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How to Create an Effective CV

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CV Creation

What is a CV? Why do we need one?

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, therefore, success depends on your ability to sell yourself, and the first stage in this process is creating a great CV.

“Curriculum Vitae (CV) is Latin for "course of life."

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

- What you can do
- Why you want to do it
- Where you want to do it

The first two of these are assessed initially from your CV, and only if you can satisfy them on these points will you get the chance to satisfy them on the third. In other words, a CV is primarily your marketing document and its main purpose is to secure an interview. Additionally, it is a discussion document which will be revisited at 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 in to. In the same way you need to establish your own characteristics, strengths, achievements and track record so that you can present them in a way that will appeal to the employer or recruiter you are trying to attract.

In other words, your CV must be targeted to your market and personalised to the specific requirement for the role – **One size does not fit all.**

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What Makes a Winning CV?

Best practice suggests that in order to gain the attention of both employer's & recruiters your CV needs to be eye catching; showcasing the skills they are looking for and it should be easy to read. Recruiters, head-hunters; executive search & employers may all have specific requirements on the types of CV and formats they are looking for.

Some CV fundamentals:

- **Length:** How Long? Best practice suggests two to three pages; however, four pages may be acceptable depending on the seniority of the applicant and the industry being targeted.
- **Attractive:** it needs to be easy to read and to be well laid out, creating some white space.
- **Factual & Believable:** No untruths or fabrications.
- **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. Achievements should be presented in the past tense.
- **Profile or Personal Statement:** Recipients prefer short, strong and realistic profiles which demonstrate fit for the role and show your transferrable skills.
- **Personal Information:** Should be kept to a minimum – it is your personal choice – there is no necessity to state marital status, DOB, or number of dependents or address.
- **LinkedIn & E-mail Contact Details:** More and more people are gaining their next career move through LinkedIn. Incorporate your LinkedIn address in your contact details. Is your personal e-mail address professional and appropriate for your CV?
- **Photograph:** Unless there is a legal requirement within the application process, there is no need to provide a photograph. If you are producing a Biographical Sketch – you may wish to insert a professional photograph.
- **Achievements:** Best practice suggests employers and recruiters want to see specific and quantified results where possible. It is important to clearly showcase at least some of your achievements within the first page of your CV to encourage the reader to turn to the subsequent pages.

The format of your CV should include the following:

- **Full name & Contact Details**
- **Telephone**: Add numbers where you can be contacted easily and ensure you have a professional voicemail should you not be available
- **Email**: Provide your personal email address & LinkedIn address
- **Personal Profile or Summary**: Which quickly summarises and provides a professional introduction of you to the reader where you clearly demonstrate your skills relevant to the role or organisation.
- **Continuous Professional Development & Academic Qualifications**: Organisations are particularly keen to learn how you maintain your own development in your career, how you remain current in your industry sector. Demonstrate your continuous learning by listing some key events or in house training you have participated in. Show your highest level of academic qualifications with subjects but not grades Do not list subjects of your next lower level – for example if you have, Higher grade or "A" levels show "A" level subjects but no standard grade or "O" levels.
- **Membership of Professional Bodies**: Showcase these clearly under this heading.
- **Languages**: List those in which you can conduct business. State whether fluent in speech or writing.
- **Career Summary or Career History**: Legally there is no requirement for dates of employment to show your tenure in a specific role, this is to protect against age discrimination. However, if you do wish to show your dates of employment these should be populated to the far right of your document as they are secondary information. You may wish to show the company or organisation name and provide a brief description of its business, products, turnover and number of employees.
- **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.
- **Achievements:** List achievements relative to each position. Remember achievements are a future predictor of success. Make them specific and quantified.
- **List all Positions:** In reverse chronological order with less detail as you go back in time.
- **Interests:** This is section is purely voluntary – does it add value? It says something about the sort of person you are (caring, active, competitive, practical, and intellectual) so be aware of this. It may add value if you mention community work or positions of responsibility - Chair of Parent Teachers Association or volunteering.

This process should give you a good outline template CV which you can use and adapt for each role you apply for. However, you will seldom send out the CV on its own, so you can use the covering letter as the means of personalising your approach to the application. Use it as a bridge between the CV and the advertisement to amplify or add points of relevance to the job.

To ensure you are prepared for the marketplace it is advisable to create different formats of CV and tailor these for each opportunity you apply for – it's NOT a case of one size fits all.

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Styles of CV

Reverse Chronological Style CV

The reverse chronological style is the most frequently used CV format. It lists professional experience in reverse time sequence with an emphasis on responsibilities and achievements.

Because it is most frequently used, it is the most acceptable format, Many, recruiters prefer a reverse chronological CV than a functional formatted CV. The reason being a reverse chronological CV provides clear information on job titles, areas of responsibility and periods of employment for each employer. Achievements can clearly be tied to organisations and time frames. The reverse chronological style CV spells out your career history from the most recent position backwards, with the most recent position having the greatest emphasis.

Best practice suggests a career history of no more than 10 years; however, it is important to showcase your experience which is relevant to the role you are applying for.

Benefits of the Reverse Chronological CV:

- Clearly shows your career history demonstrating growth and development.
- Your career objective is similar to your most recent experience.

The Reverse Chronological CV is <u>NOT</u> beneficial when:

- Your objective is very different from your career history – you wish to change industry or role.
- Your employment history is fragmented.
- You have changed employers frequently – although this is more acceptable today in the current job market, with the increase of contract and interim roles.

The Functional CV Format

The Functional CV format is designed to demonstrate your achievements and transferable skills - placing less of an emphasis on the specific employer and dates of employment. The career history is then summarised after the transferable skills/functional headings.

The Functional CV format is particularly suitable for individuals who want to make a significant change in fields or functional areas. The decision to use a functional CV format should be carefully weighed against the reality that most recruiters prefer a reverse chronological style CV - however employers, Executive Search & Head-hunters are all familiar and comfortable with functional formatted CV's.

Benefits of a Functional Style CV:

- Your objective is very different from your experience - a significant career change.
- You want to emphasise skills & abilities not used in your most recent position or role.
- Your experience has been gained in different, relatively unconnected jobs.
- You have been employed by the same organisation and used similar skills for a long period of time.

The Functional Style is NOT beneficial when:

- You want to focus on the pattern of your career growth.
- You are applying to a recruiting agency – check first what format they are seeking? It should be noted that senior executive search agencies are comfortable with this format.

Combination or Hybrid Format

- This format of CV is acceptable when you wish to showcase all your achievements from across your career – highlighting your key capabilities and you want to be both reactive and proactive to the job market. You may choose one heading such as Career Highlights; Significant Deliverables or Key Milestones to show your achievements. Again, the career summary is shown on page two in a much more condensed format.

Biographical Sketch

- A one-page document which highlights your professional profile summarises your Career Successes & Career Highlights and completes with your Continuous Professional Development and Academic Qualifications. If appropriate you may provide a photograph. There is no requirement for a career summary in this document. Short and succinct and can be used for networking and self-employment opportunities.

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Developing your CV

You will work with your Career Coach to agree the style of CV which will be most appropriate to your objectives. You may craft out more than one type to enable you to have each format ready to adapt depending on your circumstances. The following principles however apply for all formats.

Profile

It is important to showcase your unique selling points in a short summary at the beginning of your CV. If the reader does not like what they see here, it is unlikely it will be given the benefit of a complete reading. You should compose this summary in the third person, for example - not “I am” but “An experienced…..” Do not use jargon or abbreviations, often the first person to read your CV will be there to sift out the unwanted ones and they are unlikely to have a vast knowledge of your industry. Therefore, keep it short, keep it simple, and keep it to the point.

Do not try to say too much, use the most impressive statements about your professional experience and remember to sell your transferable skills. Capture the words which describe your professional expertise.

Continuous Professional Development & Qualifications

Some of you may have qualifications that you are proud of, but you attained those 20 years ago - they may have little relevance in today’s market and they actually will date you in your application. It is far more relevant to show how you maintain your professional credibility, listing any relevant in-house or external training you have completed more recently.

If you are applying to a company which uses standard application forms, they will nearly always ask you for details of your education from the age of 11 upwards, including details of every exam taken. (As these forms are generic, little thought seems to have been given to the vastly differing levels of people expected to complete them). Only in these circumstances should you go into any more detail other than the highest level of education attained.

It’s much more important to show how you remain current; keeping abreast of your industry carries significant weight. Some positions may require specialist skills or knowledge. You need to define which of your skills are relevant to the position you are applying for. Note - only the most relevant as you cannot list everything.

Professional Bodies

The only professional qualifications that should be listed are those for which you have had to qualify, i.e.: Member of a Chartered Institute. If you have several professional qualifications list only the highest accolades you have. If relevant, summarise.

Career History/ Career Summary/Professional Experience

The second most important aspect of your CV and the reason why most employers will recruit you is your career history. The first thing to do when composing this part of your CV is to start with a list of all the positions you have held. List them in reverse order starting with your current or most recent position.

Achievements – Reverse Chronological Style CV

Highlight the major contributions you made to your last employer. Use the 'power words' a few pages further on and where possible your achievements should be quantified.

Your last or most relevant position should occupy more space on your CV than any other. If you have been employed by your last company for some time, but have been promoted several times, treat each job as a separate entry on your CV with a different set of achievements. If you have six achievements for your last job, have four for the one before. If, on the other hand you have moved several times in the last ten years, instead of giving equal weight to each, focus on the most relevant positions.

Now consider the second most recent relevant position and summarise your responsibilities or accountabilities, and how you developed it during your time.

Once again, list the major contributions you brought to this role, again highlighting any relevant skills or achievements which may be a benefit to a new employer.
Continue in this format.

Achievements – Functional Style CV

Perfect the Transferable Skills Headings or Functional Headlines to showcase your achievements under. These achievements will be your primary focus in producing a functional CV with the difference being that they should be listed under your functional headings instead of under each role.

Adapting your CV

Be prepared to edit, re-edit and revise your CV according to each situation. At different times in your career you will need to use different CV formats. At some points in your career you will be selling your potential, at others, your career history.

Examples of Achievements

These examples have been selected to provide variety and to illustrate clarity. You will note that some are quantified and specific, while others are more general.

- Created a new management information services procedure which made vital operation reports available to management the following day instead of at the end of the week.
- Designed supporting equipment and techniques for a new process that raised product potential from £5million to over £20million per year.
- Increased product potential from £5 million to circa £20 million per annum through the design & implementation of supporting equipment & techniques.
- Key contributor in a project team that reduced outstanding debt by circa 50%.
- Completed transfer of work avoiding gaps in production and with no litigation on other incidents.
- Settled all old environmental disputes without additional costs and satisfied stringent environmental standards for plant closure.
- Established goals and objectives to measure manager performance which set groundwork for further promotions.
- Installed large banking systems across multi-site facilities on time, with minimum overtime and within budget.
- Penetrated new business area utilising a joint venture direct marketing approach that generated over £6million in new business.
- Analysed components of a stalled project designed appropriate solutions; project proceeded with profits realised in record time.
- Negotiated £80m finance with principal bankers which enabled the group to make an acquisitive bid.
- Raised £32m in the US Private Placement market in order to repay and reduce reliance on medium term bank finance.
- Re-negotiated subsidiary borrowing facilities to parent company level to increase flexibility of the group to raise acquisition finance when required.
- Formulated approach to obtain information from overseas subsidiaries in order to establish and pursue foreign exchange hedging objectives.
- Facilitated the delivery of new process technology to a value of £150k which increased the capacity of existing plants for personal care liquids by a factor of 3.

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Power Words

This is a range of power words to assist you in constructing your own achievements.

Advised/Told	**Bargained**	**Calculated**	**Changed**	**Checked**
Assessed Counselled Instructed Presented Recommended Taught Trained	Negotiated Traded	Estimated Evaluated	Corrected Guided Implemented Improvised Modernised Promoted Redesigned Reorganised Revised Revitalised Simplified	Appraised Audited Inspected Monitored Tested Verified
Controlled	**Constructed**	**Engaged**	**Helped/Looked After**	**Looked Into/Thought**
Administered Approved Centralised Combined Completed Determined Effected Enforced Engineered Executed Led Managed Regulated Supervised	Built Composed Created Designed Devised Invented Marketed Proved Shaped	Appointed Recruited Hired Interviewed Introduced Selected Staffed Instigated Launched Organised Prepared Produced Programmed Utilised	Ensured Maintained Supported	Analysed Conceived Defined Forecast Interpreted Investigated Originated Pioneered Planned Researched Reviewed Studied Surveyed
Made Bigger/Better	**Made Smaller**	**Made/Setup**	**Motivated**	**Paper Control**
Augmented Developed Doubled/Tripled Expanded Improved Increased Marketed Surpassed Tightened	Decreased Eliminated Liquidated Reduced	Established Formed Formulated Initiated	Inspired Stimulated Vitalised	Documented Processed
Programmed	**Purchased**	**Put Right**	**Ran /Performed**	**Showed**
Scheduled	Bought Procured	Rescued Saved Settled Solved Standardised	Operated	Demonstrated Related Specified
Sped Up	**Stopped/Took Out**	**Took**	**Wrote**	
Expedited	Averted Avoided Extracted Prevented	Acquired Captured Obtained	Edited Published Translated	

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Sample Reverse Chronological Style CV

Full Name

Email/Home & Mobile Number
LinkedIn Profile Link

A senior manager possessing an MBA with a sustained record of achievement in general management and project management operating in both UK and international markets. Roles have encompassed total P&L responsibility for businesses up to £12m across various engineering sectors. Has focused on establishing and implementing strategies for exploiting existing and new markets in addition to substantial restructuring of resources to achieve efficiency, growth and cultural change. A determined, commercially aware executive seeking to secure a challenging General Management role with a progressive organisation.

Career History

Pointer Ltd – Birmingham 2001 – date

£30m t/o Engineering Services Business – 350 employees

General Manager

Reporting to the Managing Director with responsibility for establishing and subsequent operation of a new division offering maintenance services to UK and European customers, focussing on maintenance contracts and total facilities management.

- Established UK maintenance division, analysing market and alternative strategies. Presented business plan to board and currently implementing strategies for achieving £6m turnover within 5 years.
- Turned around £700k contract with YCP, through restructuring of resources, introducing new management and improved commercial conditions.
- Increased turnover by 30%, with profitability over £800k, introducing £3m of new client business.
- Implemented a total restructuring of all operational activities, recruited new and motivated existing staff, providing a more commercial focus to the business and an improving working culture.

Stratton plc – Manchester 1996 – 2001

Electrical & Mechanical Engineers – Contracting, Maintenance, Fabrication - £200m t/o.

Business Manager (Director Designate)

Appointed as number two to the divisional Managing Director with prime responsibility for the operational and market development of five strategic business units involved in engineering services, plant maintenance, and facilities management and contracting.

- Recommended and implemented restructuring of all operational activities, which included four business units, satellite offices, engineering functions, project management and key account sales in to business units, reorienting existing senior management.
- Appointed by the Chief Executive to chair a focus group to complete a strategic review of the Group, integrating operational and marketing activities.
- Identified and exploited new markets, re-establishing the engineering services division in providing installation and engineering services to power utilities and industrial sectors. Explored and analysed potential acquisition opportunities and managed a company disposal.

Lorimer Ltd – Stafford 1993 – 1996

Consulting Engineers/Project Managers – Industrial, Commercial, t/o £25m, 650 employees.

Sales and Marketing Director

- Exceeded sales targets achieving £12m sales under competitive conditions across all sectors of the market. Increased level of prospects and enquiries by 50%.
- Led and managed the sales and marketing team in addition to achieving sales of £3m.
- Developed and implemented a comprehensive marketing information system and strategy to assist in the identification and pursuit of new business.

- Supported the development of international business in Europe, India and the Far East establishing important links with Government and client organisations.

MBA – University of Bradford Management Centre **1992 – 1993**

Byflott Ltd – Manchester **1989 – 1991**

Electro-mechanical Engineers t/o £40m – Maintenance and Engineering Services

Director and General Manager

- Established a North West company with total P&L responsibility for marketing, operations and accounts. Achieved profitability within 18 months.
- Recruited and developed a sales team establishing over 200 new clients achieving sales and financial targets.

Ports Construction Ltd – Hull **1984 – 1989**

Engineering and Manufacturing – Nuclear, Defence, General Engineering – t/o £70m.

Divisional Director / General Manager

- Assumed divisional board responsibility for the Engineering and Construction divisions with a joint turnover of £22m and 360 employees across three offices and 11 sites.
- Negotiated several major contracts and re-negotiated two major contracts turning £4m of potential losses in to profit.

PRC Ltd – Sheffield **1975 – 1984**

Nuclear Fuel Reprocessing and Manufacture.

Group Manager

- Assisted in establishing a services group of 30 engineering and commercial staff supporting a £3.5bn site development. Provided technical and financial justification for main board approval of major capital projects.
- Managed multi-disciplinary team of up to 100 for several major capital projects (£60m) from concept to construction.

AMST Ltd – Sheffield **1971 – 1975**

Engineering and Manufacturing – Automotive, Defence, Agricultural m/c.

- Joined as a Graduate Trainee. Worked as a Production and Maintenance Engineer.

Continuous Professional Development & Qualifications

- MBA – University of Bradford Management Centre (full time)
- BEng (Hons) Class 2:1 – Mechanical Engineering – University of Hull
- Diploma in Marketing

PROFESSIONAL BODIES

- Chartered Engineer
- Member of the Institution of Mechanical Engineers
- Member of the Chartered Institute of Marketing
- Member of the Association of MBAs

INTERESTS

Gardening, Travel, Walking

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Sample Functional Style CV

Full Name

Email/Home & Mobile Number
LinkedIn Profile Link

A result orientated Business Leader and Sales/Marketing professional possessing an exceptional track record of turning vision in to achievement. Committed to succeeding through staff development, customer focus and drive to maximise profitability across all areas of business. A Business recovery and market growth specialist with the ability to quickly evaluate, prioritise and address underperforming businesses and then devise and implement strategic recovery plans.

Functional Expertise & Career Highlights

Business Development

- Significantly developed Sales and Marketing strategy to increase growth rate from 9% to over 20% in a market growing at 12%.
- Recruited, trained and developed a highly successful team of sales professionals to make a failing business profitable in year 1.
- Set up an innovative business planning and management system for the sales force which resulted in a 20% business growth in its first year.
- Set up an educational forum and fellowship programme for customer trainees which resulted in £380k increase in turnover in year 2.
- Organised a meeting of customers in an unexploited market segment resulting in conversion rate of over 85% and an 11% growth in business.

Marketing

- Devised a marketing plan resulting in turnover of £65m – realising a 23.5% growth in business and a 3% increase in market share.
- Devised a forecasting system which resulted in an increase of order to forecast rate from 15% to 80% and increased turnover by more than £2M in 2003.
- Negotiated contract with external supplier to ensure entry to a £300M market and realising new turnover approaching £1M in year 1.
- Initiated a project to put a revolutionary product on the market in record time – now realising annual sales in excess of £3M.

Communication/IT

- Instigated use of an Intranet system providing essential sales information for employees.
- Produced a CD and presentation for the sales force to inform all customers of company existence, history and portfolio resulting in an immediate growth in turnover.
- Established use of internet based learning management system for all sales force – testing showed steady increase in product knowledge and sales.

Business & Finance

- Recruited a training manager and implemented needs based training for sales force of 450.
- Selected appropriate sales technique and employed external consultant to deliver – resulting in sales growth of 29%.
- Restructured a large team to 3 smaller teams providing substantially higher key customer contact and market awareness.
- Introduced new means of managing development projects for delivery in to unexploited market segments valued at £25m.
- Achieved 5% savings on a budget of £5m whilst growing market share by 3%.
- Devised a plan to open an entirely new European market segment and add a further 2% market share.

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CAREER HISTORY

Pointer Ltd – Birmingham **2001 to date**
General Manager
£30m t/o Engineering Services Business – 350 employees

Stratton plc – Manchester **1996 – 2001**
Business Manager (Director Designate)
Electrical and Mechanical Engineers – Contracting, Maintenance, Fabrication, £200m t/o.

Lorimer Ltd – Stafford **1992 – 1996**
Sales and Marketing Director
Consulting Engineers/Project Managers – Industrial, Commercial – t/o £25m, 650 employees

Ports Construction Ltd **1984 – 1992**
Business Development Manager
Engineering and Manufacturing – Nuclear, Defence, General Engineering – t/o £70m.

PRC Ltd – Sheffield **1975 – 1984**
Marketing Manager
Nuclear Fuel Reprocessing and Manufacture

AMST Ltd – Sheffield **1971 – 1975**
Graduate Trainee, Production Engineer and Maintenance Engineer
Engineering and Manufacturing – Automotive, Defence, Agriculture m/c.

Continuous Professional Development & Qualifications

- MBA – University of Bradford Management Centre (full time)
- BEng (Hons) Class 2:1 – Mechanical Engineering – University of Hull
- Diploma in Marketing

PROFESSIONAL BODIES

- Member of the Chartered Management Institute
- Member of the Chartered Institute of Marketing
- Member of the Association of MBAs

INTERESTS

Gardening, Travel, Walking