

BRIGHT
SKY HR

Standing Out from the Crowd

A Guide to CV Writing



CAREER COACHING AND HR SUPPORT

There are countless guides available about writing CVs. This one is different because it contains tips based on my experience of reading and shortlisting 1000s of CVs as an internal recruiter. I'm assuming that you know the basics (the importance of good spelling and grammar; different layouts available; the different sections to include, such as Education, Career History, Hobbies and Interests etc.) and take you further, teaching you simple but effective ways to stand out from other applicants.

CV – The Look/ Format

Stick to a classic format. The only exception to this rule is if you have a design background and are applying for a role in a creative industry (even then, a classic format is often preferred). You might want to add a little colour in your CV but generally speaking, trying to make your CV very different to everyone else's can make it seem gimmicky and unprofessional. The hiring manager is expecting to see a standard CV, so there is nothing wrong with sticking to a classic format.

If you have a design background and want to create a creative CV, there are a host of brilliant ideas on Pinterest. Just search under the key words 'creative cv'. A creative CV gives you the opportunity to demonstrate your design skills but the best ones are usually those most similar to a classic format. As with all CVs, the most important thing is the content. A beautifully designed CV with bad content is less likely to get you an interview than a standard, classic CV with excellent content.

Tailor Your CV

Even if all of the roles you are applying for have the same job title, each company has particular skills or qualities that they are searching for. This means that you'll be able to create a 'core CV' for yourself but it will need to be tweaked and amended for each role you apply for. If a detailed job description hasn't been provided with the job advertisement, ask for one and try to ensure you mention as many of the skills/types of experience in the job description in your CV.

Know Your Strengths

This is the key piece of career advice that I give to all clients. Your strengths are skills that you are extremely good at (so they will often come very easily to you). The problem is that most people are unaware of what their true strengths are. There are several different ways of revealing your strengths:

1. Ask your colleagues, boss and friends for feedback about what they think you do best. Many of your strengths will be applied at home and at work (such as having excellent organisational skills), while others will be work specific.
2. Take a Gallup [StrengthsFinder test](#).

3. Book a career coaching session with me and we will work through some activities to help unearth your strengths and reflect on the next steps for your career.

Once you know what your strengths are, you can build part of your personal statement around them and know that if you are invited to attend an interview, you will be able to talk about your strengths with confidence.

Link to Work That Demonstrates Your Skills

If you've done work you're proud of that is accessible on the internet e.g. an article in an online magazine, a video on You Tube, a published research paper, a blog on LinkedIn etc. embed hyperlinks within your CV that the hiring manager can click on to view. This will help you give the hiring manager an insight into some of your skills and personality.

Use Key Words

Use key words throughout your CV that are related to the job you want. If you are going to save your CV onto online job boards, or register it with a recruitment agency, recruiters will use software that seeks out key words (such as a particular job title, qualification, or skill) to search for relevant CVs stored within these places.

E.g. if you would like to move from being a Financial Controller to a Finance Director, put in your 'Personal Statement' that your next move is to be a Finance Director and this is the role you want. If you only have your current and prior job titles on your CV, your CV won't be flagged when a recruiter searches for possible matches for a Finance Director vacancy.

Quantify Your Achievements

Rather than simply listing the responsibilities you have had in previous roles (or as part of hobbies outside of work), clearly show the things that emphasise your achievements. Employers will be particularly impressed if you can support your claims with figures. Although you may not instantly have these to hand, it doesn't usually take a lot of effort to work them out.

Handling Your Educational History

If you're a recent Graduate, display your degree towards the top of your CV. Make sure you put your final grade on there (even if you are disappointed with it). If you leave your degree grade off of the CV it looks suspicious and it's frustrating for recruiters (if they're busy, they aren't going to bother to call you to check what your grade is; they'll just disregard your CV).

If you have a completed a degree or qualification that is relevant to the job you are applying for, list the modules you took as part of this degree that are most relevant

to the role you're applying for. Degree courses change all the time and the hiring manager may not be aware of what you have learnt.

If you have been working for several years and your career experience and skills are more likely to get you your next job than your educational qualifications, your 'Education' section of your CV can move to the second page of your CV, instead of being at the top of the first page.