The Perfect CV

Your CV is a personal marketing tool. It serves as a platform to promote yourself to a prospective employer. The most effective CVs are those that are tailored or customised to a specific application. Prospective employers only spend 20 to 30 seconds glancing at a CV, so you need to highlight your main attractions at the beginning.

Remember there are no rules to creating a CV, only conventions and guidelines.

You must decide what you want to include that will reflect your good points in relation to the job requirements. This article aims to clarify some of the main steps to creating your perfect fit CV. To make your CV as effective as possible, think about what skills and qualities they may wish to invest in and why. You can then organise and present your information in a way that is likely to interest the employer.

SELF-ASSESSMENT

The first step in your CV writing process should be self-assessment against the criteria of the role. You should have been provided with a detailed job specification - either upon request from the company or through your recruitment consultant. This offers you insight into the requirements of the employer and is your first opportunity to display evidence of your suitability to the post. By working through a specification and noting examples of when and how you displayed particular skills, you create an application that highlights all the key points an employer is looking for.

CONTENT

Your CV should be interesting to read and flow in a logical manner. Include personal details such as name, address, telephone number and email address. Include a personal profile or elevator pitch, through this you can clarify your career plan and highlight your key attributes.

EDUCATION AND QUALIFICATIONS

This section provides details of your educational achievements to date, giving particular prominence to those most recent/relevant. List your education and qualifications in reverse chronological order, give your educational achievements the glory they deserve! Don't assume employers will know about your particular degree or qualification, be prepared to offer a description of what the course entailed and the training you received etc.

SKILLS, TRAINING AND PROFESSIONAL MEMBERSHIPS

It is important that you include all your skills - applications, packages, operating systems and databases used, as well as details of any additional language skills and level of proficiency. Also include any extra training achieved you feel relevant to the post, such as workshops, seminars or courses.

EMPLOYMENT AND EXPERIENCE

Details of employment, placements and voluntary work should be included in a specific section of your CV. List your positions in reverse chronological order and provide a brief description of the key tasks and skills you developed in each role. Include details of each employer, dates of employment and your own job titles. Use concise sentences or bullet points to save space and ensure the document is aesthetically pleasing.

Even if previous roles are not directly related to the one you are seeking, you can draw attention to examples of transferable skills such as: communication; financial awareness; flexibility; organising and co-ordinating; team work; initiative; supervising and time management. Do not leave gaps - if you took a year out, or carried out interim assignments, then say so.

REFERENCES

It is normal to provide the contact details of two referees. These could be one from university and the other from an employer, or if you have gained extensive experience since finishing full time education, could be from two previous employers. If possible, select referees who are appropriate to the specific job for which you are applying and always ask permission from the people you intend to include on your CV before you do so.

PRESENTATION

The presentation of your CV is vital when selling yourself. Your CV is an indication to a prospective employer of the type of person you are. The most effective way to present your CV is with bullet points, bold headings and underlining. These simple methods achieve a clear, structured, user-friendly style. Use headings and sections to signpost your reader to the information they are seeking. Be consistent in how you organise information, for example providing both educational and employment details in reverse chronological order.

Please note your CV should be no longer than two pages and avoid using a typeface less than 10pts.