

## Six CV Mistakes to Avoid

As experienced job seekers know, the CV is a critical first point of contact in the hiring process. It is an individual's envoy to the business world, with a mission to succinctly communicate to a potential employer what it is that sets him or her apart from others vying for the same position. It also is a convenient and efficient way for hiring managers to determine, at a glance, if a job applicant is worthy of further consideration. Yet the CV is often where the mistakes of many aspiring professionals prevent them from impressing, or even getting noticed.

Following are some common CV mistakes professionals should avoid. These "no-no's" can ruin your chances of landing an interview, and some may even tarnish your professional reputation:

- 1) **Careless errors.** Carelessness is the number one cause of poor quality CVs. The cover letter, used to introduce the CV, often suffers from the same ailment. Both send the signal to prospective employers that you lack attention to detail.

If you think forgetting to add a period after a sentence in your cover letter or typing "manger" instead of "manager" in your CV will have little bearing on whether you get called in for an interview, consider this: In a recent survey commissioned by Robert Half International, 84 percent of executives polled said it takes just one or two typos in a CV to remove a candidate from consideration for a position. Recognise that your CV and cover letter are extensions of *you*.

- 2) **Graphics-overloading.** While computer programs make it a snap to design artistic-looking documents, your CV and cover letter do not need such adornment. You may be tempted to give them a "visual edge," but unless you are pursuing a creative position, you risk coming across as unprofessional. Choose a clean-looking typeface, such as Arial or Times New Roman. Accent information with white space and formatting options such as bullets and bold type. Also, you may want to use a chronological format for your CV. Job seekers often turn to this because it is easy to create and provides potential employers with a good snapshot view of their experience and education.

- 3) **Longwindedness** – Less is more, especially with content for CVs and cover letters. Most hiring managers have little time to devote to each job application received. So, keep in mind that a premium will be placed on candidates who prioritise information, present it in a compelling and concise manner, and steer clear of the “flotsam and jetsam” – extraneous or outdated information irrelevant to the job opening.
  
- 4) **Over-Personalising** – Aside from providing the basics – your name, address and phone number – do not include information about your personal life in a CV or cover letter. Some examples to avoid: your age, marital status, and physical attributes, such as height and weight. Also, refrain from including details about hobbies or personal interests, unless they are clearly career-related. Focus first on conveying what’s most important about you as a *professional*, and save the other details for sharing at a more appropriate time.
  
- 5) **Misrepresentation** – No matter how much you want to land a job interview, *never* stretch the truth as a way to get your foot in the door. Even if you do get called in for an interview, and sail through that process, false information can be discovered easily by potential employers during the reference or background check that often takes place afterward. If truth-stretching – no matter how slight – is discovered, you likely will be eliminated from contention. Also, your actions may cause serious, long-term damage to your professional reputation.
  
- 6) **Internet-unfriendliness** – Today’s job seekers *must* be e-savvy about their CVs and cover letters. When submitting such documents in the body of an e-mail, or applying for a position via a company’s website or an online job board, prepare each file as a plain text document so it is universally compatible. Remove all formatting enhancements, such as boldface type, and replace bullets with asterisks or dashes. Another tip: Don’t provide an unprofessional e-mail address, such as “ILovePuppies@xyz.ie.” If necessary, set up a new e-mail account with an address featuring only your name or a combination of your name and selected numbers. And don’t offer a link to your personal website or page on a social networking site, unless you use such outlets strictly to convey professional details.

In addition, make sure to include “keywords” in your CV and cover letter — terms that describe your experience, skills and academic credentials relevant to the job for which you are applying. You can usually identify key terms to hone in on in the description of the role and responsibilities outlined in the job listing. These are vital because many companies use filtering software to scan CVs. Also, whenever possible employ verbs that emphasize your accomplishments. For example, instead of saying you were “responsible” for something, briefly explain the specific results you achieved, such as “increased sales” or “reduced expenses by 25 percent in the first year.”

Keep in mind that it is essential to create a strong cover letter that complements your CV, as it is usually the first document a hiring manager will review. In addition to providing a sense of your communication skills, it should highlight and expand upon key points from your CV and outline specific ways your expertise can benefit the organisation. And *always* tailor your documents to suit the specific position and company for which you are applying.

The CV remains the key introductory vehicle for reaching out to potential employers. Some applicants rush through the CV-writing process, thinking they can make a better impression by waiting for the in-person interview. There is one problem with this approach, however: If you fail to impress with your CV and cover letter, you may not even make it to the next level.

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