

Marketing Yourself

Phase 1: How to Write a CV

To get your dream job you need a marketing campaign - and you are the product! And you need to think in marketing terms. Your CV is the detail aid. Your application letter highlights your features and benefits. The interview is your chance to pitch and negotiating the offer is the close.

This series of articles will help you develop a CV, draft an application letter and prepare yourself for interviews. The aim is to help you to stand out in a very competitive marketplace. This first article deals with developing a CV.

A CV has one simple purpose - **to get you interviews**. To do that, it has to be readable and interesting.

To be readable, it needs to be:

- concise
- well written
- well presented

To be interesting, it needs to highlight your:

- qualifications
- skills
- achievements

Producing a good CV is simple, but not easy. The simple part consists of the rules. The part that is not easy is **writing** your CV. You need to be a good and willing re-writer.

The rules will appear shortly but first you need to do some work on your **achievements**.

An achievement is anything you've done that:

- resulted in **more** with the same resources
- resulted in the same with **fewer resources**
- **improved** operations, or made things **easier or better**
- **resolved** a problem or panic situation with little or no increase in time, energy, money, or people
- was a **first time activity** for you, eg. launching a new product

To identify things you have done that you can claim as achievements, ask yourself these questions:

- did you take the **initiative** in confronting any problems, opportunities or challenges?
- did you **develop** something?
- did you **create** or **design** a new programme, procedure, plan, service or product?
- did you **identify** a need for a plan, programme, product, service or procedure?
- did you **prepare any original** reports, papers or documents?

A good list of well-written achievement statements will:

- make you feel good about yourself and your worth, giving you confidence
- provide you with a selection of interesting things to use in your CV
- give you some powerful things to say in interviews
- enable you to show prospective employers that you have USED your skills

Here are the simple rules alluded to earlier:

- write your own CV - at least the initial draft
- keep it to a maximum of four pages
- make white space your friend
- use bullet points
- use the first page for essential, basic information about you (eg. personal and contact details including mobile phone and e-mail, qualifications, training, skills and selected achievements)
- use later pages to give details of your work experience - in reverse date order, with your current job described in greatest detail
- write a brief description of each organisation shown in your work experience (purpose, size, output etc)
- list your responsibilities in each organisation - using bullet points
- list your achievements in each organisation - using bullet points
- use your completed work to create a summary page (you can then use this to stand alone or to serve as your front page)

The front or summary page is the most important. It should summarise everything that you have to offer. That way, if the recruiter goes no further, you have got your basic information across.

Keep the whole document concise and relevant. Your CV is not supposed to be your life story. It is more a summary of your relevant experience and achievements. It is rarely necessary to cover more than the last 8 -10 years of your experience in detail.

Now, you need to think about **presentation**. Give it the same attention that you would if you were preparing a detail aid. Use plain white or cream paper. Make sure your CV is readable by avoiding fancy graphics and using simple fonts. These include Arial, Garamond, Swiss721, Times New Roman, Univers and Verdana. For most of these, a 12pt size is best. (Apart from anything else, it stops you filling up the pages with too many words.) With Arial, you can get away with 11pt because it is the most uncluttered font of all.

And that's it, except for one final question.

Do you have to re-write your CV for every application you make? No, this is not necessary. It is better to invest your time in a targeted, well-crafted covering letter. The next article in this series will deal with covering letters.