

How to Prepare a Winning CV

Your CV or Resume is usually your main form of introduction to a prospective employer and this is what will secure you an interview. On average, prospective employers will spend less than ten seconds in determining which candidates/applicants will proceed to interview. Therefore, it is very important that your CV/Resume distinguishes you from other candidates.

There are a number of ways that candidates can distinguish themselves from others and following are some tips that you may find helpful. We recommend your CV/Resume should be set out using the order of the headings below.

Personal Details

To ensure your name is actually [and subliminally!] in the hirer's mind, please ensure your name clearly features the top of the first page in bold letters of a larger height than any other headers. Also, place a footer on every page with your name, mobile phone number and the page number.

Key Achievements

In distinguishing yourself from other candidates we recommend that you think about your career to date and have a header placed around the middle of page one [this is the area to which the reader's eyes naturally gravitate] titled Key Achievements. Then list no more than six bullet points regarding your career highlights/successes. It is important to note that more than just words will be necessary. It's very easy to make verbal claims, but without substantiation you will be no different from other applicants.

Therefore please consider three important points:

- Dollars
- Time, and
- Percentages

Examples:

- In three months achieved cost reduction of 12.5%, or
- Within four months increased the portfolio profitability by \$500,000

It is not necessary to have all three of the key areas mentioned [i.e. Dollars, Time and Percentages,] in each point, but there should be at least two per Key Achievement.

Key Competencies

Many employers are interested in Key Competencies so you may also consider inserting no more than six bullet points in this area. Ensure they particularly relate to the job you are applying for. For example:

- Demonstrated understanding of the [relevant] Act and guidelines
- Proven ability to interpret contracts
- High level communication skills

Be sure to use a descriptive word in front of each Competency. Just writing Able to interpret contracts does not have the same impact as Proven high level ability to interpret contracts.

If you aren't sure what descriptive words to use simply go onto a job board and look at which skills are required in various advertised roles. You will soon pick up descriptors that you can use to describe your key competencies.

Education & Training

Education/Training should be the next heading. You should list in chronological order from the most recent to the past, your education and training. If you hold several qualifications and have undertaken a significant amount of training, you may need to do some 'pruning' to reduce the list to make it more relevant and particularly applicable to the job you are applying for. Additionally, if there are more than four or five bullet points under Education and Training, it would be advisable to put two subheadings under the main header showing Education first and Training second.

Employment History

The next item on your CV/Resume should be your Employment History. It is important to include the month and the years of employment e.g. Feb 2010 – Mar 2014. The reason for including the months is that if you don't, it could be assumed that you have worked for the shortest possible time in that role and this may be counterproductive to you obtaining an interview.

After the Period of Employment, you should note your Job Title. This in fact is more important to a prospective employer than where you undertook the work. We recommend your job title is bolded. Under your job title insert the name of the company where you performed the work.

If the company is not well known, go to its website and cut and paste a couple of lines [no more,] about it so the prospective employer has some idea of the type/size/nature of the company.

Before getting onto Responsibilities it is not unusual to list 'Achievements'. We recommend separating Achievements and Responsibilities because if a prospective employer is time poor [and they all are!] your Achievements may be more eye-catching than your Responsibilities.

Ensure your Achievements are limited to not more than six bullet points and these can be a [partial] repeat of the Key Achievements you previously listed on Page 1.

Employment History [cont'd]

Responsibilities should appear next and your responsibilities should be listed in order of priority; that is the order in which you spend most of your work time undertaking these duties. For example, filing would not be something that would take up your entire day [unless you were a Filing Clerk obviously,] therefore it would either appear at the bottom of the list, if at all. The quickest way to prepare a list of your current responsibilities is to look at your Position Description [or a past Position Description].

We don't recommend that you go back more than ten years on your CV/Resume unless there are particularly compelling reasons for doing so. The reason for this is twofold; firstly employers and recruiters are time poor and ten years' employment history gives them enough of an idea of what you have been doing and what experience you have, and secondly, if you put 'too much' experience in it they may assume that you are 'too experienced' [which they may interpret as 'too old' and discriminate against you].

Computer Skills

Computer skills should also be noted on your CV/Resume. Include employer-specific software. This demonstrates versatility and adaptability. It may also be software that is familiar to a prospective employer.

If relevant, include your typing test results here. [You can go to www.typingtest.com and undertake a free typing test.]

If listing Microsoft Office you should note your proficiency level for Word, PowerPoint, Excel etc [e.g. MS Word – Intermediate].

Referees

We don't recommend that you provide referees' details on your CV/Resume; simply note Referees' details are available on request, or something similar. In many cases the profession or industry you work in may be small and by giving a referee's name and contact details, you may be leaving yourself in a position where an informal [and unauthorised,] reference check may be undertaken without your knowledge or consent.

Good luck in preparing *your winning CV!*

Still not quite confident? Or just time-poor? Leave it to the experts!

Call us on **[02] 9231 3411** to enquire about our **Professional CV Service** and request a quote.

General Information

Some people aren't sure if they should title their document CV [Curriculum Vitae,] or Resume. Technically, if you don't have a degree you should title your document Resume and if you have a degree you should title your document CV. However, these days the terms are fairly interchangeable.

1. Ensure you leave a wide margin on the left hand side of your CV/Resume; approximately five centimetres. This will allow 'writing room' for the recruiter/potential employer. When they talk to you they will want to make notes on a candidate's CV/Resume.
2. Ensure you use a readable font size; don't reduce the font size to fit more onto one page.
3. Select a font that is professional and consistent. For example Comic Sans may be perfect if you are applying for a role as a Comedian or Ventriloquist but won't do you any favours in a professional arena. We recommend Calibri/Verdana/Arial Narrow/Tahoma.
4. If you prepare your CV/Resume in one font and decide to change it, check your margins and pagination have stayed as you intended. [If not, realign!]
5. Many candidates place a Career Objective or similar at the beginning of their CV's. There are two opinions regarding this; some experts consider this a good thing because you have clearly stated what you are looking for, however, others don't believe it is necessarily something that will ensure you obtain an interview. We don't recommend you put this type of commentary on your CV/Resume unless you are prepared to change it for each job applied for. Clearly this statement must relate to the job for which you have applied.

We often receive CVs/Resumes from people with a Career Objective at the top of their CV/Resume and many will say they are seeking a role in an area which is not what they have applied for. This does not inspire confidence regarding the candidate. It can lead recruiters/potential employers to believe the candidate is either desperate for a new job and has therefore applied for so many jobs that they can't be bothered adjusting their CV/Resume anymore, or it will be determined that the candidate has little regard for attention to detail as they have overlooked the fact that their Career Objective does not match the role for which they have applied.

Another thing to consider when listing a career objective is that your commentary may actually limit your opportunities. For example, if you have applied for a role which doesn't require you to manage staff and you have stated in your Career Objective that you want to manage staff, the fact that you have stated this is your preference may mean that you will not gain an interview. If there are 4-6 candidates who appear suitable for the role without specific expectations, your application is likely to be rejected.

6. DO NOT include your age/date of birth/place of birth/religion/marital status/number of children/hobbies and interests. In fact putting age and place of birth can be used against you as unfortunately some employers do discriminate even though this is illegal.
7. DO NOT include the school you went to unless you are a school leaver and you are applying for your first job, or you have been in the workforce for less than two or three years. If you include the school you went to and the date that your schooling was completed, the employer will be able to quickly determine your age, which may act against you. [The prospective employer may discriminate and consider you too young/too old for the role at hand, regardless of your relevant experience.]

8. It is in order to advise your Nationality particularly as it may be relevant to the role for which you have applied for. Many roles require applicants to be Permanent Australian Residents and applicants must have a legal entitlement to work within Australia. If you are on a Visa which grants the right to work you should advise your Visa status. [We recommend you fully explain your Visa status as not all prospective employers are familiar with various Visa codes].
9. Before you send your CV/Resume ensure you have used Spell Check. We recommend you print and visually check a hard-copy of your CV/Resume. In some cases Spell Check will fail to recognise spelling or grammatical errors. Always remember your CV/Resume may be your only opportunity to gain an interview; it must be perfect and the presentation flawless.
10. When reviewing your CV/Resume also check headings. Has the same size font [type, size and bolding,] been used throughout the document? Are all margins aligned correctly? Have you inserted a footer on each page with your name/mobile phone number and a page number?
11. Always carefully read the advertisement for the role you are applying for. Be sure to tailor your CV/Resume so that it accurately 'matches' the advertisement. By 'matching' we recommend that you repeat various words/phrases contained within the advertisement. For example if an advertised role specifies Superior written and verbal communication skills make sure your CV/Resume states this exactly and then provide a short example.
12. If you decide to include a Cover Letter [which may or may not be necessary,] ensure that it is not more than one page long*, remember your CV/Resume will speak for itself. In writing a Cover Letter be sure that you address the essential requirements of the role. If you overlook this it is not likely you will be called for interview. [*If applying for a government role you will need to have a cover letter several pages long and respond to all criteria or your application will be eliminated.]
13. If you have won any Awards during the course of your career be sure to insert a section, on page 1, titled Award/s and list the details. Too often candidates who fail to include that they were, for example, Employee of the Year or Top Sales Person while employed at an organisation. This information is highly valued by prospective employers and helps to distinguish you from other candidates.
14. DO NOT include a photograph, unless requested. This is generally viewed as unnecessary and distracting.
15. 'How long should my CV/Resume be?' There are varying opinions on this. If you have only a short work history no more than two pages should be sufficient. However, if you have worked for 20+ years obviously two pages will not be sufficient. Bearing in mind that everyone is time poor, we would not recommend a CV of more than 5 pages. Remember you only need to cover the last 10 years of your employment. Quality is more important than quantity!

CityWide Talent values the contributions of a diverse workforce and is an equal opportunity employer.