

## ***The CV***

The first thing to understand about the job market is that it is a market. Within it there are buyers and sellers, and the laws of supply and demand are as valid here as anywhere else. Being good at your job is not enough, so are many other people. To an extent, therefore, success depends on your ability to sell yourself, and the first stage in this process is your CV.

There are, of course, many things recruiters look for but in particular they want to know:

- What you can do
- What you have done
- What sort of person you are

The first two of these are assessed initially from your CV, and only if you are able to satisfy them on these points will you get the chance to satisfy them on the third. In other words, a CV is primarily a selling document and its main purpose is to secure an interview. Additionally it is a discussion document at an interview and a reminder document after an interview.

With that in mind writing a CV should be approached, not from the standpoint of what you want to say about yourself, but of what recipients want to know about you.

If you were preparing sales literature for a product, you would not do so until you were clear what the product was and what market you were trying to sell it into. In the same way you need to establish your own characteristics, strengths, weaknesses and track record so that you can present them in a way that will appeal to the sort of employer you are trying to attract.

In other words you need to aim your CV at your target market and career objective.

Surveys have been conducted in order to establish precisely what it is that recruiters want to see in a CV, and in what form they want to see it. Certain general points emerged and it is now clear that a CV needs to be:

- **Short.** Most people prefer two pages, but three pages are acceptable provided you have enough useful information to fill them.
- **Attractive.** It needs to be easy to read and to be well laid out. It should be typed but not bound into fancy folders that do not fit into recruiters' files.
- **Complete.** There should be no unexplained gaps in the history, and care should be taken to include all information that makes you seem an interesting candidate.
- **Accurate.** Remember that facts and figures can be checked. Do not misrepresent yourself: liars get very short interviews.
- **Positive.** Use active words. The way you express yourself says something about you. Merely listing responsibilities that you have held results in a "so what?" CV.
- **Results Oriented.** Focus on achievements. Show what you have made of your opportunities. Employers want achievers.
- **Age.** 93% of respondents expected to see age stated on a CV. If you are sensitive about your age and you omit it, the reader will merely calculate it from other information but is likely to add a five-year 'penalty' for his efforts. The omission also betrays your sensitivity about it.
- **Summary.** It became clear that recipients prefer to see a five-line summary. It is in your interest that the reader should have his mind focused before embarking on the career history, so that he or she knows what it is they are reading.
- **Personal Information.** Despite any equal opportunity reservations that you might have, the majority of recruiters want to see marital status and number of dependant children on the CV.
- **Photograph.** The survey found that the majority of respondents did not want to see a photograph on the CV and, since it allows the reader enormous scope for prejudice and discrimination, it is much better to exclude one unless it is requested.
- **Achievements.** 90% of respondents want to see specific and quantified results listed under the job where they occurred rather than on a separate sheet.

The format should include the following:

- **Full name.**
- **Home postal address:** including postcode.
- **Telephone:** provide numbers where companies and recruiters can contact you easily – home, mobile etc.
- **Email:** provide your home email where possible.
- **Date of birth:** month in words. Do not add 'age'.
- **Marital status:** try to avoid using 'divorced'. Add number and ages of children only if they are still dependent.
- **Nationality:** only important if you are not British or if you may be seeking work outside the UK.
- A five to six-line **summary** that introduces you and allows the reader to focus attention on the sort of role you might be seeking. Do not include exaggerated claims about your personal qualities.
- **Education:**
  - Show your highest level of education with subjects but not grades.
  - Do not list subjects of your next lower level (eg if you have 'A' levels show 'A' level subjects but no 'O' level subjects).
  - If you are a recent graduate show class of degree, otherwise do not show class unless it is particularly impressive.
  - List with dates in reverse chronological order showing the establishment.
- **Academic qualifications:** list with dates.
- **Qualifications:** include membership of professional bodies that reflect genuine attainment. Recruiters know which ones are bought by paying a subscription.
- **Other training:** list dates and training organisation. Whilst this is an opportunity to mention specific additional skills or knowledge you may have, avoid one day courses or those of a trivial nature.
- **Languages:** list those in which you can conduct business. State whether fluent in speech or writing.
- **Employment history:** date from and to, company name and brief description of its business ie products, turnover, number employed.
- **Job title:** if obscure use a more widely understood term, but do not mislead. Show accountabilities with scale e.g. size of budget, number of people, etc. Identify achievements, make them specific and quantified. Show how the job developed while it was yours.
- **List all jobs:** in reverse chronological order with fewer details as you go back in time. The history should show a pattern of progression and development.

- **Achievements:** list achievements relative to each position.
- **Interests:** they say something about the sort of person you are (caring, active, competitive, practical, and intellectual) so be aware of this. Useful to mention community work or positions of responsibility (eg Chair of Parent Teachers Association). A chance to show skills not obvious elsewhere in the CV (eg IT).

This process should give you a good 'standard' CV to use.