

Seven Seconds Away!!!

You have just seven seconds for your CV to grab a hirers attention!!!!



Everyone wants to give you advice on your CV, it must be 2 pages, it needs to be as long as it takes to include your work history, it must say this, it must say that!! It's hard to know what advice to take and what to ignore.

One thing that is well researched and documented, is that you have a very limited time to grab the attention of the reader, reports vary but generally you have seven seconds! Yes, you read that right, you have just *seven seconds* for your CV to make the right impression.

Of course, once you have passed the seven second test, the person reading will start to dig deeper and deeper into the detail in your CV, so it really needs to be able to stand up to that scrutiny.

So how do you make your CV one of the 'I need to read on' ones? The obvious answer is to have relevant information at the top of your CV and by relevant, I mean skills and attributes that match those required for the job you are applying for.

If that means moving things around for each application, then do it!!! If the job isn't worth that little effort why are you applying?

A simple tip is to use your opening statement to 'highlight' your relevance to the role. Recruiters and hiring managers don't want to see "I work well under pressure", "on my own or as part of a team", "quick learner" and they certainly don't want to read your autobiography. If recruiters and hirers had a pound for every time they have read those lines, they would all be happily living off the interest! Let's get you in the door first, sitting in front of the hiring manager.

So here are some tips to keep your CV from the dreaded 'delete' button:

Get straight to the point with statements like, I have '3 years' experience as a "insert the job title here" with 2 years' selling "the product/service that the job requires you to sell" for ABC Ltd. Or, I am a fully qualified "job title" with 5 years leading programs/operations/sales for XYZ PLC.

If the role requires running operations, selling similar products or services, or managing programs for one of ABC or XYZ's competitors you are immediately a "Person of Interest", and not in the TV detective way!

Please don't use the third person (anywhere in your CV) 'Fred has 5 years' experience' is so impersonal, keeping your CV to the point means it loses some of your personality, by using the third person you remove it altogether. And, be warned, using the third person came in the top ten of hiring manager's dislikes in a recent Recruitment survey (again).

Where possible include an example of a recent work achievement in the opening statement: Delivered 3 major change programs on time and on budget 2016/17, or, delivered £800k against a target of £500k in the first half of 2018. I like to see a 'Notable Achievements' section within the CV, straight after the Personal Profile section works best. Bullet points work well here. Notable achievements need to be verifiable, quantifiable and MUST stand up to scrutiny.

Job Titles:

If you had one of those in-house titles like 'Manager of Fun' or 'Wombat Hugger' (yes that is a real job title that was advertised back in May 2016) you should use more recognised titles like HR Manager and Animal Welfare Officer in your CV. By all means include your actual title as well, the fun aspect may stand out in your favour. Some of these titles do grab attention, but if they are too company specific how are the rest of us supposed to know what you did?

Be aware that when recruiters, looking for an Animal Welfare Officer, search job sites for CV's it's unlikely that a Wombat Hugger will be returned, and even if it was it would be way below the animal welfare officers on the list.

Avoid repeating the same achievements, or use of the same skills when describing your previous roles, if it's a relevant skill or achievement include it in the most recent job in which you used that skill. If your CV tells me you have experience of a required skill telling me again, and again, won't help. Remember you should have already told me in your opening statement that you have 'X years experience' in a similar role.

How many pages?

Two is a rule of thumb, for a school leaver it is hard to fill two pages, for a 30 years "seen it all and done it all" C-Level executive it is hard to cram it all in to two pages. However, there is no need to go much beyond 3 pages even at this level. It is understood that if you have been the CFO at a multi-national for the past three years you understand P&L and EBITDA so there is no need to list it.

Think of it like this: “I have a full UK Drivers Licence” says it all doesn’t it? I don’t need to say “I applied for a Provisional Drivers Licence, had twenty driving lessons during which I learned how to use the accelerator, brakes and steering. I studied the Highway Code, took a theory test and passed, I then had a driving test which I also passed”.

Should you list your education?

Again, a school leaver will need to, there will be little else on their CV apart from some work experience.

Your Degree, if you have one, should be included.

Those of us that are a little more mature really don’t need to include our ‘O’ and ‘A’ Level grades, no one is interested.

You should also avoid over formatting, a CV that has lots of fancy formatting can ‘confuse’ recruitment and HR software and vital information may be lost, keep it simple and easy to read.

There are hundreds of sites that offer advice on your CV, just remember, whatever you decide is right for you, you have just **SEVEN SECONDS** to engage the reader and keep your CV open on their screen.