



POSITIVE CAREER ADVICE

# A COMPREHENSIVE GUIDE TO CREATING THE PERFECT CV



# HOW TO CREATE THE PERFECT CV



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## INTRODUCTION

In today's competitive job market, it's more important than ever that your CV speaks directly to the hiring manager. It needs to make an excellent first impression and in doing so, whet the appetite of a prospective employer enough to want to meet you.

By following this step-by-step comprehensive guide, you will create a CV that showcases your achievements, skills and career intentions, encouraging more interviews to help you secure the right job with the right employer.

This guide will cover:

- Vital Preparation
- Essential things you need to know
- CV Structure
- The importance of tailoring your CV



## VITAL PREPARATION

Your CV is one of the most critical self-marketing documents you will ever write. With most employers taking just 6-10 seconds to review a CV initially, it's essential that the content, structure, and layout quickly grabs the hiring manager's attention.

It may have been a while since you last updated your CV, especially if looking for a new job hasn't been a priority until now. Don't worry. You're not alone. However, your CV will likely need a complete makeover as the employer's expectations have changed drastically over the last few years.

With the world of work rapidly evolving due to advances in technology and automation, there's more to getting hired now than just qualifications and previous experience.

A CV needs to represent who you are, what you stand for, and what you want professionally, this calls for you to look introspectively and ask yourself some questions. While this can feel like a daunting prospect, it is a vitally important exercise to complete to avoid applying for entirely the wrong roles which will undoubtedly affect your confidence and self-esteem.

One of the most common mistakes job seekers make is to launch themselves straight onto the Internet and start applying for jobs without clarity on the role that they seek and the value that they have to offer.



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## VITAL PREPARATION

To ensure that you have a targeted approach to your job search, it's vital to keep in mind the following 3 steps;

1. Discovering, recognising, understanding and appreciating your key contributions and learnings and crucially, how they will fit into your next role.
2. Gaining a good understanding of your target position and target company and how good a fit you currently are. (Also, consider the company's evolving aspirations and the employer's expectations from the role).
3. Your ability to position yourself for your target role based on the first two aspects objectively without assuming.

I would recommend beginning with the 'end in mind' by starting with point 2 and researching your target role and target industry/company. By doing this it will help educate you on employers expectations and ensure you include vital information within your CV to reassure employers of your suitability. It will also help you remove unnecessary information from your CV too.

Changing jobs or moving up the career ladder involves a lot of deep-introspection which many do not dedicate enough time to.

The following 3 exercises will help you gain greater clarity not only when creating your CV but also for your job search in general.

### A. Self-Reflection

So, here are some questions to help get you started in the process. To maximise the value of this exercise, invite your friends, family, ex-colleagues and Managers opinions too.

- How would you describe yourself in 3 short phrases?
- How would your friends/colleagues describe you in 3 short phrases? (How are you perceived by them? Is this how you want to be perceived? What can you do to turn it around positively)?
- Of all the things that you do well, which three things do you do best? (Gain more clarity on your specific skillsets and personality traits)
- What activities do you pick up quickly? What activities bring you the greatest satisfaction? (We are naturally stronger at things which we enjoy doing)
- Do you ever become negative or disappointed with yourself? When? (Which areas do not come naturally to you? What tasks do you keep putting off)?
- What does my job require me to be good at? (Make a note of your peer's and especially your boss's feedback. Find a way to receive honest feedback).



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## VITAL PREPARATION

### B. Identifying your Strengths & the Value that you offer

Without exception, with every Webinar I have delivered, this is one area many people find challenging.

The aim is to move away from a 'responsibilities' orientated CV towards an 'accomplishment' orientated CV. After all, a shopping list of duties and responsibilities with limited business impact and value is not going to help you to stand apart from your competition.

So, consider what you are most proud of and the problems you are great at solving?

Take into account the following:

- Someone you have helped
- A new skill you have learned
- A new idea which you implemented
- Improving a process or system
- Reaching or exceeding targets
- The feedback you have received
- A goal you have exceeded
- Taking on a challenge
- Something you have introduced
- The money you have saved
- A business account you have won

As you consider examples, structure your response as follows;

- Describe the achievement. What was done? For whom.
- How you accomplished the achievement. Step-by-step.
- The results of the achievement. What was the impact (where possible, be as specific as possible)? Quantify (£ or %)

Also, don't just think about what you do at work. Think about the things you do outside of work too. So often, people miss transferable skills and strengths which are developed from achievements in hobbies and interests.

### C. Identifying your Values & Purpose

Our values reflect what is important to us, how we form our thoughts, how we act and how we make decisions. If you struggled to identify your purpose, understanding your values will help you.

Think about it. You can't expect to know what you want out of life if you don't know what is essential in life. Identifying your values gets you much closer to the answer.

What is important to you in relation to;

- The people you work with?
- The work that you do?
- The organisations what you work for?
- The environment that you work in?

There are many FREE Values exercises you can complete online. Here's a [link](#) to one I would recommend.





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## VITAL PREPARATION

Once you have completed these exercises, you will have more clarity on your:

- Your areas of specialism
- The skills and strengths that define you
- Your accomplishments (career, educational and extra-curricular)
- What drives you (your values and purpose)

Preparing well will help you to exclude information that is unnecessary on your CV and help you to speak more simply to your target employer, answering their most vital question, "why should I hire you?"

## ESSENTIAL TO KNOW

### Be Concise and Relevant

A CV should be focused, which often means two pages in length. In some cases, a three-page CV is appropriate for more senior-level executives who have more content to add.

Including experience from over 15 years ago is often outdated, unless your experience is relevant to the role you are applying for or related to the company you are approaching.

A CV is a summary document; therefore, it should not tell the reader everything about your career. Job seekers often make this mistake.

CV's that look like a manuscript can be incredibly off-putting, and there will be a high likelihood that it won't receive much viewing time.

### The Importance of Keywords

If you are posting your CV onto a job board, ensure you research relevant keywords appropriate to the career you are seeking and include keywords within your CV. (Ensure you refresh CV's loaded onto Job Boards weekly to show prospective employers you are still seeking employment or you could be left out in searches).

When responding to an online vacancy, mirror the keywords used within your CV from the job advertisement (be careful not to repeat them excessively).

Using keywords will help make your CV more relatable to the hiring manager and enable your CV to be easier to find through the online search technology used by Recruiters and Hiring Managers.



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## **Applicant Tracking Systems - A separate CV? (THIS IS A MUST READ)**

Organisations use Applicant Tracking Systems or (ATS) to help progress job applicants through the hiring process.

Many myths and misconceptions surround ATS's, so I would encourage you to read my [guide](#) which will help you understand them better and support you to present the best version of yourself on-line to a prospective employer.

## **Avoid Cliché's**

Job seekers often overuse clichés in their CV's. So, avoid words like hard-working, enthusiastic, passionate and driven. These are unsearchable words and take up valuable space on a CV and add no value to your application.

Instead, prove your capabilities by providing examples of your achievements and skills.

## **Make it easy for the Hiring Manager/Recruiter**

How you structure your CV to draw the reader to your significant achievements first is critical.

Order your career history in reverse chronological order demonstrating your employment background (job titles, companies, dates, critical areas of duties and achievements)—most recent to past.

It may seem like an unnecessary comment to make, but so many CV's highlight their earlier career history first. If a hiring manager is only taking 6-10 seconds to review a CV, they will miss your most vital relevant and recent experience.

Also, avoid including a picture on your CV. It can make your CV look outdated. Only add a photo if it is essential legally or if it's correct to do so culturally (some countries expect photographs on CV's).

## **Face your Barriers to being Hired**

Everyone has barriers to being hired. Whether that's:

- Gaps in employment
- A job that was a mistake
- A jumpy career history
- A very long stint with one employer

If you have 'gaps in employment', show them on your CV. A hiring manager will spot them anyway. Think about what you learned during that time, how resourceful you were and find a way of showcasing your capabilities.





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## ESSENTIAL TO KNOW

If you had 'a job that was a mistake', and many people do, don't miss it out (unless it was very brief). Instead, show humility and describe why it wasn't right for you and what you learned from the experience. Never bad-mouth a past employer though.

With a 'jumpy career history', there are often good reasons why people move on or have undertaken temporary work for an extended time. Consider what new skills you learned, how adaptable you have been and how quickly you were required to be productive.

If you have had a 'very long stint with one employer', show how your career has evolved. Perhaps you had different roles (show each role as you would if you had moved from one employer to another). Demonstrate how you have adapted to change and highlight this in your achievements. If your role has remained the same with one employer consider what you are the 'go-to' person for and how you have been called upon because of your wisdom for advice or to train and mentor staff.



## CV STRUCTURE

### First Page

We know that we need to grab the Hiring Manager's attention quickly, so the first page of your CV is vital. (Please refer to the [CV template](#) as you go through this section).

If we look at the headline or as many people, refer to it, a Personal Profile, this section often contains too much unnecessary information. It is usually littered with buzzwords and unsearchable clichés.

Instead, tailor your opening statement to who you are, the value you offer and your career goals. This can be tricky to create so refer to this additional [guide](#) I have created to help you.

The next section should be 'Key Career Achievements'. In this section, it is vitally important to be as specific as you can. Demonstrating how you have excelled during your career, which, in turn, shows the value you can bring to a prospective employer. Use numbers and data where possible to prove your achievements and reference the year of the success to help the hiring manager join the dots tailoring your achievements to suit the role and company you are applying to.

Following this, there should be a section for your 'Key Competencies' or 'Key Skills'. Tailoring them to the role that you are applying for will be essential. So ensure you look at the advert for the role you are applying for and mirror the keywords and language used in your CV to be more attention-grabbing and relevant. This will also help you get past the automated sifting processes with Applicant Tracking Systems referred to earlier.

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## CV STRUCTURE

### First Page Cont'd/Second Page

Employers will want to see where you have worked on the first page of your CV so aim to commence your 'Career History & Achievements' (or, Recent Career History if you are featuring the most recent 15 years of employment) in the second half of your first page.

As previously mentioned, be careful that it doesn't look like a shopping list of duties or a 'cut and paste' of your job description. Instead, demonstrate your capabilities and showcase your achievements.

You don't need to go into war and peace, just show the 'relevant' skills and capabilities that you have and where you will add value through evidencing your achievements which are most relevant. Your interview is the time when you can elaborate and go into more detail. Remember to add 'context'. The industry, size of the company and team and scope/purpose of your role. This information will reassure a prospective employer if they share similarities.

If you have recently attended University or College or completed qualifications or training courses which are relevant to the role you are applying for, you may wish to show these on your first page. However, if you attended an education establishment a while ago and it is less relevant to the role you are applying for, it may be better placed on the second page in a section just before your interests.

Don't worry about including all of your qualifications, just include the most relevant ones. For example, including O-Levels/GCSE's may not be relevant if you have A-Levels or a Degree.

Don't forget to add your Interests at the end of your CV if they add-value. It's amazing how many hidden transferable skills are missed from extra-curriculum activities. Ensure though that you make your 'Interests' interesting!

## TAILORING YOUR CV

Employers want to know that you are a good fit, not just with your skills and experience but also personality.

Treat your CV as a working document and view it as a template that you will need to tweak for each company and role that you apply for.

In addition to adjusting keywords, you will also need to address any key points the company is looking for and potentially shift the order of importance of achievements and skills within your CV.





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## TAILORING YOUR CV

Most importantly, your CV should represent your experience in such a way that it supports your career goals. For example, if you are looking to remain in a customer service position your CV will 'paint the picture' of a well-qualified customer service executive, which is exactly who you are. Conversely, if your goal is to transition into a management role, your CV will describe how you may have trained and mentored others, taken on additional responsibilities, covered management in periods of absence, etc.

## A CV WITH THE 'WOW' FACTOR!

Creating a CV with the 'WOW' factor takes time and thought. It's not an easy process, so resist the temptation to rush it. Appreciating this can be tricky, especially when financial pressures are at play.

The investment you make to get your CV right at the beginning of your job search will increase your confidence, create the right mindset, give you pride in what you've achieved and will secure you more interview opportunities.



## FREE WEBINARS AVAILABLE THROUGH EVENTBRITE



Good Luck