100 or so new associates every year in total. The top firms may only hire for one dozen positions per year, maybe less. To illustrate what you are up against, the Private Equity clubs from Harvard and Wharton have more than 800 members each. If you add to that number the analyst and junior associates classes of Goldman Sachs, Morgan Stanley, McKinsey, Bain & Co, etc., you will be very quickly in the several thousands of well-educated, well-trained candidates who will compete against you for a handful of jobs.

2. Find a "marketing angle" that makes you unique

Your marketing angle will come from different dimensions:

- Geography: Obviously, language is a big differentiator in Europe. But only talk about the languages you speak fluently or the regions you actually worked/lived in. Then reach out to people from those regions when sending your CV, and mention this clearly to the headhunters. Note that if you speak a language but never worked in the country, that may be a handicap, so you need to mention that you spent a number of years in said country.
- Sector expertise: Very useful for sector-focused funds or funds organised in verticals.
- Specific deal exposure: Mentioning transactions where you either worked with the private equity fund or where it was an under-bidder is a good angle to start a discussion with a PE fund, as they will be able to test your understanding and abilities very quickly. This may backfire though - make sure you know the deal inside and out.

- Transaction types: If you work for a boutiques or mid market of focused banks or consulting firms, this will be well received by small cap and mid-market funds.

- Educational background: Use your alumni base as much as you can, but don't limit yourself to your own school. For example, a top MBA is likely to be well received by somebody from another top school.

- Company alumni: Similarly, reach out to people who worked at the same firm than you. Again, you don't need to limit yourself to the same firms. For instance if you worked at McKinsey and you are reaching out to somebody who worked at a rival firm, it is still more likely to work than reaching out to an ex-banker.

- Other connections: Ex-military, specific background (i.e. if you studied medicine, law, etc.), same associations, etc.

If you build your profile along those verticals, you will now see that you can differentiate yourself effectively and make yourself much more memorable to the firms.

3. Tailor your CV and angle to different firms

I would advise against sending generic CVs to every firm or headhunter, hoping that something will fit your profile. You need to target funds, and then tailor your message accordingly. For example, if you are in a specific sector team, try to diversify your CV if you apply to a generalist fund (i.e. less detail about the sector/deals, highlight some other experiences, etc). If you apply to an all-British fund, there is no need to mention your international experience or language abilities at length, etc.

4. Personality is the ultimate differentiator

All the above advice will help you get to the interview stage. However, in the end, the "fit" is what really differentiates one candidate from another, all else being equal (i.e. same performance in the technical tests, modelling tests, etc, which is under your control if you practise). At all times during the process, do not forget to maintain a well-mannered and humble attitude, which, surprisingly, is an area where many candidates fall short. If you have the right profile and manage to differentiate yourself, build a story, maintain the right attitude and prepare, getting a job in private equity will just be a matter of time!

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