

Notes on How to Complete an Effective CV

Introduction

The purpose of these notes is to provide a structure for your CV that is as ‘user-friendly’ for the reader as possible. We have developed the format below after discussion with the HR professionals we deal with. The structure allows them to draw out the important information they require quickly and efficiently.

We are not saying that this is the only effective way to structure a CV or that you must use this format. Please feel free to structure your CV the way you are most comfortable with as ultimately your CV is an expression of yourself. These notes are merely to provide guidance to make sure you give yourself the best chance of getting through the first stage of the employment process.

(1) General Notes

In general terms you should be aware of the following. The person reading your CV will in all probability have a large number of other CV's to read. Your best approach is to ensure you do not get weeded out at this stage. It is a common misconception that one must ‘try and stand-out’ at this stage. In a word DON'T. If you do your CV will in all probability be rejected and the only impact made will be your CV with the bin. Therefore **AVOID GIMMICKS AT ALL COSTS**. Steer clear of unusual stationery, unusual fonts (use Times New Roman and Arial), and any graphics.

Essentially the over-riding aim is to ensure you survive the first cut of candidates. Therefore **MAKE IT EASY** for the reviewer. Make sure you **USE CLEAR LANGUAGE**. Too many people fall into ‘management-speak’ gobbledegook. For example we have seen too many sentences such as “Innovated and introduced dynamic methods of resolving business weakness.” The experienced HR professional will ask – What weaknesses? What innovations? What did you introduce? Was there a dollar saving to the business? A better sentence would be “I programmed and rolled out an automated inventory management system using SAP which resulted in a more efficient stock ordering process for the company. This allowed us to reduce inventory held by \$500k.” Therefore **BE SPECIFIC** and where possible **ATTRIBUTE SPECIFIC BENEFITS TO YOUR ACTIONS** and if possible include a **DOLLAR VALUE**.

Also bear in mind that you don't necessarily have to have one CV. You can and should tailor your CV for each position that you apply for. For example, a Financial Analyst and a Financial Accountant will both require the same types of qualification and they will have some common requirements in terms of a skill-set. However, they are very different roles therefore you should and could highlight different aspects of your experience in the CV's you submit for each role. Put simply **CONSIDER THE NEEDS OF THE END-USER**.

(2) Use of Pictures

You may include a picture of yourself although it is not necessary or required.

(3) Contact Data & Personal Data

You should consider what your employer will find useful for the job. Therefore I would avoid any references to height, weight, information about parents or religion.

Also consider whether your current personal e-mail address is appropriate for your CV. Whilst your friends may find sexybeast99@googlemail.com amusing, why take the chance the person looking for a professional to fill their vacancy does not. We suggest if you have an 'unusual e-mail' address open up a sensibly named one for the purposes of your job search.

(4) Professional Qualification

The right professional designation is possibly the most important requirement on your CV. If you don't have the specified professional qualification for a particular role, you will be rejected. Therefore make sure this is PROMINENT and that the reader doesn't have to make any effort to find it.

(5) Work Experience

List out your experience in REVERSE CHRONOLOGICAL ORDER under headings that show clearly (a) dates of employment (b) position (c) employer.

A good approach to this section is to list your DUTIES in that position, followed by what you ACHIEVED. As noted above you should steer clear of any management gobbledegook and state SPECIFICALLY what your achievements were in that role and state any DOLLAR VALUE to your actions. Using bullet points is advisable in this section.

If you have any gaps in your employment history assume that the HR Professional reading your CV will notice these. Therefore you should fill gaps with as much positive information as possible. If you did charity work or travelled please include rather than leave this area blank.

Therefore to ensure there are no gaps you may need to give details of junior positions you once held. Bear in mind that you do not have to give an equal amount of information/an equal number of bullet points on each position you have held. Generally give more information on roles you consider the most relevant to the position you are applying for. A one line entry on the filing job you did to clear your overdraft after college, whilst not glamorous, is better than a 3 month gap in your CV.

And again I reiterate be CLEAR, CONCISE and SPECIFIC.

(6) Education

Detail your other qualifications including your University Degree, higher education and so forth. Again decide what the reader of your CV will consider to be most relevant to the specified job. Therefore your BSC Degree in Accounting should be emphasized whereas you might not give such prominence to detailing your GCSE in geography.

(7) Courses

We have seen an increasing number of candidates detailing all the courses they attended throughout their work experience. Again you may wish to tailor this list in accordance to relevance to the position. For example if the job you were applying for had a requirement to have knowledge of the Sarbanes-Oxley Act then clearly you should include your two-day course in SOX. However the reader may not necessarily be interested in the half-day course you took entitled 'Basic Powerpoint'. Put simply include only what is RELEVANT.

(8) Other Interests

It is your choice whether you put your personal interests in your CV but you should consider the following. If you are applying to move to another country then your potential employer will want to ensure that you will be able to adapt and be happy. Any assurance that you can give the employer that you will have the ability to make friends and socialize would be useful in this section. Any interests in clubs and teams sporting or otherwise will be useful here.

(9) References

You may include details of you referees on the CV however a better approach is to state 'References available on request'. The reason being employers rarely take up references until the interview stage therefore you are avoiding clutter and again only ensuring your CV contains relevant information.

Conclusion

As stated in the introduction the above is merely a guide based on information and feedback we get from the many HR professionals with which we speak to on a daily basis. However, to summarize:-

- Consider the specific requirements of the end-user.
- Include only relevant information.
- Be clear, concise and specific.
- Be prepared to tailor your CV to each position.

And finally in terms of length please aim for two pages, at the absolute maximum three. In our experience HR professionals dislike CV's over this length and if you follow the guidance above you should be able to summarize what they need into a two page CV.