

Top 10 CV Tips

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Your CV should get you noticed, if it is written properly. It should be up to date and should present you and your achievements in a totally positive light, emphasising how you could be an asset to the company with the vacancy. It should be thought of as a marketing tool and needs to contain a Personal Profile near the beginning. This should summarise you in terms of your key areas of expertise, skills and attributes that the hiring company is hopefully looking for. Ideally the Personal Profile should be exciting and get the reader interested in reading the rest of your CV. It should be written in the third person.

Below is a typical Personal Profile

John is a skilled, innovative Chartered Engineer with twelve years' experience in both manufacturing and energy sectors including international experience the Middle East. He holds chartered membership of Engineers Ireland, has wide-ranging knowledge and experience of start-ups with excellent team-working and problem-solving skills. He has been a Project Leader of teams that have designed and built complex projects on time and within budget. In addition he has trained and mentored Junior Engineers in a range of situations.

Top 10 CV Tips

1. Be sure to include your name, address, contact number and email

Surprisingly some CVs arrive without even the basic information and the hiring company cannot then contact the applicant. So pay attention to the basics.

2. Ensure that there are no spelling or grammatical errors

There is nothing more annoying for a recruiter than to have to read misspelt words and poor grammar in sentences. As well as using your computer spell checker, ask someone else to read your finished CV. Spell checkers do not pick up all spelling mistakes so the document needs to be double checked by someone with a good standard of English.

Equally do not use fancy fonts or colours, keep it very simple. Use a reasonably wide margin either side and do not clutter the page too much.

3. Do not use jargon or abbreviations

Do not use jargon as the reader may get tired of it and may feel you have included it in order to be seen as cool or trendy – jargon examples would include phrases like: “end user perspective” “singing from the same sheet music”, “pick the low-hanging fruit” and the one that is completely overused – “moving forward.”

Equally try not to use abbreviations unless you explain them. The person reading your CV may be a Human Resource or Recruitment professional, who may not be that that technical and may, therefore, not be familiar with technical jargon from within your discipline – some abbreviations used in business for instance might include: BASIC (Beginners All-purpose Symbolic Instruction Code), BPO (Business Process Outsourcing), POS (Point Of Sale) etc. The abbreviations can then become tiresome and can put the reader off.

If and when you get to the interview you may then have an opportunity to show off your knowledge when there may well be a technical person present who can discuss your vast technical experience with you.

4. Write the CV with the specific job in mind

You may end up with several versions of your CV and that is fine as long as each one highlights the specific areas of your qualifications, background and experience that are relevant to the job being applied for. Put yourself into the reader’s shoes. Ask yourself “what are they looking for”? They try to give it to them.

5. Lay it out logically

Make it easy for the reader to follow “your story”. It should be easy and logical to read, starting with your personal information, then on to your profile, moving then on to your education and then finally to your employment history (with the latest job first, working backwards etc.) Do remember to list all schools or colleges attended, courses attended, results achieved. Point out any particular achievements you may have e.g. student of the year, highest mark in chemistry etc. Do not give the reader the excuse to dump your CV because it was too difficult to follow. Ultimately you don’t want the reader to get frustrated reading your creation.

6. Do not try to hide gaps between jobs

Your CV must be accurate and true and if you have had periods of unemployment then state that. But here you have an opportunity to details what you did during those periods - e.g. voluntary work with a charity, courses you did online, help that you gave to a friend in their business etc. All of these activities add to your skills and experience so talk about them positively. Unemployment now does not have the stigma that it may have had in the past. Many excellent people are unemployed through no fault of their own and recruiters know that. They are more interested in how you used the time to improve yourself.

7. Keep it short and concise

Generally a CV should be no longer than 2 X A4 pages. If you have a lot to write in your education or employment history sections then you need to summarise the content while highlighting significant achievements, strengths, key milestones achieved etc.

8. Do list memberships of all Professional Bodies

I do not mean memberships of the local badminton club or the tiddlywinks society (they can be included in the hobbies and interests section at the very end). If you are a member of a training body, engineering organisation, whatever put it down. It verifies that you meet the criteria for membership which generally include minimum qualifications, some years of experience and increasingly mandatory continuous professional development (CPD), all of which tells the reader that you are a professional in your chosen field.

9. Do give details of referees

Providing details of referees is an excellent idea. Referees can be previous employers, lecturers, clients or whoever as long as they really know you and will say good things about you. Please do contact them first and ask their permission to list them. While you have them on the phone also ask them, if relevant, to emphasise some aspect of your work if and when they are contacted by the hiring company. Ensure that you have an up to date phone number for them.

10. Do list hobbies and interests

Generally it is good to include something about your leisure time but consider if these hobbies and interests enhance your CV or not. Putting down “watching television” is not career enhancing while including “Training under 14 boys in soccer in my local football club” tells the reader that you have good training, mentoring and coaching skills which might be relevant to the job you are applying for.

For assistance with CVs, Interviews, Job Hunting etc. – contact Mary Darlington on 086 2437677 or by email at: info@darlington.ie. Visit my website: www.darlington.ie