



## Make Your CV Stand Out



**Make an effort to accommodate these five points when writing your CV and you'll immediately be well above average.**

### **1) Maximise readability**

It is essential for your CV to be easy for the reader to scan quickly and effectively. You need to separate different sections and insert clear section headings. Avoid long paragraphs; use bullet pointing to break up text into more manageable 'bite-size' chunks. It should be eye-catching and uncluttered. Check vigilantly for spelling and grammatical errors.

### **2) Include a *Professional Profile* and an *Objective***

These sections should summarise and emphasise your key attributes and your intended future career path. Your words must flow seamlessly – avoiding cliché and superfluous hyperbole. They should each only be a few lines in length but they must spark the reader's interest. If you can't successfully 'pitch' yourself in under ten lines then you risk losing the reader's attention. Be brief – you can highlight examples in later sections. But be persuasive.

### **3) Include achievements where possible**

If you can include an *Achievements* section then it can make an instant and dramatic difference to the power of your CV, enabling you to distinguish yourself from other candidates. This is no time for false modesty. This is a time to show what you have achieved – and to imply that you will be capable of achieving similar results in the future.

### **4) Keep your CV concise and to-the-point**

Your CV should be informative – but also concise. In general, two A4 pages is a maximum. Too many CVs are quite simply too long. Only include information which will actually help to sell you. Recruiters don't want to waste time reading details irrelevant to your ability to fulfil the job role.

### **5) Target/Tailor your CV**

If possible, tailor your CV according to the specific vacancy for which you are applying. Whilst many people use a general CV designed to suit any position they are applying for, greater success can always be achieved by tailoring your CV according to the needs of the specific role to which you are applying. It stands to reason that every job and every organisation are different, and every CV should therefore also be subtly different.

## **The 15 most common CV writing mistakes – and how to avoid them**



**The same common CV mistakes crop up time and time again. Too many jobseekers miss out on their dream job because of a small number of easily avoided blunders. These tips come from a comprehensive analysis of over 2,500 CVs to derive a 'Top 15' most common CV writing mistakes:**

### **1. Inclusion of photographs**

People often include photos of themselves on their CV. Don't! Unless you are applying to be a model or wish to work as an actor/actress then including a photo with/on your CV is definitely not recommended – at least not within the UK.

### **2. Inappropriate heading**

Your CV should be headed with your name – and just your name – boldly and clearly – before any other details – contact details, etc. They should no longer be headed 'Curriculum Vitae' or 'CV'. It's very old-fashioned.

### **3. Missing or inappropriate email addresses**

Whilst having no email address at all on your CV is clearly a problem, it's not something I see very often. Far more common is the use of fun or jokey email addresses. Whilst these may be fine for corresponding with friends and family, employers will probably regard more 'serious' email addresses as simply more professional.

### **4. Superfluous personal details at the top of the CV**

My clients often feel that it is compulsory to include details such as their marital status, nationality, number (and ages) of children/dependants, etc. Whilst, yes, it certainly used to be the norm to include this sort of information on a CV, it is now increasingly rare, given modern anti-discrimination legislation, to find these sorts of details on a CV. They simply aren't relevant.

### **5. Lack of clear section headings/separation of sections**

It is vitally important for your CV to be easy for the reader to scan quickly and, to this end, clear section headings and separation of sections is essential. I often recommend the use of lines or other graphic devices in this respect, although there are other ways of achieving a clearer separation.

### **6. Writing in the first person**

The words 'I' and 'me' are often used repeatedly in homemade CVs. CVs should be written exclusively in the third person. It might seem unnatural to write a document about yourself and yet never use either 'I' or 'me' but recruitment experts conclusively agree that this is the best way to do it. Don't give your reader I-strain!

### **7. Lack of proper Professional Profile**

A Professional Profile is a brief statement at the very beginning of a CV which, in the space of a few short lines, conveys to the reader an overall impression of your key personal and professional characteristics. It's essentially an introduction and should give the reader an overview before they read on in further detail.

## **8. Inappropriate section order**

It's extremely important to choose an appropriate order for the various sections of your CV. For example, the decision whether to put your Education & Qualifications before or after your Career History is critical. It all depends on what is your greater selling point.

## **9. No bullet pointing**

In today's fast-paced world, recruiters no longer have the time to read large, solid blocks of prose. They need to extract the information they need – and they need to do it fast. Long paragraphs of prose are tiresome for a recruiter to read right through and, as a result, many simply won't bother.

And this is where bullet pointing comes in...

## **10. Reverse chronological order not used**

It is a standard convention on CVs to use reverse chronological order, i.e. to present your most recent information first, followed by older – and consequently less relevant – information. And I would strongly suggest you make sure your CV conforms to this.

## **11. Excessive details of interests**

You should aim to keep your interests section brief. As with every other aspect of your CV, do include what you feel will count in your favour – but be selective about it. Choose carefully. You may indeed have a passion for model railways – but do you really want the recruiter to know that?!

## **12. Date of Birth included**

I often get asked whether or not you should include your date of birth (or age) on a CV. No, you shouldn't. Not since the introduction of The Employment Equality (Age) Regulations 2006.

## **13. Referees included**

Details of referees generally shouldn't be included on your CV. They're a waste of valuable space! They clutter it up and, more importantly, you will find that your referees get pestered unnecessarily by time wasters. By the time they have handled their umpteenth enquiry of the day, they are a lot less likely to say nice things about you!

## **14. Spelling, Grammar & Typos**

It is impossible to stress enough how important this issue is. Spelling and grammatical errors are amongst the most irritating errors a recruiter sees, amongst the most damaging errors you can make – and are also amongst the most easily avoided. The answer is to check, check and check again – and then have someone else check for good measure!

## **15. Length**

This is one of the most common problems I see when people prepare their own CVs – they're quite simply too long. I have seen CVs over 30 pages long (true!) with photocopies of all their certificates on top of that. This is not an autobiography you're writing. It's a curriculum vitae. It's a lot shorter!

## Interview Preparation – Top Ten



**Blaire Palmer is an executive coach and author of “What’s Wrong with Work?”. Here are her top ten tips for preparing for an interview.**

There are plenty of books out there with tips about what to wear at an interview and even how to answer awkward questions. But there is some preparation that very few people do, and it is perhaps the most critical if you want to actually enjoy your next job.

**1. What are the values of the organisation?** I don’t mean the corporate values statement they put on their website. I mean the values that actually determine behaviour. Spend some time inside the organisation, talk to anyone you know who has ever worked there, scour the internet or even pretend to be a customer. This will give you some insight in to what the company believes in.

**2. Who is interviewing you?** Gone are the days when you just turn up and field questions. These people are going to be part of your lives for many months or years. “Fit” is more important on a day to day basis than employee benefits.

**3. Know what you are looking for.** In the past you might have left out the fact that you didn’t really like paperwork (when the job was primarily administrative) or said that your work was your life (when really your life is snowboarding). Any job can seem attractive when you want to move on, but you’ll soon realise you’ve made a mistake if you disrespect your own needs.

**4. Walk the talk.** It is a cliché I know, but make sure your actions are consistent with your words. You will be judged as much by what you do as what you say so if you are going to claim that you are a great listener, make sure to listen.

**5. Have ideas.** What are the company’s plans for the future? What projects is it involved in? Has it been in the news recently? What is going on in the industry? Demonstrating that you know the context and that you have opinions and ideas will mark you out as a leader. Don’t be controversial for the sake of it but demonstrate an interest and enthusiasm for the bigger picture.

**6. Be rounded.** The most successful people I have met have a broad life beyond work, television and “having dinner with friends”. Whilst you don’t want to appear as though your work is an after-thought, most employers will appreciate time you have spent travelling, working in the community, a talent you’ve developed or a passion. Think about what these say about you and how that adds value to the organisation you hope to join.

**7. Know where you are going and how you will get there.** I couldn’t leave this one out even though it is so obvious. Do a trial run if you aren’t too sure how long it will take. Have back-up phone numbers and a back-up travel plan in case the train is delayed or your car won’t start. Everything you do has meaning to a prospective employer. If you are the only one who made it in despite a tube strike, you’ll get the job!

**8. What’s the worst question they could ask you?** There is probably something you would rather not talk about. Be prepared for a question about it.

**9. Interview as well as being interviewed.** Even if you have done your homework, you will probably have questions or subjects you want to explore. Whilst you won’t want to sound pompous, it is fine to ask about aspects of the company which interest you and which will help you decide whether this is the right company for you.

**10. Bring a notebook and a pen.** You may have questions you don't want to forget but you may also discover information in the interview you want to remember later. This is particularly important if you get nervous. Chances are you won't have to refer to it, but knowing it is there will help you stay calm. And no employer is going to mind if you say "Actually, I gave some thought to that before I came today and I've made some notes".

## Top 10 tips: How to get headhunted



**Getting headhunted can seem extremely difficult at the best of times, let alone in the current jobs market. But as the majority of senior roles are not advertised to the public, according to recent research, making sure you give yourself the best chance of being spotted is a very sensible thing to do.**

Jonathan Krogdahl, a leading headhunter at The Curzon Partnership, offers the latest tips and advice on how to get headhunted:

1. Make yourself known - speak at events, publish articles or white papers, get involved with industry networking groups. If you become recognised as an expert in your field, relevant headhunters will seek you out and make an approach about a job.
2. Network online in the relevant social media, such as LinkedIn, Twitter and Facebook.
3. Do your own research and find out who the leading headhunting firms are in your sector.
4. Identify who is your headhunting expert (there will only be a few true specialists, so hunt carefully) and introduce yourself. In other words, if you work in the real estate industry, find out which specific head-hunter has this as their expert domain (e.g. yours truly).
5. Play the long game. When you have found and got to know the right head-hunters, and there will only be a handful, use every excuse to build a relationship with them.
6. Ask them who of their competitors they rate and start to build relationships with them as well.
7. If you're in a job and aren't looking for a role, give your chosen headhunters some work searching for other posts if possible. Offering them the opportunity to pitch work with you on finding people for your team can be an excellent way of getting to know each other.
8. Alternatively, become a 'source' of the headhunter's. Refer them some names of trusted colleagues/ contacts for roles they are working on that aren't of interest to you. They'll quickly come to trust you and rely on you - and you'll be first on their list when a suitable role does come up on your area.
9. Make sure you are registered with the relevant recruitment agencies and jobs boards and keep your profile up-to-date. While headhunters don't tend to look on here (they don't really need to), it can't hurt to keep yourself in the market for general recruiters - those who are looking for people to fill middle-management roles up to about £80,000 a year. Recruiters working on behalf of an agency tend to be quite reactive and search existing CV databases, so it's worth keeping yourself in the loop.

10. Keep your profile up-to-date and nurture your relationships with headhunters. It's no use going to just one event, writing just one paper or meeting just one headhunter once. It's a constant game so keep yourself noticeable, relevant and in demand.

## **10 most frequently asked interview questions**



**Interview questions may vary but in essence they are all trying to establish the following:**

- **Your skills and experience to do the job**
- **Your enthusiasm and interest for the job**
- **Whether you will fit in**

If you can answer these questions, using real-life examples to illustrate your points, then you should be able to answer most of the questions that arise including the following frequently asked questions.

### **1. Tell me about yourself?**

This question or something similar usually starts every interview. Your answer should be well-rehearsed, confidently delivered and last between 3-5 minutes. It should also:

- Focus on the areas of most relevance to the job in question
- Include some impressive achievements e.g. improvements made
- Convey your enthusiasm for the job
- Avoid personal or irrelevant information e.g. your children, un-related jobs

### **2. What are your key skills/strengths?**

Focus on what you know they are looking for, even if it has been a smaller part of what you have been doing to date. The job advert or person specification form will give you the information you need about their requirements.

### **3. What are your weaknesses?**

Choose a weakness that:

- Doesn't matter for the job e.g. languages for a UK firm.
- Is a positive e.g. "I like to make things happen and get frustrated if too long is spent sitting around discussing it without action"
- Used to be a weakness but which you have improved upon e.g. presentations

### **4. Why did you leave your last job?**

Your answer should be positive and upbeat even if the circumstances were difficult. If you were made redundant, depersonalise it by talking about company restructuring rather than your individual circumstance. Never criticise a previous employer no matter how tempting.

### **5. Why do you want this job?**

Your answer should reinforce why you are such a good fit for the job and then convey your enthusiasm for the role e.g.

- good match between your skills and their requirements
- interested in the product/market/sector
- company's excellent reputation, exciting challenge etc.

Do not say (even if it's true) that you just need a job, or you want it because it's local.

### **6. Tell me about a difficult scenario at work and how you dealt with it**

They are testing how you cope under pressure as well as your problem-solving and communication skills. Good examples are where you:

- helped resolve or improve a difficult situation
- were resilient in adverse conditions
- showed emotional intelligence and cool-headedness

Avoid any examples which still feel sensitive, because in a high-pressure interview situation, old emotions can easily resurface and throw you off balance.

### **7. Tell me about an achievement of which you are proud?**

Choose work-related examples that shows a tangible benefit to the business. Personal achievements should only be included if they are very impressive or prestigious.

### **8. What are your career goals?**

They are checking if you are likely to stay and if so, for how long. Reassure the employer that the role you are applying for fits your career plan and your longer term commitment to the company.

### **9. What are your salary expectations?**

Salary negotiations are best handled at the job offer stage so try to avoid this at interview if you can. If forced to name a price, give a realistic but wide salary range and say that you feel that salary won't be an issue if you decide to work together.

### **10. What do you know about our organisation?**

You need to know the following:

- Company structure, finances, products and services, key staff
- Customers and competitors
- Market trends and challenges

### **Do you wish to be successful at your next interview?**



### **`The Guide to a Successful Interview`**

Here it is: help for those in `all` age groups who are struggling to find a new job, find a *better* job, or make a move towards self-employment. Packed with essential advice will help you create a personal strategy for success and overcome your biggest obstacle: age discrimination.

It's all summed up in the motto: *'Know yourself, sell yourself, network like crazy'*.

If you're able to do those three things well, your chances of getting back in work (or changing career) are vastly improved.

With this book, you'll learn how to:

- discover and understand your key skills (*know yourself*);
- describe yourself persuasively in person and in writing (*sell yourself*);
- network effectively to acquire, develop and maintain useful contacts (*network like crazy*).

And if finding a job isn't the right answer for you, the self-employment/business owner section on the book *'Accelerate with Impact'* shares with you how to start your own business or even opt for a portfolio career.

**`Every` person in the world will benefit from this comprehensive information and help them to be successful, now and in the future.**

Open your mind to the 'Challenges' you face in winning the job for your success.

## **Incorporated in the publication**

### Winning Interview Skills

So, you have landed an interview for a seemingly wonderful job! Now what? Successful interviewing will be essential in order for you to lock in to an offer. This publication is full of tips and strategies for effective interviewing from preparation through delivery.

### Learn and Practice

Knowing as much as possible about the company can make your interview more interactive and could be just what you need to get ahead in a competitive job market. We share with you techniques that work and will win you the job.

## **Contents**

- The Guide to a Successful Interview
- The Interview
- Company and Job Research
- Advice on Interview Tips
- Questions to ask the Interviewer
- Overview - ten Minute Guide
- Summary on winning the job
- 7 Simple Steps to Improve Optimistic Outlook

This guide is the result of a fresh in-depth analysis and evaluation and reveals how the landscape of this sector has been evolving dramatically over the last few years.

**Open your mind to the 'Challenges' you face in a global environment to be successful.**

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**Colin is a former successful Managing Director of Transactional/Print Manufacturing Plants, Print Management/Workflow Solutions companies and other organisations, former Group Chairman of the Academy for Chief Executives and Non-Executive Director, helping companies raise their `bottom-line` and `increase cash flow`. Author of several publications, research reports, guides, business models on CD-ROM's/Software and over 400 articles published on business and educational subjects worldwide. Plus, International Speaker and Visiting University Professor on the International circuit.**

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