



# CV TIPS

## How good is your CV or Resume?

CV's are very subjective. What one person reading your CV gains might be quite different from another. The reason you reach the "selected for interview" stage may differ but will always depend on a few critical variables.

### Within your control:

- Submitting a substandard CV or letter
- Missing the deadline
- Not submitting a personalised letter or additional documentation required
- Suitability – miss-matching skills and experience to job COMMON ERRORS
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### SEVEN COMMON CV WRITING ERRORS

Human Resource departments and hiring managers generally have little patience for reading CVs and resumes. They will be more likely to reject your application than think about calling you for any clarification! Below is a list of seven common CV writing errors discovered on many applications:

#### 1) Poor presentation

The presentation of your CV is equally as crucial as the actual content. You must be very careful and stick to a simple and professional layout. Fancy borders, images and confusing graphics all take the eye away from the content and can also take too long to load. We believe that as many as one third of all candidates with excellent experience ruin their hopes with a poorly presented CV or resume - don't let this happen to you!

#### 2) Resume is the incorrect length

You will not gain credit for writing a 3000-word report. You will also fail to be successful if you choose to summarise your working life within one page. Every country has very different criteria as to CV length, so it is important that your CV or resume is prepared to their particular requirements.

#### 3) CV fails to add any value

If your CV has been submitted and is similar to the Cvs of another 40 or 50 candidates, it is likely chance that you will end up missing out and will never receive that all-important phone call. Your resume must present the 'WOW' factor so that it is your name that is at the top of the pile.

#### 4) **Bad spelling and grammatical errors**

Your spelling and grammar should be perfect on every CV that is sent to a prospective employer. When you are in a hurry, mistakes are inevitable. When writing a CV or resume, great time and care must be taken in order to prevent silly mistakes. Printing out your resume is also important so that you can see how each section looks to the reader, as well as checking page breaks and formatting.

#### 5) **Unimportant information**

It is advisable to ensure that any activities written on your CV have some form of relevance to your career. By placing irrelevant information on your CV demonstrates a lack of focus. For example, if you completed a 4-week Spanish course whilst travelling in Peru in 1987, this is not relevant if you are now applying for a senior executive position.

#### 6) **Lack of focus**

It can be easy to write your CV without focusing on the job which you are applying for. If you decide to do this, you will inevitably create confusion. Ask yourself the question: will my potential employer want a candidate who has a mixed bag of skills or will they want a candidate with a focus that meets their criteria?

It is essential that your resume and cover letter match the competencies, skills and experience which they are looking for, in addition to quickly recognising what value you can add to the organisation.

#### 7) **Picture perfect**

It is not advisable to display a photo on your CV or resume unless you are applying for a modelling role or similar.



### **REJECTIONS**

When your CV is rejected, it is very important to obtain feedback. This can be frustrating as very often there is a lack of response provided or a standard 'Dear John' reply.

#### **Below are three common reasons for rejection:**

#### **1 You have too much experience**

If you are declined for having too much experience, this can be because a CV illustrates excessive skill and/or education. This is of course, not entirely negative; however, employers will generally question your application. Basically, little can be gained from submitting an application that could be suitable for a Financial Controller position when the employer is only looking for an Assistant Accountant.

Ask yourself the question: should I remove my key skills and experience so that I can apply for this job? This can be a tight juggling act as you must re-align your CV with the role you are applying for. You must ensure that transferable skills are clearly specified and the vast majority of your skills can be matched to what is required in the position now, not in five years' time. A hiring manager putting together a short list together just wants to know three things:

- Do you have the skills and experience to do the job?
- Are you the best person to do the job 'on paper' from all the other applicants?
- Do you seem like a good team fit?

## 2. Wrong team or culture fit

If you are rejected on the basis of 'culture fit' this not necessarily related to ethnicity. This rejection can be used quite generally by employers and some additional analysis is often needed to pinpoint the exact meaning of the rejection.

A common question is; how can an employer possibly assume that I am the wrong culture fit without meeting me in person? This can be very confusing. The answer could relate to any of the following:

- CV is not specific
- CV is too focused on exact technical skills
- CV focuses too much on one particular industry for example manufacturing or FMCG. Experience in those industries may be irrelevant to the position applied for
- CV lacks corporate experience or perhaps illustrates too much corporate experience
- No impression of personality or key personal attributes has been portrayed

You can counter this rejection by demonstrating transferable skills and/or transferable experiences/competencies in your CV.

## 3. Wrong industry fit

This could apply if perhaps you have only ever worked within one industry and have a lack of relevant industry experience.

Care must be taken when writing a CV that is too technically focused. You must be aware of your core competencies and be able to illustrate how they tie in with your technical skills.

It is completely normal for employees to change industries every few years and it is also quite normal for employees to face a wall when attempting to write a relevant CV.



### DESIGN AND FORMAT

Importance of great content in a professionally written resume

This is a crucial area where your CV can triumph but could also fail.

Next time you read an article in your local newspaper, please take a moment to count just how long it takes before you decide that what you are reading is of absolutely no interest to you. Ask yourself, did I really give the article a chance? Did I even attempt to understand the meaning of the article?

A similar thing very often occurs when a prospective employer reads your CV and cannot instantly see any appeal. There is nothing worse than spending forever and a day working on the content of your CV only to have it cast aside within a matter of seconds.

Choosing the content of your CV is one of the most challenging areas to perfect.

Your CV must have the correct balance and appeal that is relevant to your target audience. Get this right and you are halfway there.

### First Impressions

First impressions are everything. It takes seconds for an opinion to be forged on almost anything. This is very common across many aspects of everyday life and the same can be said for buying a car, meeting new people, watching the television or reading a holiday brochure - your CV is no different.

It is generally accepted that a recruiter or hiring manager will make a decision on your CV within about 6 seconds.

Take a moment to imagine that you are an employer. You have advertised a role and have received 70 applications. How much time do you honestly think you can dedicate to each CV? Ten minutes? Five minutes? Five seconds?

The truth is that you would not dedicate more than about five seconds if the resume which you are reading has no style or appeal. You would switch off and move on to the next one.

The design and format are the first stage to gaining extra attention, the content and appeal form the second.

## Take the 60 Second Challenge

Have a copy of your CV and cover letter, plus the details of the job you are applying for, on the screen in front of you. Imagine you are a busy employer who does not know you at all and has never heard of you. Set the timer to 60 seconds.

### First Step

Click open your letter. Skim for 5 - 10 seconds. Is it clear what role, in which company you are applying for? Do you get a feel for your personality? Do you meet the criteria of the ad or job description? Have you expressed your interest enough? Have you demonstrated that you can do the role?

Stop the clock. Ok, now let's assume you have achieved the above and that the hiring manager wants to know more about you. Start the clock again...

### Second Step

Click open your CV. Skim for 30 - 50 seconds.

What did your eye go to first? What stood out? What parts did you not read or look at? Did your CV reflect the level you are at and, more importantly, the level of the role that you are applying for?

Was it clear what you have done? Your achievements, competencies and skills? Does your CV make it easy for the reader to follow and understand? Is it compelling?

If you can be truly objective and feel that your existing resume achieves this, then you have done very well - congratulations!



### STAND OUT

Ensure that you are the best!

To obtain interviews and ultimately a job offer, it is essential that you aim to be the best in everything you do.

This includes every aspect of the recruitment process including:

- Your CV and cover letter
- Your application email
- Your email address
- The way you answer your phone
- Your voicemail message
- Your handshake
- The way you present and conduct yourself at interview

All these collectively add up to create an impression so if any one of these is not quite right, chances are someone around the corner can tick all the boxes.

### For example

Auto Promotions are advertising for a Business Development Manager. They place an advertisement on Seek and receive around 100 applicants for the position. The Sales Manager is recruiting for the role and, due to heavy workload, can only interview a maximum of 5 candidates.

This is a typical situation in a candidate-rich market and in some cases an employer may only want to interview 2 or 3 candidates. We know of some recruiters and companies who only interview 1 candidate.

## **Differentiate yourself to add value**

If you do not aim to be the best, you are more than likely going to miss out. There will probably be around 30 or 40 applicants in the same boat, so you must be able to differentiate yourself from everyone else by adding value.

Adding value is not as simple as adding a list of major achievements. You must demonstrate your key competencies and be able to illustrate how those competencies can add value to your future employer's business.



## **Cover Letters - An integral part of the job application process**

A cover letter is an integral part of your job application process, although there are many schools of thought around what constitutes a good cover letter.

The truth is, some hiring managers and recruiters will not even look at your letter whereas others will open it first. If they then do not like what they are reading, they will not even open your CV.

No matter who you talk to, everyone will have a different opinion on the value of a cover letter. So, it is advisable is to always present a strong, professional and targeted letter!

We know of many clients who have actually secured an interview and then their dream role, on the strength of a powerful and 'different' cover letter.

If you write your letter well, this can solidify your chances in landing the position. If you write poorly, this can ruin everything. It is important to present the best qualities that you have to offer, whilst matching those qualities with what is required by the company to which you are applying.

It is essential to present the correct information otherwise you may scare off your potential employer.

Match your skills and attributes to what is required by the company and ask yourself the following questions:

- Have I outlined how I will add value?
- Have I been too modest with regards to my successes?
- Have I made sure the reader will be fully aware of my skills and abilities?
- Have my key achievements reflected the demands of the position?
- Am I able to cover the key points of my cover letter at interview?
- Have I been confident with my wording?
- Have I demonstrated that I believe in myself?
- Have I double-checked my spelling and grammar?
- Have I expressed enough interest and enthusiasm?
- Is it clear what role I am applying for?

This last point is particularly relevant when applying through a recruitment agency!

## Competency-Based Letters

Many government departments and larger organisations require a more structured application process often involving competency-based questions.

For these types of applications, it is imperative that you provide examples and answer the exact questions asked. Be very specific and think of the best practical example in your work experience to date that demonstrates your competency in relation to the question.

The trick here is to always remember that the outcome must be positive and the answer relevant. Do not provide so much detail that the reader forgets what the task was, but provide enough to illustrate your strengths, experience and competency level.

## Resignation Letters

When you resign from your job this can be one of the hardest things to do. Most people wish they could just say goodbye and walk out, however the majority of employers require you to give up to four weeks' notice and they also remember more about your performance in your final days than at any other time.

It is absolutely vital that you word this letter to perfection. If you word it correctly your notice period will be more comfortable, and this will assist your chance of receiving an excellent reference from your manager if this is required for future employment.

Who knows, one day you may return to the same company.

**Note\* This document is provided for your guideline only. We do not guarantee that the use of these techniques will result in a job offer.**