



DECEMBER 2020

A Recruiter's Guide To Improving Your CV

Advice by Chris Carr, Business Manager



HELLO

It is true what they say - your CV can be scanned in as little as 7 seconds by a hiring manager and even faster by an automated selection system. That might seem really harsh, particularly when we compare it to the time and effort you dedicate to writing your CV. If only you knew exactly what a hiring manager looks for!

So here it is, a guide that explains how you can improve the quality of your CV by focusing on the actions that make a positive difference.



It is written by **Chris Carr**, a recruiter with over 6 years' experience who knows a thing or two about helping candidates effectively manage their job search.

01

CONTACT DETAILS

An easy one to start with. You'd be surprised how many CVs we receive without a job seeker's name, email address and mobile number. Make sure these are clearly presented at the top of the document.

There's no need to include your home address—a simple reference to your town or city is all that's required.



NAME

City Location
Contact Telephone Number
Email Address

Personal Statement

Your personal statement is your first chance to sell yourself to an employer, pick your best working attributes and relate them to the job you are applying for.

02

BULLET POINTS

With application volumes at an all-time high, it's important that your CV is as user-friendly as possible. Bullet pointed descriptions are far easier to digest than large chunks of text.

Your twelve line paragraph describing your current role might be worthy of the Nobel Prize in Literature, but if your CV is sitting anything beyond tenth in the pile then the hiring manager is already in skimming mode.

SHOW THE EMPLOYER WHAT THEY WANT TO SEE, PRESENTED IN BITE SIZE CHUNKS.

03

EDUCATION

If a hiring manager asks for a specific qualification on a job advert or description, then one sure-fire way of whittling down 100+ applicants is for an Assistant or Administrator to filter out anyone who doesn't hold said qualification.

You may have spent four years and a five-figure sum gaining the relevant certificate, but if it's not clearly detailed on your CV then you're in the "no" pile alongside those whose applications were a long-shot at best.

Spoon-feed the reader – get those initials after your name, and refer again to the mandatory qualification in your Personal Statement.

IF YOU'VE GOT IT,
FLAUNT IT.

04

PERSONAL STATEMENT

An effective Personal Statement should read like a condensed cover letter, ideally no longer than three sentences or four lines of text.

Sentence one is your headline (expertise, years of experience, qualifications) with more targeted information about your suitability for that particular vacancy in sentence number two.

Close the Personal Statement with a note of your current aims and availability/notice period.

Drop The Buzz Words

~~Hard Working~~

~~Team Player~~

~~Perfectionist~~

~~Target Oriented~~

Avoid Self Diagnosis - Be Factual!

05

EMPLOYMENT HISTORY

A lot of CVs include sections listing Key Skills or Areas of Expertise, but it can be difficult for a reader to rely upon these without the context of a setting and a timeframe.

Case in point, if you're someone who has "managed teams through periods of transition", this carries more weight if done with your current multinational employer than it does if it relates to the family business you spent a summer with back in the 1990s.

Just about every hiring manager will jump straight for your Employment History, paying most attention to your current and most recent roles.

Detail your employment history in chronological order, with the most recent first. Include areas of expertise and responsibility that are specific to each role.

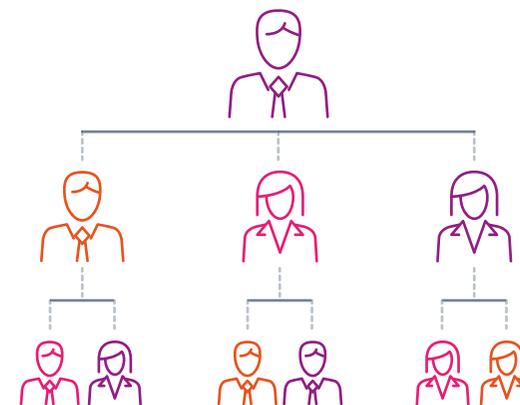
06

COMPANY DESCRIPTIONS

Unless you work for a global brand like Google, Coca Cola or Volkswagen, you should probably assume that CV readers don't know much about your employer.

Help them to draw parallels between your workplace and theirs by describing the business in terms of size, industry, expertise and – where possible – headcount and annual turnover.

Report lines can be helpful too - your Advisor title translates differently if you report directly to the Managing Director, as opposed to a Senior Advisor.



07

JOB TITLES

CVs are your one (brief) chance to make a solid first impression, and it's tempting to make job titles sound more impressive than they actually were.

Yes, you may be frustrated that you did a Supervisor's role in everything but name, and it's understandable you'd want your CV to reflect this – but how will it look when your successful application and interviews are followed by reference checks that confirm the real job titles held?

Such inconsistencies typically lead to a complete breakdown in trust, with job offers regularly rescinded as a result.

Just be honest – include a note of your official job titles, and if any are misleading then briefly detail the breadth of your role in a snappy bullet point underneath.

08

DATES

There's a growing trend for more experienced job seekers to simply break down their career path by year, not month. This often leads to suspicion that gaps are being covered up.

As an example, "2015-2016" could equally apply to jobs that lasted 2 years (January 2015 to December 2016) or just 2 months (December 2015 to January 2016).

Tell it how it is, and explain any notable gaps in your CV.

References detail the months you worked - you should too.

09

PROGRESSION

Many applicants only list their final job title with each employer, as opposed to referencing those held whilst climbing the company ladder. After all, 10 years as a Senior Manager is far more impressive than the reality of only progressing to that level 18 months ago, isn't it?

In some cases, maybe, but the vast majority of hiring managers want to see progression on a CV and may suspect long-term title holders of lacking ambition and adaptability.

Break down your length of service by job titles held (dates included), demonstrating the breadth of your experience and the trust bestowed upon you to take on more responsibility over time.

10

ACHIEVEMENTS

The unspoken rule of employment = your employer is looking for a return on the investment they make in you. Role aptitude and relevant experience will of course be sought on CVs, but what differentiates you from similarly qualified applicants is the value you've added throughout your career.

The best CVs include a list of job-specific achievements, showing what you've brought to the table above and beyond what was expected of you.

After providing a bullet-pointed summary of relevant jobs held, include a separate Achievements section listing the projects, initiatives and general successes you contributed to during that spell.

EFFICIENCY, TIME-SAVING AND AWARENESS RAISING ACTIVITIES ARE JUST AS IMPRESSIVE AS TANGIBLE COST-SAVING.

11

IT EXPERIENCE

More than ever before hiring managers use IT experience to differentiate between otherwise identical applicants, preferring to employ those who've used relevant ERP systems or even Microsoft packages to a greater extent than their competing candidates.

With such fine margins becoming part of decision-making processes, it's imperative you detail your IT experience on your CV, with a list of systems used and where applicable the level of proficiency held.

Being an advanced / super user of any IT package(s) reflects well on you, especially if you can quantify your expertise with recent training courses.

12

DON'T INCLUDE

- ✗ Too much information – the CV space you allocate to each job should reflect length of service and relevance to the job you're applying for.
- ✗ Date of birth, gender, marital status, photo – none of which can be used as a deciding factor by law-abiding hiring managers.
- ✗ "References available upon request" – this is assumed, thus unnecessary.
- ✗ Outdated training courses – anything completed over a decade ago is arguably no longer relevant (professional qualifications aside).
- ✗ Abbreviations or Company specific terminologies – make your CV accessible to everybody.
- ✗ Room for assumptions.

If you have any questions, get in touch.

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