CV & Resume

What recruiters want

This presentation is based off recommendations by James Reed, the head of one of the UK's best known recruiters.

Seven seconds is all the time a recruiter will give your CV before it goes into the 'interview' or 'reject' pile.

What do recruiters want

- Tell them up front why you're one of the best candidates for that particular job
- Be clear and easy to read so they can compare it instantly with other CVs
- Bring out your mindset and personality

What do recruiters want

Read the job spec and have it next to your CV and ask yourself if they match. If they don't, would you interview that person? Lay out your CV in a way that reflects what the recruiter wants and you can change it relatively easily.

Five Key Mistakes

1. A lack of relevant work history
2. Spelling mistakes
3. Not enough information
4. Poor visual layout

Writing Your CV

A super CV needs to be a concise and straightforward representation of You.

Before we move into how to communicate your job history, qualifications, and skills, let's look first at some general writing tips that will make an enormous difference to how well your CV will be received.

Words to avoid

Here's what not to use

- Long, passive phrases – they put the reader to sleep (more on them in a moment)
- Overly technical information and jargon, unless you're sure the recruiter will understand it
- Meaningless Buzz words e.g. "Goal Driven"

Words to use

It goes without saying that you should always be positive when describing yourself

- Accurate
- Adaptable

Make sure that you back them up with evidence by including them in your previous experience, responsibilities, accomplishments, and any targets you've hit.

Quick Tip

A good CV isn't just words, it's numbers as well. So in accountancy, if you put 3,000 invoices a month on a ledger, don't just write, "I completed the ledger", because you could be doing that for an SME in a team of one, or a blue chip company in a team of ten.

Voice

And finally, always use the active, rather than the passive, voice.

Here's the difference: Passive voice: 'I am considered to be an excellent communicator.'

Active voice: 'I am an excellent communicator.'

Putting It Together

Putting it together

let's start stringing them together into effective sentences, each headed up with a bullet point. Instead of writing,

'Responsible for IT strategy and team meetings'

swap this for

'Created a team of diverse IT professionals to develop innovative solutions for our most persistent IT problems'.

Next

Order bullet points by importance. Hiring managers will skim downwards rather than reading them in detail, so you want to have the key information up top. Take this example from an IT manager's CV:

- Led an IT project involving five stakeholders which reduced marketing costs by 17 per cent.
- Worked with HR team to improve absentee reporting

CV

And finally, write in the first person, not the third. That means saying 'I' not 'he' or 'she'. The last thing a recruiter wants to read is, 'Sheila Jones is an experienced sales person'. Instead, they want to see, 'I'm an experienced sales person'. It's more personal and direct.

HOW TO PRESENT YOUR WORK HISTORY

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We're assuming a reverse-chronological format here because that's the most commonly used, but you can adapt these tips to your own needs.

Your task is to highlight what's most likely to get you an interview – in other words, what makes you the best fit for the job.

Job Title

An area that might hold you back is if your current job title doesn't do justice to your level of responsibility, or the nature of what you do. What should you do? Change your job title or embellish your role? Please, no.

Job Title

First of all, clarify your position. If you've been an assistant manager for three years, but have been doing a manager's role for the past year.

Instead of putting 'Assistant Manager' as your job title, put 'Name of company: three years'. Then, clarify in the first bullet point below that you've been working at manager level, but you've never had an updated job title.

Multiple Positions

If the jobs were similar in nature, write the company name and list the job titles underneath, like this:

X Company Personal Assistant (September 2015–Present)
Executive Assistant (January 2013–September 2015)

- Key achievement or responsibility 1
- Key achievement or responsibility 2
- Key achievement or responsibility 3

Achievements and responsibilities

These bullets should focus on your most impressive accomplishments in both roles combined. If the jobs were in different areas or required very different skills, however, list the company once but break out the titles and treat them as two completely separate roles:

HOW TO PRESENT YOUR WORK-RELATED QUALIFICATIONS AND TRAINING

This is an area many recruiters will zoom in on, especially if they've got a requirement for a specific type of training or qualification. If you have a professional qualification that's relevant to the job, make sure that you include it at the beginning of your CV.

HOW TO PRESENT YOUR SKILLS

It's good to have a separate section for your skills, so a hiring manager can have an immediate sense of what you're good at. There's usually no need to break them down into hard, soft, or transferable skills, unless the specific job you're applying for demands it. The most important thing is to present them in priority order, and with evidence.

HOW TO PRESENT YOUR SKILLS

You want to end up with around three or four skills listed as bullet points. Make use of your power words, and if you have a long list of them this is where subheadings come in. Group them into categories and name them appropriately.

Personal Statement

YOUR PERSONAL STATEMENT

Many recruiters advise candidates not to include one at all because they get fed up with dime-a-dozen statements that sound like clones of one another.

A bad statement is worse than none at all. So if you find it hard to write in fluent sentences, use bullets instead.

Really, this is worth getting right.

Your Personal Statement

From your point of view, it's a paragraph (or a short list of bullet points) which sells you to the recruiter. Not only will you be summarising your skills and experience in it, you'll also be making sure these are relevant to the job you're applying for.

Given it's usually at the top of your CV, it's the element that can make or break your application.

Your personal statement

1. 'Who are you?' Give the hiring manager a powerful statement about who you are and what you do, and include your core values.
2. 'What can you offer?' If you're struggling for inspiration, try using the job description to help you to identify the specific skills the employer is looking for.
3. 'What are your career goals?' craft your goals from the standpoint of what you can offer to them.

Examples

If it shows that they're after someone with excellent business analysis skills, your statement might include:

'Working experience of strategic business analysis, with an investigative and methodical approach to problem solving'.

Tips

No more than 150 words – any more than this and you'll run the risk of rambling,

You're best writing it in the present tense, apart from when you're referring to events in the past. This makes it more immediate and personal.

Personal Statement Dos

- Get straight to the point.
- Answer the key questions: who are you? What can you bring to the role?
- What's your career goal? Add value by being specific.
- Quantify your achievements with numbers, rather than hinting at your success.
- Avoid clichés such as 'team player' and 'goal-oriented'.
- Use the job description to show that you're a perfect fit

Personal Statement Don'ts

- Don't be too generic. Tailor your statement to the job instead.
- Don't focus only on yourself. The best personal statements cover the skills you would bring to the company that no other candidate can.
- Don't confuse it with your cover letter or employment history. Your statement is a short introduction, so keep it that way.

Personal Statement Don'ts

- You need to include concise examples of your career to date, such as 'A financial analyst with eight years' experience', but make them brief.
- Don't think of it as a list, and ensure it's pleasant and varied to read. This means avoiding statements like:

Tips

Use Grammarly to check spelling and grammar, they have free online text editor that checks everything