

Candidate Tips: How to Write A Successful Curriculum Vitae (CV). . .

- The sole purpose of your CV or Résumé is to get you an interview. Once your name is on the interview short list, your CV has done its job.
- Your CV should be a concise yet informative account of your commercial and / or educational career
- A CV is NOT an autobiography, it should only reflect the salient aspects of your career and education in a logical format, with an emphasis on the detail relative to your target job opportunities.

Your CV is the only part of the job selection process over which you have 100% control. You can control how you look on your CV. It goes without saying that your CV should be error free, impeccably neat and easy to read.

This does not make it any less daunting though trying to put into words, on few pages, the information that will convey to a hiring manager the complexities of what you have done, specifically what you have done well, with what tools, in an environment specific to the organisations that you have worked in, what your strengths are and how you can add value to their organisation so that they will consider you for the opportunity that you believe awaits you.

What is a CV? What is the detail you need to add in, and to leave out, if your search for a career move is to succeed?

- We are agreed that the primary function of a CV is to secure an interview. As such, this is a sales tool to highlight what you would bring to the organisation if you were hired based on what you have actually done in the past – in essence you should consider this to be your first interview.
- Hiring managers hire people to get problems solved, to develop perceived opportunities, and to produce results to help them and their team succeed.
- This means you need your CV to focus on the details from your work history that positively address the needs and requirements, and the priorities and preferences as detailed in the job specification and other information you can obtain from your recruitment consultant and background research on the business and its industry will help you to determine what that is.
- Hiring managers are always pressed for time and your application will appear before them in a pile of other CVs, so you need to keep yours focused on the details that would be important to the reader, and stripped of all the other possible details not relevant to the job to which you are applying.
- You want to focus on bullet point details for the positions you list from your work history, your educational record and so on that show how well you did and how valuable a contribution you made. This means bullet points that quantify your performance where possible and it means limiting or completely eliminating the “responsible for” bullet points that simply say you did the tasks that would be listed in a standard job description.
- In this, it is vitally important to keep in mind that your CV is NOT your biography. It is a tool you use to document and market your skills, energy, enthusiasm and approach and activities you executed in and what you actually produced when carrying out a specific given job and how you measured your success in completing these assignments.

Most of us have at least some problems deciding what the best details are to include of all the many possible points we could add, and how best to write them. This goes way beyond formatting that final copy to determining its most effective, relevant and accurate content. Keep it SMART – specific, measureable, accurate, real and time-lined.

Writing and formatting are the two last steps in preparing a CV and whether you do this completely yourself or with the aid of a professional, it is the specific content, detail and logical structure, prior to the actual scripting of your CV that will determine its effectiveness in landing that interview for you.

Starting out with a focus on the preliminaries:

- **Contact Information** This includes your name, address, date of birth, contact phone numbers (mobile, home, work) and if possible your contact email address, preferably your personal email details.
- **Education** Include a summary of your educational and professional training. Education, like experience should be set out in reverse chronological order. List third level and secondary schooling. When listing courses you did in college or during your commercial career, list in order of relevance to the job you are applying for or in chronological order, most recent first.
- **Career, Technical and Business Skills Summary** Include a summary index of your core competencies both technical and business skills – this index should be reflected in the detail allowing the reader to determine your depth of expertise in this competency. Summarise your industry and business function process domain knowledge
- **Work Experience and Achievements** This is where you list in reverse chronological order:
 - Previous Employers www.previousemployer.com (if valid) plus a sentence or two which explains their business. Give the reader an insight into the actual business of your employers – don't make any assumptions.
 - We would often advise against using Job Title in the CV and replace with Role name as quite often the Job Title may not accurately reflect the job that you did whereas Role name can better address this e.g. JOB TITLE: VP Commercial Process Architecture versus ROLE: Senior Business Analyst / Team Lead
 - What YOU did, Why (business drivers), Where, When, and
 - How. ..you need to convey in detail HOW you approached the piece of work or project including use of particular skills (planning, design, interviewing, analysis, research, technologies, methodologies, tools, creativity, etc. and an indication of your actual deliverables – what you produced in conjunction with what the team) produced – highlighting your own contribution is key.
 - Who you did it for
 - When you did it
- Draw out the detail from your work history that would go into the detailed employment history. That includes understanding what the “responsible for” points are, but it should go beyond that to developing your own set of quantifiable performance points too -Employers know that the best predictor of future performance is past performance, so emphasize your achievements.
 - “increased sales by 23% to the value of €xxxxxx over the first six months on the job”,
 - “managed a team of 24 employees”,
 - “designed and programmed a suite of test harnesses using. . .”,
 - “managed a programme budget of €2 million”,

“designed and documented a fully validated functional specification in line with recognised industry standards, future proofing the company’s competitive edge in the areas of ... “

- **Achievements** When listing them, remember that a responsibility is different from an achievement. Selling IT solutions or products is a responsibility while increasing sales of IT solutions by 22% in the first 12 months is an achievement. Rule of thumb question is: does the achievement clearly explain how I added-value to this company and does it give an indication of / quantify the value brought by my own contribution.

Important to list those achievements that connect into the requirements and goals of the position you seek. Once again, the objective of your CV is to show from your past record what you can do, what creativity or pragmatism you applied to the task and how well you can do it moving forward, addressing the needs and responsibilities that hiring managers seek to get the job done with a new hire.

Looks and Content Matter

- **Length of CV** Depending on your experience your CV can and should be up to 4 to 5 pages – relevant detail is vital
- **Format of CV**
 - Use wide margins and plenty of white space – never clutter
 - Avoid excessive use of bolded text, bullets and underlining
- **Spelling Check** Use a spell checker or dictionary – but don’t only rely on that – get a friend to proof read for you
- **Put Life into the words in your CV**
 - Choose positive words and use short, clear sentences
 - Use active voice – ‘managed’ instead of ‘the management of’, ‘designed’ not designing and be sure to document what you mean by “managed” or “designed” and the only way to do this is to document the actual tasks / or steps you completed and what you produced as every stage of the project
- **Desk check for Completeness** - Make sure your CV meets the requirements set out in relevant job advertisements. Best way to do this is to review the bullet points in the job description and for those that reflect your own skills and experience, check to see if you have reflected them (both the summary and the detail) with sufficient emphasis, using similar words / labels in your CV.

Tell The Truth:

If you cannot justify every part of your CV, you will instantly lose your credibility. This does not mean that you have to include every detail, it means you have to be honest about the detail you have included.