

What makes the perfect CV?



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IT RECRUITMENT

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The Perfect CV- What is your view ?

When we asked for your help on "The CV dilemma" we were inundated with your suggestions, opinions and issues arising from this very sensitive topic. The phrase - Curriculum Vitae is the Latin phrase for 'Course of Life' which enables you to demonstrate what you are capable of and have what you have achieved so far in your career.

Before you read all the responses, I want to ensure you had our perspective on some of the CV basics with this short Fact or Myth list:

CV Length: We have 1000's of CV's on our database and when we last analysed our data the average length of these CV's were 4 pages. It's impossible to get all of your 'course of life' as an experienced contractor onto 2 pages. Who come up with this rule? **We view the 2 page CV as a MYTH.**

Accuracy: As an expert of IT you know that you have to get the coding perfect, you have to implement the correct strategy. Your CV must be in the same font, font size, without spelling mistakes, poor punctuation and should read correctly. **FACT**

Honesty: You absolutely must be able to back up any statement you make. If you say you are an expert in X then be prepared to be tested on that bold admission. **FACT**

Consistency: Ensure all dates tally. Remember that every time you send an updated CV to an agency or upload it on a job board, the Recruitment Consultant will be able to view your older version and compare the dates provided each time. **FACT**





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The House Rules

You all have some very strong views on what is acceptable to put on your CV and what will guarantee your CV going into the 'no' pile. Lots quoted the 2 page CV rule and bullet points were very popular. My favourite quote was:

"The purpose of a resume is to trigger a desire in the hiring Manager to engage in conversation with a candidate for additional information related to a project".

I know this easier to type than to do but I thought it summed up the reason for the CV perfectly.

So I hope you enjoy reading the responses provided:

"A CV should be specific to the position being applied for. That's to say it should demonstrate (i.e. with evidence) that the candidate has the skills and attributes being sought for the job in question."

"What makes my toe's curl? Bad punctuation!"

- 1." Stop calling literally every job in the IT world by using the adjective "architect". They are NOT."
- 2." Reject any CV that uses 'architect' as a verb. It is not."

"The absolute deal breaker for me though is when someone claims a capability in a CV, and then you pose a question or challenge in interview to verify this, and they fail miserably. In one instance I had someone who claimed to be an Excel guru. In the interview, I posed a problem that should have been well within his ability to answer, not a trick at all, and there were at least half a dozen acceptable answers. His answer? "I'd call IT and ask them". Giving him the benefit of the doubt, that he'd misunderstood the direction and intent of my question, I said "IT aren't available, you're off site, the manager needs an answer now". He replied that he'd raise it with the IT Manager as a priority. Out of curiosity to see if there was any hint any basic skill, I gave him half the answer and waited in vain to see him join the dots. At that point I halted the interview, thanked him and waved him out the door."

"A good CV captures the skills of a candidate, and the things that they are passionate about, all within 1 page if possible."

"Two pages: no photo: no url links to FB, LinkedIn etc., just evidence based facts and figures:

It has to be customised and in that the 1st page should highlight the relevant experience for the position. A basic rule of thumb for me is Employers want to know what you achieved in a specific role and how you did it. I have found success approaching it this way."

"The other thing I'd suggest, is that unless it's really special, few employers are interested in anything you did more than ten years ago, apart from demonstrating track record in a particular field. After ten years, a one line description is usually all that's necessary."

"For me it's fairly basic. If these basics are met, I'll look a little deeper. It will:

- Be tailored to the job description of the position applied for.
- Contain measurable specifics (i.e. managed xx people, with a budget of xx pounds etc)
- Document prior experience, education, and professional accomplishments.

A stand-out CV will not:

- Have grammatical errors (spelling or punctuation). This is a deal breaker.
- Contain photos or unusual fonts (size or typeface).
- Be more than two pages."



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"The CV should not be more than 2 pages of A4size and the first page should highlight the competency, knowledge, learning and contribution in his/her profession. The second page should have brief details of various employment and its details. So by seeing the first page itself you will be able to decide to accept or reject."

"A Resume should never be more than 2 pages long. Any Resume more than 2 pages long is never read in some cases."

"I think that bullet points highlighting technical skills (with levels) and standard enterprise software that the applicant is comfortable with is useful."

"It's fairly easy to see a CV that's jammed with buzzwords vs. one where the applicant has taken the time to list what they know and are comfortable with. I'm sure you've seen enough to know the standard qualifications people jam onto their CV."

"Also, formatting matters! If your CV has eight fonts and differing point sizes within the same paragraph you have to assume that will reflect on the quality of work the person puts out and their attention to detail. The ideal candidate will always be someone who takes pride in their work and thus pays attention to details, but the most important qualification (that you can't train or buy) is passion. If someone can write a CV that conveys a sense of passion for the position I can almost guarantee I'll want to meet with that person. You also can't fake passion... at least not in an interview."

"I recently spent time polishing my CV and showing it to the in house HR bods and others. They suggested I rewrite the CV putting key features into bullet points. So I did. Then people said I should ease up on the bullet points and write more sentences. I think the key thing is that different people have different ideas about what they are looking for - if you are lucky, they will communicate it to you via the recruitment bod, so you get a chance to tailor your core CV and get yourself in front of the hiring manager."

"What are buzzwords? Jargon should be used with caution, but the key words are useful in the initial selection process. I look for key words in jobs that interest me (even if I don't decide to apply for them) and consider how they can be incorporated on my CV."

"Everything you say in the CV you must be able to enlarge upon or justify if later questioned in an interview. Hence the desire for evidence. Numbers are useful - customers supported, sales figures, number of units installed or serviced etc."

"The purpose of a resume is to trigger a desire in the hiring Manager to engage in conversation with a candidate for additional information related to a project."

"I was job-hunting a year ago and a CV re-write massively changed the number of calls I got."

"I think the trick is to keep it concise and get the important stuff over quickly. Most people skim read CV's so you need to get noticed quickly with your headline information, then hopefully they'll put your CV in the "to be read properly" pile. You also need to make sure your CV makes sense. Recent certification and number of years experience is more important than a 10-year old degree so make sure that stands out at the top of the CV."

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"It's not our fault - IT'S yours !"

"We have all had a bad day, when everything goes wrong and we need someone to blame...But when its YOUR course of life you are talking about, only YOU have lived it and therefore YOU have to be the best person to provide clarity and depth to your career history so far. So, don't tell us what you can't do and try focusing on what you can do and did do.

e.g. I didn't finish my contract due to the company going into administration

I was able to complete x and y during the time made available to me.

However, for those of you who do find writing your CV an absolute chore - here are some of your frustrations:-

"My problem is that I have a varied work history. I have worked in a number of different industries in roles from engineering to sales and have experience to burn. However, as I worked in contracting for the last ten years on mainly short term contracts it tends to fill up my CV with non-specifics when applying for more interesting roles and is a negative from a recruiters point of view for permanent roles."

"I am an IT contractor, and some of the so-called rules do not apply. For example, we are told, account for all gaps in employment. In contracting there are bound to be gaps. The periods between contracts may be prolonged in times of recession, such as we have been through. And of course breaks can be taken for other reasons, e.g. illness of self or relative, or simply the need to have a holiday now and then."

"We are told to keep it chronological, most recent first. But contracts I take on vary from major, of several months or more duration, to one-day-stands. All these are worth doing, but my CV needs to represent on the first page what is most likely to interest a client. Currently I am addressing this by listing main and lesser contracts separately. Of course, if I "personalise" a CV for a particular client, I can apply some judgement here."

"Many would advise use bullet points, but you say some clients don't like them."

"It's a bit like another "dilemma" for contractors... agencies like to see customised CVs that match the job description, yet many agencies get so many applications that they don't look at every one - maybe only the top 50 or 100 emails get reviewed. So, do you invest time in customising the CV and hope the agency review all, or immediately send in something more generic containing plenty of keywords to get through any automated screening systems? Is there a best of both?"

"I tried for years to find how to construct the ideal CV, and came to the conclusion that there is not one. One can read books on CV style advice. I find these of little use. The CV examples are usually modelled on a thirty-something-year-old sales-person, who has had three progressive positions so far and is seeking their fourth. Nothing about the traumas that most of us have in our careers, such as redundancy, career-change."



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We just need help

Well Done You! - Always ask a professional to do the job. If you know that writing your CV is going to take you weeks but you can go into an organisation and fix a major fault on a server then use an expert to help. If you spend all your time focussing on your weaknesses then all you get is frustrated. You spend time on what you are fantastic at and leave the rest to others.

There are lots of companies that can write your CV for you so, if these comments are true for you then search on Google after you have read them and make a positive step to getting the perfect CV:

"As a Volunteer Career Counsellor I develop Professional Resumes for all types of Job Seekers which I enjoy. There is a well-known saying "If you can't sell yourself on paper you will never be able to sell yourself in person".

"As a contractor I have found myself having to ask agents for clarification on a role - which led to the hiring clients to review their job specification and provide a clearer specification. This has saved me the hassle of attending the interview in the first place"

"I'd suggest answers to your immediate question about how to encourage improved CVs is to be honest and tell them that without doing it, the chances of success are low, and decreasing in a market where competition is only becoming fiercer. If they don't show commitment and self-interest, then do you really want to be putting them forward to clients?"

I'd also suggest that there is no such thing as one CV. You need a tailored CV that hits all of the customer requirements. I think it's critical to highlight why you as an employee have a proven record of making a difference, as opposed to turning up every day and turning the handle."

"If you have a varied employment history, you should be able to demonstrate characteristics or traits that are valuable no matter what the job is: the right attitude, flexibility, communications skills, budgeting resource and time management skills."

"I think it would be a win - win situation if recruiters can have a technical writer sort of guy who can give the finishing touch to the resumes after a discussion with the contractor about his skills and then submitting it to the employer.

However, if a recruiter gave me some advice on how to make my CV work better for me, I would certainly take note and make those changes, especially for that role."

"As a recruiter, you have a vested interest in whether people are hired or not, perhaps it should be up to you to help them by reformatting their documentation if necessary to meet your customers needs."

"Think of the candidates as mere poets, some specialise in rhyme, some in prose, regardless of the style unless you ask them in advance for a particular style, they will deliver their art in the format they are most comfortable with!"

"My recommendation is to do what a the recruiting firm that we hired did: screen through your top 20 candidates and redraft their CV so that the templates are identical (e.g. establish a template and filter their data to recap in that template). Naturally, the easiest way to do this would be to have a software program do the work for you (does one exist?). If only..."

View Omnium's guide on writing your CV [click here](#) and as always, please call us if you would like any assistance.

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