

### **Tailoring your CV to the job**

Your CV should be tailored for the job you're applying for, focusing on the parts that are important and relative to the vacancy. So many people have a 'standard' CV which they send to everyone – this does not work! Look at the job advert or the person specification and think about the organisation and what the job involves. What is the employer asking for? What will make him or her interview you? Investigate the organisation, their history, area of business and try to obtain an appreciation of where the organisation is going. Take some time to find out about the core activities of the employer.

### **How long should your CV be?**

This depends on how many years you have been working and the type of role you are applying for. Remember that employers receive many CVs every day, so include the things which will grab their attention positively and quickly.

- It should be easy to read with space between each section
- It should be no more than 2-3 pages long.
- Senior executives with a lot of work experience should perhaps have longer CVs.
- It should be well structured and relevant to the vacancy you are applying for.

### **What should I definitely include?**

Your CV should start with your personal details; name, address and contact details. It's up to you whether you include your age, marital status and nationality - it's not essential and increasingly today, this information is not included on a CV. This is down to personal preference.

### **A personal profile**

After your personal details, your 'Personal Profile' provides a brief outline of you as a person, and what you can offer the organisation offering the job vacancy. It should include a brief summary of your skills, qualities of character and a mention of your recent work background and life achievements. Your personal profile would usually be 100-200 words maximum.

The objective of your personal profile is to immediately gain the reader's interest – they will decide whether to read the rest of your CV just from what you say in your personal profile. For example, if the job involves working with or managing people, you could say you're a good team-worker and an effective communicator as a senior manager. If the vacancy is technical, then this ability needs to come across in your personal profile.

### **Education and work experience**

This part of your CV depends on your background and the type of job you're applying for. Some jobs require experience, while for others your academic qualifications are more important. If you've been working for a while, put your employment history first; if you're younger and don't have much work experience, focus on your education and training. Think carefully about what the organisation is looking for, the type of job and the main requirements needed for the role. If the vacancy you are applying for is sales or financial results related, illustrate some of the past successes you have; increasing sales in a business by 45% during the last two years.

### **Employment history**

Start with your present or most recent or current position and work backwards, using bullet points and a brief summary of what you achieved personally and for your organisation. This should include:

- Name and location of the employers
- The dates you worked for them
- Your job title
- A summary of your main duties

Employers want to see how your experience will be useful to them, so it is important to be brief about jobs that are totally different from the one you're applying for. Relevant jobs should be listed in more detail, showing not only your main duties and responsibilities but giving examples of the skills you used and what you achieved. This is the key information the employer uses when deciding whether to interview you or not – remember that during the CV selection stage, your CV may be considered for only 1-2 minutes before being accepted or rejected for an interview. Your employment history must highlight your experience and suitability for the job. Include useful information but leave out anything that's not relevant.

Relate your skills and experience to the job description and what the employer is looking for. Also include any relevant temporary or unpaid work. Avoid unexplained gaps in your employment history, as employers may think you have something to hide! Do not hide anything though and certainly do NOT lie on your CV, you will eventually be caught!

### **Education and professional training**

Start with your most recent academic studies and go back to the qualifications you got at school. Using bullet points or a table include:

- The university, college or school
- The dates the qualifications were awarded and any grades
- Any supporting information about a thesis or dissertation you completed

### **Hobbies and interests**

Some employers like to read about your interests, as it can give them an idea of your strengths and what you'd be like to work alongside. However, keep this section brief and as with your employment history, it should be relevant in some way to the job. For example, if you're involved in any clubs or societies this can show that you enjoy meeting new people. People often put on their CV that they enjoy cooking or reading, but these activities are too general to be of interest to an employer and should be excluded.

### **References**

Finally, you should state that references are available if required, although you don't need to include referees' contact details on the CV at this stage. At least one referee should be work-related; or if you haven't worked for a while, some other responsible person who has known you for quite a while. A personal referee is usually supported and do remember to ask for their permission before including them on your CV.

### **How to present your CV**

Print your CV on good quality, white A4 paper, using just one style and font – Arial 12pt is recommended. It should be concise and easy to read. Check it for spelling and grammar mistakes. You can use a computer spelling and grammar check but it's also good idea to get it checked by somebody else who does not know you so well. Read it and read it again! Also ask friends and professional colleagues to comment on the contents. Are you under-selling yourself or perhaps over-exaggerating on certain events in your life?

A common mistake is to use bold or italic type everywhere. Bold type is good for section headings such as 'Employment History' or 'Education' but many people use it to highlight dates and previous employers' names - this draws the reader's eye away from what's important and is unnecessary.

You should also prepare a password protected word.doc copy of your CV, and if you have the facility a PDF copy is also very useful for submitting electronically by email or on-line through a website.