

Crafting a Stand-Out CV: Tips for Getting Closer to Your Dream Job

A Blog of the Swiss Association of MBAs



ISABELLE NÜSSLI
Author

Before we begin, let's clarify one thing. While they are often used interchangeably, CVs, resumes, and bios are all different, serve different purposes, and have distinct formats.

A CV, short for "Curriculum Vitae," is a comprehensive document that provides an in-depth overview of your academic and professional accomplishments. Its purpose is to present a complete record of your academic and professional background, highlighting your achievements, qualifications, and relevant skills.

A resume is a concise and targeted document that summarizes your relevant work experience, skills, and qualifications. They are typically tailored to specific job applications. So, unlike a CV, which includes comprehensive information, a resume focuses on presenting key details relevant to the position you are applying for.

A bio, short for "biography," is a brief summary or birds-eye view of your professional background and accomplishments. It is typically used in networking situations, personal branding efforts, or as an introductory document for speaking engagements or online profiles.

For the purpose of this article, we are sticking to CVs.

A well-crafted CV showcases your skills, experience, and qualifications. But everybody includes those, so how do you stand out? Here are a few valuable tips that will help you craft your CV in a way that sets you apart from other candidates.



Tailor your CV to the job with the help of an executive profile

Applying for a job doesn't always have to be a numbers game. Study the job description, understand the key requirements and skills sought by the employer, and customize your executive summary.

Recruiters don't usually have time to deep dive into each CV because of the sheer volume they receive. This is why you should consider highlighting relevant experiences, accomplishments, and skills, which align with the job's expectations, in the summary at the top.

For instance, if you are applying for a marketing manager position, emphasize your experience in developing and implementing successful marketing campaigns, managing teams, and analyzing data to drive business growth.

Use a professional and clear format, including the headers and descriptions of each company

Not only do you need to ensure that your CV has a clean format that is easy to read but it is also important to make your document more reader friendly.

Recruiters typically won't look up your former employers unless they really like your profile. To make your CV more insightful, consider adding a one-line description under each company's name to tell them what it does and which industry it belongs to. This will save the recruiters time and may keep them interested in your CV longer.

Besides, use a legible font, appropriate font size, and clear headings to organize your information. Include indispensable sections such as contact information, LinkedIn profile, and any certifications.

Of course, your work experience and education are critical pieces of information. But your personality also matters when it comes to recruitment, so it is advised to add a section on personal interests, including your hobbies, extracurricular activities, volunteer work, artistic expression, and leisure activities - all of which give the recruiters a better view of yourself as an individual.



Ensure that you use bullet points to list your accomplishments and responsibilities under each work experience entry, making it easier for employers to quickly scan through your qualifications.

Highlight your achievements using numbers and powerful verbs

Quantitative and numerical data grabs more attention than words. Instead of merely listing your job responsibilities, focus on highlighting your achievements and measurable results.

Quantify your accomplishments whenever possible, such as revenue growth percentages, or project milestones, or awards received. This will demonstrate your ability to deliver tangible results, which is a critical part of what most companies are looking for.

Further, consider using active verbs to convey your data more effectively. Impactful words like "charged with," "oversaw," "co-designed," "led," and "initiated" strengthen your statements. Besides, most people don't use active words, so you stand out when you do.

So, including sentences like "increased sales by 20% through the implementation of targeted marketing strategies" or "led a cross-functional team to successfully launch a new product, resulting in a 30% increase in market share" can prove beneficial for you.

Showcase your relevant skills.

Include a dedicated section to showcase your relevant skills. This can include technical skills, software proficiency, language fluency, or soft skills such as communication, leadership, or problem-solving abilities. Be selective and highlight skills that are directly relevant to the job you are applying for.

Proofread and edit carefully

It is generally known that typos and mistakes can create a negative impression on employers and undermine your credibility. So, avoid spelling and grammatical errors by proofreading your CV multiple times. Take the time to review your CV and consider seeking feedback from a trusted friend or expert, also regarding cultural do's and don'ts (e.g., adding a profile picture).

Keep it concise and focused.

Finally, while it is essential to include relevant details, keep your CV concise and focused. Aim for a two- to three-page CV unless you have extensive experience. Prioritize the most recent and relevant information and remove any outdated or irrelevant details.

A good rule of thumb is to add more information to more recent jobs and fewer bullet points to older jobs unless you were associated with those roles for a long time. Recruiters typically want to know about what you did in the recent past.

In addition, instead of including every job you have held, focus on adding information to the positions that directly relate to the job you are applying for or showcase transferable skills. Everyone appreciates a crisp resume.

Include relevant keywords

To ensure that your CV passes through applicant tracking systems (ATS) used by many recruiters, include relevant keywords related to the job description. ATS scans CVs for specific keywords to filter out candidates, so incorporating these keywords increases your chances of getting noticed.

Hence, if the job posting mentions "project management," "data analysis," "consumer insights", "SaaS platform," "transformation," and "team leadership" as desired skills, ensure you include these terms strategically throughout your CV.

About the Author

Isabelle Nüssli is a partner at H.I.E.C, a global executive search boutique headquartered in Switzerland. She is a multilingual senior executive and board member with experience in international business leadership, corporate governance, and succession planning. A two-time Amazon #1 bestselling business book author and leadership coach for board & C-level and tech-based start-ups & scale-ups, Isabelle helps them recruit the right talent, build a high-performance team, and navigate change and transformation.

LinkedIn: [linkedin.com/in/isabelle-c-nüssli-2b04403](https://www.linkedin.com/in/isabelle-c-nüssli-2b04403)