

Writing your CV – tips and recommendations

Writing a resume, even for the most seasoned of campaigners, can be an exercise fraught with pitfalls and difficult calculations regarding exactly what information to convey and in what detail.

Your CV is, in most cases, the first impression a prospective employer will have of you and, as such, should be able to sum up who you are as a professional. It is your introduction and, if you pitch it well, should contain enough of the right information to make hiring managers want to learn more by inviting you to attend an interview.

While CVs are really often a matter of personal taste, we have tried to compile a few pointers here that can help you make a start in thinking about how your own document should read.

Think about who you want your resume to say you are and then produce a holistic document that achieves this!

Obviously you will need to think about the Shape, Content and Style of your CV but before doing this, take a step back and ask yourself what you need your CV to say about you. So many of us start our CVs off early in our professional lives and just keep bolting the latest project onto the document but think about this; “does the summer time work experience from fifteen years ago really need to still be on your CV if you are pitching for a senior executive role?” And, in a more subtle way – are there other elements of your experience that need to be expressed in a different light now that your career has progressed?

A great many CVs, while having some great material, often lose sight of the overall impression they are trying to convey – and all that good content gets lost in the general malaise. Read your CV from start to finish and see if it holds together as a single purposeful document, expressing why you are a great candidate for your particular (current) skills set. Be ruthless and take out anything which does not further this purpose. Here are a few further pointers in terms of Shape and Content that may help to keep your document on track:

1. Write a ***strong executive summary*** at the beginning of your document – basically I see this as a capability statement which summarizes some key points of your executive experience and should sound enough of the right notes with whoever is reading it, for an employer to want to read on.
2. Try and get the ***information relayed as succinctly*** as possible; generally we ask people to keep their CVs to between 3 and 6 pages as beyond that we find attention spans wander and it may put someone off actually reading the document!
3. ***Responsibilities and Achievements.*** Remember that in basic terms what most hiring managers want to get out of a candidate’s CV are both the candidate’s responsibilities and achievements within each particular role. If you are at least making both of these elements clear on your resume, you should not go too far wrong. Where ***responsibilities*** are concerned please try to refrain from writing something that sounds like it has come straight out of a job description; this can come across impersonally and may not make as much sense to those outside of your organisation. Instead try paraphrasing the key elements of your roles so they can be understood almost by a layman. List and expand on your ***achievements*** throughout your career - this is your opportunity to really sell yourself so please avoid undue modesty. Think of your CV as a way to market

your own skills, experience and knowledge so **be positive and specific** here, demonstrating tangible benefits to the organisations you have represented. Your aim is to show that you are a successful employee who has a track record of achievements which position you strongly to do the same for a new employer.

4. Last but not least, **please spell check and grammatically proof your CV** – this is the first impression a potential employer will have of you and the last thing you want is for it to be littered with errors.

For some ideas on shaping your CV, please see the other reference PDFs in the Acuity search website tool kit which includes a couple of sample templates.