

CV Writing Checklist

Making an Impact

In today's recruitment market hiring managers, HR Professionals and Recruiters have an almost unlimited access to job seekers, profiles and CV's.

Some popular roles will receive hundreds if not thousands of applications and the reality is that in certain situations you could have as little as 10-20 seconds to make an impact before the reviewer moves on to the next applicant. At first glance this may seem like desperate times but with a little effort on your side this can be turned into a huge advantage as some of your potential toughest opponents may not make that cut themselves.

Layout

First and foremost it is important to consider how you want your CV to look (bearing in mind it should be no more than 1-2 A4 pages, unless it's an academic CV). There are several things to make sure you include in your CV (not necessarily in this order):

- **Contact details**
(important – you must consider whether you want to include your home address if you are making your CV public)
- **Education**
- **Referees**
- **Skills**
- **Work experience**

The Brutal Edit

The bottom-line is the days of "one CV fits all" are truly over. A tailored approach to applications is the best way forward. Think of a sharp shooter vs the scatter gun – Seek out positions that you really like the look of and then make your CV as appropriate as you can with the time that you have at your disposal.

Our advice would be to follow the guidelines in this document but have in essence a Master Copy of all of your key skills and achievements and then edit that document accordingly to fit the specific role you are applying for. The more niche you are the less editing you will have to do but if you have a reasonably generic CV with a wide range of useful skills, achievements or industry experiences then this is absolutely the way to go.

Introduce yourself

Let's start with the assumption that you have 20 seconds to make an impact. It might not always be the case but if we use that as a bench mark then you have in effect 20 seconds to demonstrate to the hiring manager / recruiter that you are not only relevant but someone who he or she wants to meet in person and interview.

First and foremost you need to entice them to read more with a punchy headline or introductory profile. Now this can't be generic or ambiguous or you may as well not have it. It needs to be clear and concise but it needs to create an impression. If you struggle with this one have a think about your biggest achievements and make a list of them here editing out the ones that aren't relevant depending on the position you are applying for.

Summarise Key Skills

On top of achievements it's a very good idea to have a key skills summary. Again if you have more of a generic profile with multiple roles then have a master list of key skills and reduce it to no more than 5 or 6 when making an application.

Careers Section

Here you list in chronological order starting with the most recent first, your employer, your role and dates of employment. If you held multiple roles within the same organisation this can be demonstrated here along with any acquisitions etc. If you are a contractor with a large number of contracts and employers then it might be worth summarizing the period of time in contract employment with some of the notable highlights.

The above should be more than enough to demonstrate to whoever is reading in a very short space of time that you are suitable applicant and time will then be taken to read the remaining document in more detail.

Now that you have captured their attention it is time to add some real depth and clarity to your application. The career section is where you do just that, and as always there is more of an emphasis for recent roles over experiences in the past.

One of the most common mistakes that we see time and again at The People Foundry is an applicant making an assumption that the reader knows everything about the companies but this is rarely the case. The last thing a potential employer wants to do is spend time researching your previous employers! So start with the headlines:

- **Company name**
- **Position**
- **Dates of employment**

Now you can set the scene:

- **What industry are they**
- **What do they do**
- **How big are they** (employees / revenues / offices / locations and are they national or global)
- **Who are their customers** (even if it is a very well-known company it's still a good idea to add some headline information)
- **Focus on the particular area of the business you worked in.**

Then in a second short paragraph describe the role, which department you were in, who you reported to and who reported in to you. Keep it high level and don't waffle on. CV's that are very wordy rarely get read all the way through so there needs to be a balance here.

Now you need to highlight the key responsibilities and achievements either together or in separate groups but preferably as bullet points. Keep them short and sharp and don't make them into paragraphs themselves. Ideally 1-2 lines apiece. As with the skills and achievements section above it's good to have a master copy and then edit according to the role you are applying for. Tangible achievements are always preferred. Even if you are in a role like software development, what were the commercial benefits of the product you created when it was released?

The reader wants to get a sense of what you can bring to their own company beyond the key skills you possess and job functions you have fulfilled in the past.

Including Education / Qualifications

As with a lot of your CV the further you get along with your career the less relevant the early stuff becomes. If you have recently graduated or left school and therefore have little work experience it would be best to begin the CV with this information. It's important to list all of your grades and any part time or summer jobs you may have had.

After 5 to 10 years of commercial employment it really isn't necessary to add this at the top, so maybe put this after the careers section. It's always good to name the schools you attended as the reader may well be connected in some way and you've instantly gained something in common.

Finishing Touches and Top Tips:

Be Factual

Where you can, add facts and figures that are tangible. That may be easier for someone in sales but in all areas of business and life there are measurable components that can demonstrate previous success.

Explaining gaps

At The People Foundry we come across gaps in a CV / profiles frequently, some big some small. Most of the time there are very good reasons for this such as "family member unwell and caring for them or travelling". Whatever the reason do put it in, you don't have to go into lots of detail but something brief shows you have nothing to hide and you're only human.

Grammar

Check the spelling and grammar; these are pet hates of any employer / recruiter. It may seem small but if this isn't up to scratch it just portrays a sloppy and careless profile and certainly not someone anyone would want to hire!

Adding a hobbies / about you section

This isn't compulsory but may be worth including if you think it's relevant to the role or you are particularly proud of something such as volunteering / sporting achievements. You might want to consider that you may on the off chance also have this hobby in common with your potential employer. Again keep it short and sweet.

Test it out

As a final test give your CV to someone to read and allow them only 20 seconds to do so and see what they say! Do they have a clear idea of what you do and are they impressed?

Looks Good

When you've finished your master copy make sure it looks pleasing to the eye. Try not to be too clever here.

Save it

Don't forget to save it and call it something that's easy to find e.g. 'Joe_Bloggs_CV_Nov2016'