



Does your CV still matter?

Social networking sites are nice, but you still need a formal calling card, says Bob Boad. Here's how to ensure that your written profile makes a positive impression

In this age of information, when so much of our professional history is held in online profiles, easily retrieved by an internet search, and often reported in real time on social media, you might question whether the curriculum vitae still has a role to play. The answer is a resounding “yes”.

There is no substitute for a carefully drafted CV that succinctly sets out your qualifications, experience, achievements and interests. And an experienced interviewer will be looking for more than just a list of your qualifications and employment history. Instead, the document should be the clearest evidence of how you wish to present yourself to an employer and communicate those less quantifiable, but desirable, qualities that point to an ideal candidate.

So, your CV should be:

- **Concise:** No matter how many qualifications, key positions and successful cases you have to your credit, it is important to condense the information – ideally to no more than two pages. Don't worry – if you are selected for interview, the interviewer can, and will, ask further questions to put more “flesh on the bones”.
- **Legible:** Do not try to cram details in by skimping on spacing, using a small typeface or omitting headings – the document should be pleasing to the eye and easy to read. Recognise that your CV is likely to be read on a screen as well as in print, so make sure it works as well in PDF format as it does in hard-copy format.
- **Complete:** Gaps in your work history will catch the eye of most interviewers, and you may be quizzed about them. Being upfront about time spent travelling or between jobs will help establish you as a credible and honest candidate.
- **Tailored:** Always tailor your CV to the specific role for which you are applying. Put the emphasis on what you have accomplished in your present and past jobs, and the key skills you would bring to this one.
- **Free of clichés:** Avoid the usual well-worn jargon, even if you do

believe that you are a self-starter and a natural leader. Instead, take the opportunity to signal how much you enjoy working in this field.

- Error free: I hesitate to give this most basic advice, but it is so important to check and recheck to ensure your document is absolutely correct. Don't just rely on the built-in spellcheck; print out and read your document out loud to catch every single misstep.
- Truthful: Do not include any untruths, or even exaggerations. Prudent organisations will follow up on the references that you provide. In these days of increased workforce mobility and readily available counterfeit degrees and other qualifications, would-be employers are motivated to check out claimed qualifications with the appropriate educational institutions and professional bodies, unless they have personal knowledge of the candidate's credentials. Many will reject candidates as soon as they spot an inconsistency or discover untruths during the interview. If an employer becomes aware of an

issue after you have been hired, it may consider this grounds for dismissing you.

CAUTIONARY TALE

That last point really should go without saying, but, if you have ever been tempted to embellish your CV or take a lesson in self-promotion from the cast of *The Apprentice*, the case of Michael McCooe should make you think again.

Some serious inaccuracies on his CV resulted in the Solicitors Regulation Authority (SRA) taking an interest. In a decision published in July 2016, the SRA announced that it had agreed with him that, among other things, he would remove himself from the roll of solicitors.¹

OTHER ISSUES

Some older jobseekers try to disguise their age by omitting from their CVs the dates when they were in education, and some even leave out their early work experience. However, I am not convinced that this is a wise

move. In the IP world, experience is highly valued, and, in my opinion, ageism is generally less of an issue than it is in some other fields. Looking ahead, we will all need to get used to the idea of working to a more advanced age than we did in the past and make the necessary adjustment to our attitudes.

Obviously, your CV is not the right place, and the interview is not the right time, to reveal that you have a past conviction for dodging a train fare. However, if your application is successful, you may need to consider whether there is an appropriate moment to share such information with your potential employer before its own checks bring the fact to light.

Of course, you may find that the recruiting organisation itself is not as open and forthcoming as you might wish – for example, if you try to find out why the previous postholder left so that you can check that the opportunity matches up to the glamorous description that appeared in the advertisement. We try to encourage both parties involved in the recruitment process to be as honest and open as they can be while assessing one another.

FIRST STEP

Ultimately, remember that the CV is merely a preliminary part of the recruitment process. It is mainly used to screen out those who are unlikely to be a fit from those who may be suitable. Other candidate-screening procedures and factors, such as how you come across at interview and your personal reputation in the IP field, will eventually decide the outcome, if your carefully crafted CV has got you past the first hurdle. ■

1. Full details of the case can be viewed at bit.ly/SRAMcCooe.



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