

CV's – A Recruiter's Guide

INTRODUCTION

The first thing everybody thinks of when its time to get a new job, is 'CV'. As an experienced recruiter I have been sent thousands of CV's. Your CV will invariably invoke one of two reactions. Either the recipient will be interested (sometimes even excited) to give you a call, or will not be bothered in the slightest and will divert your application to the bin.

In truth I have always thought that CV's are a bit over-rated – that other people perceive them to be more important than they actually are. In my experience it is a rare occurrence for a candidate to be offered a job on the basis of a CV alone. After all, it's just a piece of paper – which is exactly why we meet everyone we work with.

However it is very true that 'you get one chance to make a first impression' and the CV *is* essential to get your 'foot in the door'. Bad CV's risk not getting the meeting with prospective employers and consultancies. I shall therefore try to point out some of the positive and negative CV features to hopefully help you get the meeting.

Positive Features

'Professional' is the key word. Your document must be of the right length (ideally no more than two pages) and of 'Professional' appearance.

Remember that you are in Sales and that, rightly or wrongly, sales people are constantly judged. Whereas people in other industries, for example media, will try to make their CV stand out, you should not take any unnecessary gambles.

Keep the layout and the font simple and conventional. Ensure the layout is clear. Make sure that you list your most recent role first and work backwards, ensuring that all dates are accurate.

It is the content and your proven track record which should make you stand out.

Ensure that the entire content of the CV is relevant. The more relevant the better – **a bespoke CV is always better than a generalised one.** Give the buyer what they want and ensure that you emphasise your achievements.

I have listed below key areas which you can emphasise and use as your ‘hooks’ to interest prospective employer’s / consultancies and get you that meeting.

- Sales Training: Make sure that you include relevant courses you have attended such as TAS, Miller Heimann, etc.
- Target Achievement: If you have performed above target list this (as a percentage) and in terms of revenue generated.
- Comparative Performance: How many sales people do you operate alongside performing a similar function? Where do you rank? If you are number one, say you are number one. If you are number three out of a UK Wide sales force of fifty, use this as a selling point.
- Awards: You have probably received more than just salary in terms of remuneration, yet not everyone states other benefits accrued due to good performance. Awards sometimes make for interesting reading and talking points, especially things such as ‘presidents club’, sales person of the year or biggest deal. List the location of any trips won.
- Best deals: Not enough people detail their best deals for each employer which can help the reader visualise you winning similar deals for them. People are often wary of divulging certain information and often a confidentiality clause can preclude this. You should remember however that divulging this information to recruiters like me can only benefit you – I don’t care who you have won deals with as long as you are a good candidate. The key when you describe a deal is to give detail (even if you want to conceal the name of the company) for example: ‘Easy Jet (company name), selling Supply Chain Management (SCM) software and services (solution sold), worth £120k initially and then recurring (deal value). The sales cycle was 6 months.’
- Order Values: If your order values are high this is evidence of your salesmanship.
- What level do you deal at? If you deal at senior board level state this – it is another selling point.
- Detail ‘salesy’ attributes: If you are dynamic, resilient, self-sufficient, hungry, innovative and over-achieving then state this – and state why. Use ‘Action-verbs’ such as ‘over-achieved’ and ‘won’.
- Bespoke your application wherever possible: Perhaps you have sold software and services and the company you are applying to is more of a services led organisation. Of course you should not give any untruths but you should emphasise all the ‘services’ elements of the role and service orientated deals.
- Always offer at least two referee’s who will speak positively about you.
- Follow up your CV either to the company or the consultancy with a telephone call to confirm that it has arrived and sell yourself before hopefully setting up a meeting. Remember that there is a fine line between selling yourself and being pushy so be careful.

Negative Features

- Too long: Everyone knows that sales people like to talk. However waffle on your CV is bad practise and an essay style bibliography is unacceptable. To give you an indication of how bad some people can be I was today sent a 13 page CV. It went straight in the bin. How much time has that guy got on his hands? If I see a CV which is too long or with long winded paragraphs the first thing that honestly crosses my mind is 'I bet this guy will go on a bit.' The truth is, I just haven't the time to read it so remember to be concise and that long CV's in the current market are almost a professional discourtesy.
- Don't accentuate the negatives: Don't mention them at all in fact. One of the most common ways of doing this is rambling on about the reason for leaving current or previous jobs. There is a time and a place for this and that is in the meeting – stating that you do not get on with your boss in the CV will not help you get the meeting.
- Personal Photograph: No matter how good looking you think you are – don't put your picture on it. This could just be my own personal opinion but I don't think having your 'mug-shot' on there helps much.
- Spelling errors / grammatically incorrect: This shows poor attention to detail. Always spell check and even get someone to have a look over it just to be sure.
- Lengthy Gaps in Employment: If the gaps include voluntary work or training then you can include them in the 'skills' or 'qualifications' sections of your CV. If not, by detailing only the year of employment rather than the month and the year your CV will be more fluent.
- Incorrect contact details: You would be surprised how often the contact numbers we are given are inaccurate, or how often somebody we don't expect to meet answers the phone. Ensure that you give an accurate personal mobile number rather than a works mobile number unless you are absolutely sure that it is fine for us to contact you on that number.
- Interests and Hobbies: Ensure that you put only relevant interest down and don't take any risks. Train spotting may well be the love of your life but the person reading your CV might hate it. Small issues like this can often stop you at the starting post from getting an audience with an opportunity that could be tailor made for you.
- Bad sense of humour: Remember that a CV is a formal document and that humour is entirely subjective. For example, I have seen more than one candidate list under 'dislikes' the fact that they 'don't like getting out of the bed in the morning!' It might have made the candidate chuckle to himself but I didn't meet him.
- Lack of Relevance: Don't just send your CV everywhere. Ensure that there is at least some synergy between your background and the target company. You would again be amazed at some of the CV's we get sent, one of the funniest being a Pizza maker who thought he could get into IT Sales by describing his skill at applying ingredients to ten slices on the base. Unfortunately he didn't get a meeting, either.

To conclude, your CV should be a professional sales document and it should highlight your successes. Contact Finlay James and we will be happy to put together a bespoke candidate profile on your behalf.

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