



# Successful CV Writing

... the up-to-date way!

**Helen Harrison**

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## **Author’s Note**

In order to avoid awkward “s/he”, “him/her” references the plural “they” or “their” has often been used to refer to singular antecedents such as “person” or “client” even though this construction doesn’t adhere to strict grammatical rules.

I dedicate this book to my husband Alan. I love his presence in my life.

And to my parents, Michael and Diana Wade, who encouraged all their children (five of us) to go for work that fulfils us because that would give us a much happier life than money alone or 'doing the socially expected thing'.

And to Michael Ashe, Rachel's partner, who used one of the first drafts of this ebook – and gained interviews in all three vacancies for which he applied! I gained extra belief in what I've written.

# Welcome!

I'm **Helen Harrison**, experienced in the human resources (HR) profession, including as a Director in an international public company. I've enjoyed working with a broad range of companies, large and small, most of them experiencing different types and levels of change.



During this time I learnt that good things happen for both individuals and the organisation when people get a real buzz out of their work and time at work. And it's great to help this to happen!

I like working with people who currently are not where they want to be job-wise (including no job at all) - and help them:

- ✓ discover what they have to offer,
- ✓ recognise what makes their heart sing in the world of employment - and then
- ✓ have the confidence and courage to go for it.

**This does not necessarily mean that they change their job and/or organisation for which they work.** It may lead to them taking a different approach to their work and working relationships.

**The same process helps people who are desperate to have a job, let alone one they enjoy.**

All these people call on my knowledge and work experiences I've gained through my life. The journey may not be direct, but knowing what they're aiming for gives them focus.

One of the ways in which I have helped people – and continue to do so – is to facilitate them to develop a great CV that achieves its purpose ... to gain the person an interview they want.

I want to share my knowledge and experience to more than just the people I meet – hence this ebook!

Writing CVs is not as easy as it may initial appear! Nevertheless, you can write a great CV as long as you follow some basic practices.

In this short handbook, I'm focusing on two types of CV:

- for job vacancies that are in the same career channel, and
- for job vacancies that are significantly different from what you current have, or have had in the past.

There are a lot of similarities and a few key differences.

On the next page is the 'Table of Contents', which outlines what I'm going to cover:

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# The Purpose of a CV

This is short and sweet – to gain you an interview! That’s it. It’s a marketing tool, “selling” you for the vacancy the recruiter has. It needs to answer at least the following questions: does this person

- have the skills and other attributes I require? This may include things like being employed by blue chip companies, made progress through their career, have the appropriate education and training.
- have the experience of using the skills and attributes I require? This can be both inside and outside the work environment.
- understand my requirements?
- show they’ve provided benefit to previous employers using these skills?

Therefore, in your CV you need to tell the reader clearly and concisely that:

- you have the skills and other attributes the organisation needs to help it achieve its goals,
- you know what goals it is trying to achieve,
- you have used the skills and attributes before to achieve similar goals for previous employers or non-work organisations, and
- you are the best fit for the role!

# Why different types of CV?

Different situations call for different ways of presenting the same information so that you gain the interview for the job you want to have. The easier you make the recruiter's job to select you the better it is. That's why different CV formats exist.

And remember the recruiter wants to find a suitable candidate, because then s/he either earns commission or has someone to fulfill the work.

The two types of format that I'm going to cover are:

**Chronological CV:** this is the most common style of CV. This is particularly appropriate to use when you want to obtain an interview for a similar job to the one you currently have. You are emphasising employment details.

**Transferrable Skills CV:** this is a less commonly used type of CV - there is no standard name for it. I've also known it to be called a Functional CV and a Skills-based CV: I suspect there are other names too. So be ready for this type of CV being called something else!

Anyway, this type of CV, whatever it's called, is worth using when you want to move from one type of work into something very different. It helps the recruiter to recognise where your skills, strengths and experiences meet the needs of a completely different role. In other words it helps the person to take you more seriously as a potentially suitable candidate, worth inviting for interview!

# Preparing to Write Your CV

## What to Notice

Whether you have been asked to complete an application form, be it online or on paper, or send in a CV, you will notice that some recruiters will provide more information than others!

For some organisations, they just ask you to send in a CV or application form. The other extreme is you are given a whole host of information – e.g. job description, person specification, competency framework for the organisation and vacancy, even corporate values. And anything between.

It is hugely important to read any supporting information carefully before developing your CV for that particular vacancy. Here are some reasons for this suggestion ...

The documents will give you lots of **direct and indirect information** about what would be definitely worth covering in your CV – and what is not important to them. This is certainly true when you receive a person specification – and any information on their competency framework helps greatly too. An advertisement related to the vacancy is a mine of information. For instance, often the order in which they give you what the role entails indicates the priority the first points have over the following responsibilities. However often something is mentioned is also an indicator of its significance.

In amongst the information there can be **direct instructions** on how to supply your CV e.g. give years within the job rather than dates when started and left a job (or vice versa). If you don't follow their instructions, the organisation will make judgements/assumptions about you – e.g. about: reading what you're given, attending to detail, following work based procedures. It can go against you if you don't follow the instructions, even though such attributes may not be of any real significance to the vacancy.

In amongst the information there can sometimes be **guidance** on what they're looking for from you. Some organisations do this because they want external

candidates to have as much information as their internal candidates as is feasibly possible in order to make it more even between these two types of candidates.

## What to Remember about the CV/Application Sifters

Here are some pointers about the people who go through the CVs and application forms and at least reduce the number of applicants to go to the final decision makers.

They ...

- may **have little knowledge about the job itself**, except what is in the job description/person specification – therefore, minimise the jargon you use, unless it's in the advert and/or documents that you received.
- will only **spend about 1 minute** reading through your CV – and 1 minute is rarer nowadays - therefore, you need to make it easy to read and digest.
- are likely to **have to go through a lot of CVs**, be it for the vacancy you're interested in or other vacancies they're handling – therefore, it's important that you write in a clear and concise way to make their job a doddle.
- **want to find a candidate that fits really well** to the description they're using (and which is usually covered in the advert etc) – therefore, make sure you cover the key points made in any advert/description of the vacancy, making it a 'no brainer' to invite you for interview.
- **may sift through CVs/applications rarely OR for the bulk of their job.** Some may be well briefed, while others not. So, it's not possible to take for granted their professionalism or consistency in decision making – therefore, the more you can help them, especially to warm to you, the better your chances in being selected.

Of course, sometimes the 'sifter' is a computer rather than a human! I think it's worth finding out whether it will be a human or computer that is doing the sifting, because it makes a difference about using key words and phrases. I've noticed that computers tend to be used more in IT type roles – note that I say MORE in these type of roles. Therefore, still ask.

# Things to Consider Before your Start

- Check if there is a **closing date**: if none is mentioned it's worth making contact with the recruiting agency or recruiting organisation itself to find out what the timeframe is. It's best to get your CV in early. This may work in your favour because it can be interpreted as you having enthusiasm for the vacancy and/or that you like to get things done well in advance of deadlines. Hopefully, you are starting to appreciate that recruiters gain information about you through more than the CV alone.
- What **strengths/skills do you want to use** in your next role? Research shows certain benefits when you make use of your strengths:
  - insight and perspective in your life is encouraged
  - optimism is generated
  - they provide a sense of direction
  - they help develop your feeling of confidence
  - a sense of life-giving energy is generated

I imagine you already know that different types of work call on different attributes. So the more your strengths fit with the type of work you're doing the better it will be for all concerned – your employing organisation, the team you're in and you (of course).

- **What are your values** and how well do they fit in with the organisation and vacancy? The more they align the happier you'll be – and there's lots of evidence that this will increase your performance, which suits both you and your organisation! Your health is likely to be better too.
- **Consider the audience** you are targeting – and the job vacancy. You need to write about skills and achievements that match the requirements of the prospective employer's vacancy.
- **Consider which CV format** best suits your situation: if you are applying for a similar role as you've previously held (or currently hold), even though may be less senior and in a different industry, then a chronological CV is probably the most appropriate CV to use.
- **Make a list of all the characteristics** the organisation has said they want the successful candidate to have – next to each characteristic jot down possible

examples of when you have demonstrated that characteristic successfully. You may already have examples from past CVs and/or application forms. Or performance review documents.

- **Contact your referees**, giving them a brief description of the job that you are applying for so they know how to sell you if a prospective employer contacts them.
- **Recent research shows that Mondays are the best day statistically to apply for a vacancy!**

# General Do's and Don'ts for CVs

- **Be honest.** It really is the best policy. Bluffing or telling 'white lies' have a nasty habit of catching you out, which can cause you to be sacked in some instances. It's especially important nowadays when recruiters can access information about you from other sources e.g. LinkedIn, Facebook, Twitter, etc.
- **Have the most important information on the front page:** particularly the contact details and key information about what you have to offer – more on this later.
- **Have a clear structure:** this is achieved through using headings that stand out.
- **Include a covering letter/email,** unless you have been specifically told a covering letter/email is NOT wanted. You have a real opportunity to gain a competitive edge with a well-written covering letter/email, because other applicants can ignore its importance, thinking the CV is all that matters. Applicants who include a covering letter/email are 10% more likely to receive a reply.
- **Obey all the instructions** you are given!
- **Always ask someone to read your CV** before you submit it. Even if you have a great eye for detail or are the best at grammar, it is easier for someone else to spot minor errors. Applicants sending CVs and letters without spelling mistakes are 61% more likely to get a reply and 26% more likely to get an interview.

**Another reason to ask someone to read your CV** is that they may have ideas how you may improve how you have presented your information. When I was applying for jobs, I would invariably ask someone to look at my CV and gained invaluable ideas from them.

- **Ensure your CV reaches its destination before the closing date** – and time if it is given. I know, this seems so obvious!
- **Give achievements,** rather than a job description or list of responsibilities! You may have been responsible for 10 people, but it doesn't mean you were successful in implementing that responsibility. If you give job responsibilities (rather than achievements) it will leave a question in the recruiter's mind. Really unnecessary because you can prevent such questions when you give them an achievement about managing 10 people that meets their particular interest in your management

skills. Any such unanswered questions increase the likelihood you will be in the 'reject' pile.

Achievements build your credibility and authority, key elements of any marketing strategy. They tell people about the value you have created in the past – and also suggest the value you will add in the future.

- **Bullet point your example achievements, giving sub-headings at the beginning – or highlighting key words in the achievement description.** This makes it so much simpler for the recruiter to make sense of your CV and specific examples.
- **Ensure you match your skills/experience/achievements to the requirements** the recruiter has indicated they want in the information they've given you. There is no benefit to mention skills that are irrelevant to their needs. In fact, it could go against you, because you waste their time and are indicating that you do not understand what they want.
- **Use the past tense** in your achievement examples or any questions they want you to answer. And at least infer the **use of 'I'** where a question is directed at 'you': for instance, 'tell me about a time 'you' made a key decision?' However, limit using 'I' itself! Too many can start to feel like you're exaggerating or too full of yourself. It's possible to get a point over without using 'I': e.g. "selected to manage a 2-year project with £222,000 budget and achieved key objectives within deadline and below budget by 5%" – the 'I' is inferred. If not sure, take this approach.
- **Keep the CV to a maximum of two pages.** There are only a few exceptions to this; for instance, academics often need to list their published articles, recruitment agencies for IT contractors quite often to like to know more detail.
- **Use relevant keywords:** make sure your CV mirrors the language used in the advert and any other information you have been given. This is especially important when responding to posts advertised through job boards and online recruiters. Typically, keywords are entered into databases to find the most relevant jobseekers without having to trawl through 1000s of candidates. These keywords will include specific technical skills like SAP or qualifications like ACCA or specific job titles like 'Customer Services Advisor'.
- **Make sure your contact details are correct.** An incorrect phone number or email address may mean you miss that waited-for invitation for interview. Even it

you try to rectify this error later by contacting the recruiter, it doesn't mean the relevant person gets to know.

- **Ensure your CV gives the right visual impression.** You want to come across as professional. How you present your CV says something about you. For instance, only use creative approaches where creativity is a key part of the job (e.g. media, design). If unsure, use a straightforward approach. So ...
  - **Use a font that gives the best impression.** Sans fonts don't have curly bits on the letters, which make them appear cleaner, more modern and simple to read. Extreme fonts, especially if it makes it difficult to read, will not win you interviews. Stay away from outdated serif fonts like Times New Roman, unless you are applying to a law firm (they seem to like it!). Arial is a standard well-used sans font – because it's so common it can come across a bit boring. Instead go for the more modern sans fonts such as Verdana or Tahoma for a fresher feel (the bit after 'or' is in Tahoma font) or Lucida Sans is possible too (the bit after the second 'or' is in Lucida Sans). If your CV is likely to be read on screen, keep screen readability in mind. Verdana is often used on websites. This handbook is in Verdana (except where I've shown the different fonts). If you find fonts interesting, you may like to read [this BBC article](http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/magazine-10689931) (http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/magazine-10689931).
  - **Get the size right.** If your text is too small it makes your CV crowded and hard to read. If it is too big on the other hand, it makes it look like you don't have much to say for yourself. The good font size is generally a 10 or 11 (even 12 for some fonts) for the body text, **14 for sub-headings in bold**, and **a big massive 20 point in bold** for the main page header (which should be your first name and surname to really make that impact and grab the recruiter's attention).
  - **Use visual aids.** By this I don't mean pictures. I mean things like bullet points, line breaks and bold formatting. These help you make more impact in the way it looks. For example, **have clear bold headings** to attract attention (this is already mentioned when discussing font size).
  - **Avoid tables and graphics:** apart from giving a more cluttered feel, they cause difficulties if you need to supply your CV over the Internet. An exception maybe when you're going for a job that involves design. However, I'd check

with the named contact whether they want to have graphics in the CV, because it may cause them difficulties, which may put you at a disadvantage.

- **Be consistent** – whatever fonts and style settings you decide to use on your CV, be sure to keep it the same throughout. It's cleaner and clearer. The reader can quickly be put off a CV when they see a mess of different fonts etc.
- **Use straightforward language:** unnecessary use of complex words gives a bad impression. People who use simple, clear language are rated as more intelligent!
- **Use clean, white, good quality paper** if you are asked to send it by the ordinary post.
- **Use a large enough envelope** to keep your CV flat.
- **Address the covering letter and envelope or email** to the named person or department. You are 15% more likely to receive an acknowledgement and 5% more likely to gain an interview.
- **When emailing a CV, send it in PDF format:** this ensures the CV will look the same, no matter what reader software is used to open the document.

# CV Content

It would be best to include the following in your CV:

- ✓ **Your name** Forename that you use and surname – unless the organisation has stipulated full name, then do as instructed!
  
- ✓ **Contact details** Postal and email addresses, telephone and mobile phone numbers. You may even want to include your **LinkedIn profile**, because it has some useful recommendations associated with it.
  
- ✓ **Personal profile / summary** A short statement to 'sell' yourself
- ✓ **Achievements** Showing key examples of what you've done, the results and what skills / strengths you used
  
- ✓ **Employment** A brief record of employers, dates or number of years employed, and job titles
  
- ✓ **Qualifications** Particularly those relevant to the vacancy
  
- ✓ **Education** A brief summary (more if you are aged under 25)
  
- ✓ **Training** Particularly those relevant to the vacancy
  
- ✓ **Interests** Not essential: if included then just a brief description of up to three interests, especially any that are relevant to the vacancy

The following topics normally should **NOT** be included. This is because either they shouldn't be taken into account due to legislative reasons or could go against you in the selection process. Therefore, I recommend that you exclude them (unless they have been specifically required):

- X **Age / date of birth** These aren't wanted on CVs in the public or not-for-profit sectors: not needed for the private sector because of ageism legislation
- X **Referees** Can be given later when requested
- X **Family circumstances** e.g. names and ages of family members - irrelevant
- X **Marital status** Irrelevant usually
- X **State of health** Irrelevant
- X **Weight and height** In most roles this is irrelevant
- X **Current salary** Not needed: may impact you being selected for interview and/or what salary you are offered (negatively if you are on a relatively low salary)
- X **Salary expectations** Better left off because it may put recruiter off: leave as late as possible to negotiate
- X **Reasons for leaving** This can be discussed at the interview stage
- X **Driving license** Only include when the job includes significant driving or it's a job requirement
- X **National insurance or passport numbers** This information is very sensitive and personal to give – you just never know who will have access to it and, potentially, misuse it.
- X **Your photograph** This is definitely not favoured in the UK, regardless of how good you look - in one recent survey over 60% of HR departments said that the inclusion of a photograph with the CV **adversely** affected their opinion of the applicant
- X **Your nationality** This only needs to be included if you don't have automatic right to work in the UK

## CV Layout

The key differences between the two CV layouts is how you display the 'key skills and achievement' and the 'career / employment history' parts of the CV.

### Chronological CV

In this CV you want to emphasise your employment history and linking your achievements to particular jobs. Here are the usual categories for this type of CV ...

Personal Details  
Personal Profile / Summary  
Career / Employment History [*in reverse chronological order*]  
Key Skills and Achievements [*linked to each role*]  
Qualifications / Memberships [*where relevant*]  
Training and Education  
Other Information

### Transferable Skills CV

In this CV you want to emphasise achievements and skills rather than employment details. Here are the typical categories of information ...

Personal Details  
Personal Profile / Summary  
Key Skills and Achievements [*grouped*]  
Career / Employment History [*in outline*]  
Qualifications / Memberships [*where relevant*]  
Training and Education  
Other Information

# Writing Your CV

I'm now going to go through each section of the CV in detail – and in the order I would generally expect the section to be on your CV.

## Personal Details

Only give your name and contact details. There is no need to label them, because people can see what they are. This reduces clutter. Here is an example ...

### Jo Smith

22 Door Road, Fillington, Hants PL2 3AA  
01458-221457 07865-775993  
jo.smith22@email.co.uk

If you have a preferred way of being contacted put that one in bold. This will make it stand out. I suggest you put your home address first because that's what recruiters tend to expect; whether your phone number(s) or email address follows is completely a personal preference. Some people suggest that you only give one phone number so the recruiter doesn't have to decide which to use. I have spoken to some recruiters and they like the option especially if they're unable to leave a message on the landline.

**LinkedIn profile webpage:** if you have an up-to-date LinkedIn profile and you have some recommendations linked to it, you may wish to include the webpage link details just under your contact details. Another place to put it would be under 'Other Information', which includes interests and such like.

## Your Personal Profile / Summary

A personal profile (sometimes known as a Career Profile) is a short statement to sell yourself – your strengths, experience, personal qualities, personal preferences and values. Again you don't need to label this section, because it is self-explanatory.

This summary needs to be tailored to the requirements of each job for which you apply. You want to make it clear to the recruiter that you're right for the particular job. I know, in some instances you may be sending your CV to a recruitment agency. In these circumstances, it's best to tailor it to the type of role and organisation you are targeting.

You may find it worthwhile to develop a summary in advance, which includes the attributes you like using and, of course, you're good at! This may be longer than you'd want for the CV you send, yet it gives you a source from which you can tailor your personal profile with relative ease.

I imagine you will want to attract the sort of organisations that would best suit you. Therefore, I strongly recommend that **you** shine through. Yes, it is tempting *to be all things to all people* – ie try to be suitable to all opportunities that may emerge. In my experience this approach tends to dilute your profile and ultimately leads to fewer quality leads – even becoming over-burdened and de-focused.

So here are some guidelines ...

- **Ideal length:** I would suggest between 30 and 100 words. Yes, this is quite a range! In giving such a range, I'm recognising that circumstances vary. You may prefer to consider it in terms of lines – I'd recommend between 3 to 5 lines.
- **Avoid clichés:** recruiters will often read phrases such as "I am a highly motivated individual who works well in a team and on my own; with exceptional communication skills and the ability to work under pressure, producing results under tight deadlines". Such overused descriptions hold little power or believability.
- **Examples:** it's important that you can give examples in an interview of you using any of the qualities you give in the personal profile.
- **What to cover:** it's important to include what's relevant to your target job. This can be:
  - credentials such as required minimum qualifications and experience, and
  - key qualities you bring: these can include skills, values and personal outlook.

Here are some examples ...

"a committed and self-motivated person with over ten years' management experience and a proven track record of achieving set goals. Personal strengths include giving and receiving feedback, coordinating disparate teams and taking on board new information"

"a reliable and efficient administrator, who likes to exceed customers' expectations. Consistently gives quality service and helps other team members when support is needed"

"enjoy and am acknowledged as good at developing inexperienced staff into reliable effective performers: have six years' experience in the manufacturing sector within operations and support functions. Believe it is important to act with integrity and humanity"

Some people use bullet points rather than the way I have demonstrated. This is just personal taste – space and overall look of the CV can come into it too.

## **Skills and Achievements / Career History**

Now here is where the two CVs differ in layout. However, there are certain commonalities concerning how you write about skills and achievements.

When **writing an achievement you need to cover three main areas:**

- what you did,
- what the results were, and
- what strengths/skills/competencies you used.

It doesn't matter what order these areas come – what does matter is that you include all three.

You'll find it worthwhile keeping in mind the question "so what?" because it helps you work out what's relevant and what's missing!

Here's an example of an achievement ...

"**project management:** project managed the introduction of centralised sales administration [*what person did*]: used my planning, influencing and team management skills [*skills/strengths used*], completed on time and within budget [*result achieved*]"

Some further general points to keep in mind are:

- **which skills/competencies to cover:** it may not be possible to cover all the skills or competencies that are mentioned in the advert and/or person specification. You will have to make a judgment call as to which ones you think the recruiter gives greater weight e.g. some are mentioned before others, some may be mentioned more often than others in the information you've received.
- **Length of achievement:** between two to three lines – however, the sentences within the description are best short.
- **Sub-heading:** give the specific achievement a sub-heading so the recruiter knows what to expect. OR instead highlight the key words/phrase with the achievement description.
- **Past tense:** use the past tense, so the recruiter knows it happened.
- **Avoid generalisations:** even though you might do something frequently, have in mind a particular example. Generalisations can easily look like you took it from a book or article and so are far less likely to be believed.
- **Sources of achievements:** you can find achievements in both your work and non-work experiences. For instance, if you are going for a promotion into a managerial role, you can use your experience of being the Captain of a sports team or Chairperson of a committee to demonstrate certain aspects of management.

You have to decide **which achievements to use.** When deciding which achievements to use in your CV, there are several factors to consider:

- If you've **done something in several of your jobs**, it's usually best to select the one that shows off that particular aspect to your best.
- **Some examples may fit into several skills/competencies.** It may be easier to find good achievement examples for some skills/competencies than others: when that is the case use it for the one that it is most difficult to find examples.

- There's **inevitably going to be some overlap**: when describing an achievement you may well cover other skills/competencies that are outside the one, for which you have selected the achievement example.
- If you're writing a chronological CV, you may cover a similar achievement more than once, because it happened in more than one role. This is definitely worth doing if you believe the recruiter considers the particular achievement of significant importance.

If you're struggling to vary the action verbs for your achievement statements, use a thesaurus!

## **Chronological CV: Career History**

The recruiter likes to **see what you are currently doing first**, which is why it's strongly recommended to give this information in reverse chronological order.

Generally speaking, it's only necessary to go into detail about the jobs you've held in the past 10 years. This is because experience tends to build, so there is little benefit in including early examples of what you're doing today. Professions also move on over time, making some experience obsolete. Including older examples can 'date' you, especially if you are an older candidate.

For jobs you held earlier than the past 10 years, you only need to include the employer, job title and years' service (or inclusive dates in years), unless you have an achievement that is just too good an example to miss.

You first give basic information about:

- **the organisation**: usually you only give the name of the organisation. If it isn't obvious what an employer does from their name, some people like to add a very short sentence describing their line of business and indication of size – e.g. number of staff, financial turnover or profit - (less than one line).
- **Job title**: if you know that your actual job title is not one that is normally used, it's OK to put the normal job title in brackets after your actual job title.

- **Years in job or start and finish dates:** when giving start and finish dates, you only need to give the year – the month is unnecessary detail. This also reduces clutter.

Next you give the key achievements for that specific job that are relevant to the vacancy for which you are applying. I would suggest you give between six to eight achievements linked to your current role (or last role you've held).

I think it's about time to give an example linked to a career summary!

### **Management Accountant**

**2006 to Date**

JP & Co

- **Monthly returns:** accurately compiled monthly returns to strict deadlines, from which non-finance managers made business decisions. Used my analysing, summarising and report writing skills
- **Software implementation:** through planning, influencing and coordination, implemented new accounting software system for monthly management accounts, which streamlined activities by 12%

## **Transferable Skills CV: Skills and Achievements / Career History**

So in this CV you're focusing on your skills / competencies rather than where you gained experience. It is necessary to have two sections in order to cover the same material covered in 'Career History' for the chronological CV. First cover 'skills and achievements' and follow it up with 'career history'.

Here are some **guidelines for 'Skills and Achievements':**

- **Number of skills/competencies covered:** cover between three and five skills/competencies areas
- **Examples per skill/competency:** give between two and four examples

Here's an example of one competency in the 'Skills and Achievements' section ...

## Skills and Achievements

### Leadership Development

**Building successful teams:** coached a general manager: through posing questions, listening intently and raising her self awareness, her team increased their performance by 15% and reported 20% better job satisfaction

**Change Management:** successfully modeled how to guide commercially important group-wide re-organisation project - included working with relevant stakeholder groups, gaining commitment and ensuring awareness of psychological issues and their practical application

**Management Development:** developed inexperienced staff to become strong balanced task and people managers by designing and delivering management workshops and giving follow-up individual coaching sessions

The **next section is 'Career History'** (or you may call it 'Career Summary').

This section is where you give the basic information about your past and present employers in reverse chronological order. The basic information is:

- Name of organisation
- Job title
- Years in job or start and finish dates (year)

If you had more than one job with an organisation you can show this in one of the following ways:

Name of organisation	years in organisation/ start and finish year
<b>job title 2</b>	years in job/ start and finish year
<b>job title 1</b>	years in job/ start and finish year

or

Name of organisation	<b>job title 2</b>	years in job/ start and finish year
Name of organisation	<b>job title 1</b>	years in job/ start and finish year

or

<b>Job title 2</b>	years in job/ start and finish year
Name of organisation	
<b>Job title 1</b>	years in job/ start and finish year
Name of organisation	

If you've had lots of jobs in one organisation, you may like to list the top three then summarise the rest. You could say something like "progressed through various technical and managerial roles" then give the start and finish years.

That's all that needs to be included in this section. What the organisation does is not usually material to the vacancy, unless there is a stipulation for a specific type of organisation e.g. large international organisation, manufacturing industry, not-for-profit organisation experience. In such circumstances, you may wish to ensure the recruiter appreciates that one or more of the organisations, for which you have worked, fits their criteria. In this instance, just give the information that is required.

## Qualifications and Training

This is the next section. Here are some tips:

- **The heading:** I would tend to use this more general heading rather than have several specific ones. Too many headings give a messy feel to the CV.
- **Level of education detail:** what you include in this section depends partly on how much work experience you have had since leaving education. When close to your time at school/university you give more details about the qualifications you have (e.g. where you gained it, what year it was gained, any special projects/awards) - otherwise leave it out (unless you're really chuffed that you went to a particular university that has a great reputation - we're all human after all!).

- **Level of training detail:** this depends on relevance and quantity. For instance, if you've done a lot of specific technical training, it may be better to summarise this by saying something like "various x technical training workshops and updates" or "8 x training in past y years". If a specific type of training is mentioned in the advert and you have it, then ensure you include that detail. It's worth mentioning that you have had some training, because some people interpret this information that you are still trainable!
- **Level of capability:** in matters like use of particular software packages, it is worth mentioning how good you are at using them – for example, you could say "non-technical expert in the use of Photoshop" or "sound capabilities in using Microsoft Word, Excel and PowerPoint". This infers a level of training as well as experience.
- **Sub-headings:** if you have different types of information to give, you may make it easier for the recruiter by giving sub-headings. On my CV I have a 'General' sub-heading under which I have included my degree, my post-graduate professional qualification and my professional membership. None of these are specifically related to executive/career coaching or training, yet they do give gravitas to my background. The other sub-heading is 'Coaching/Training related'.

And the final section ...

## Interests

It is not essential to include this section. Certainly if you are struggling to fit your CV onto two pages feel free to leave it out. If you have the room I suggest you include it because it's an opportunity to connect to the recruiter at a personal level. The possible exception to this is when you're going for a senior position.

As for what to cover in this section, include:

- **Anything that aids your application:** e.g. one person I coached was going for a job within the travel industry but had no travel industry experience. What he did was include evidence of his strong interest in travel by mentioning the various continents he had been to and the fact that he took 3 months off traveling in a particular part of the world. He gained an interview.

- **Interests that give a fuller picture of you:** the recruiter likes to gain an understanding of what motivates you, your personality. An intriguing free-time pursuit can make up for lack of work-related experience, gaps in your knowledge, or even missing qualifications. However, avoid interests that may make you look too individualistic or eccentric! A good number of organisations are risk-averse. And a good number of time-consuming interests may put a question mark against you too.
- **Some interests can be useful in work:** golf is often mentioned as being used in larger organisations, for team bonding and building customer relations.
- **Sport** is generally a safe interest to include, just make sure there is balance so you still look well-rounded. Sport tends to indicate that you are fit and healthy.
- **Being a volunteer** is a positive activity to include. Just be aware of how your 'cause' might come across.
- **A range of interests:** this can be interpreted that you can fit into a range of situations.
- **Specific succinct detail** rather than a list of interests. Include two to three interests, four at most.
- **Web links to LinkedIn recommendations:** when relevant to the job vacancy I'd suggest you mention them here (and possibly use the heading 'Other Information' rather than 'Interests' if you include this information because it isn't really an interest. OR you could put the LinkedIn webpage just under your contact details.

As I've already indicated, specific interests are often interpreted to say something about you ...

Computing	good with technology, analytical, question-mark about social skills
Swimming	keeps fit and healthy
Puzzles	excellent problem-solving skills
Football	team work skills
Chess	intelligent, strategist
Squash	highly competitive, motivated
Socialising with family	team player (rather than loner)
Witchcraft	weird!

OK, I think it's about time to give an example ...

## **Interests**

Member of local squash team

Vice Chairman of the local Amateur Dramatics Society, including scene design

Enjoy gardening and eating the produce

## In conclusion

You've now got plenty of information to create a high-impact CV. What we have covered here is a proven method as part of an overall job search approach for getting an interview.

Remember that vacancies are found in a variety of places. OK, The most well known routes are **adverts** in all sorts of media and use of **recruitment agencies**, both on and off line. However, there are two other key routes that research has shown are equally, if not more, important – through **networks and speculative contacts**. When I learnt this I was surprised, particularly the speculative angle.

So make the most of the people, with whom you have contact – friends, family, neighbours, colleagues, previous colleagues, club/associations, shop keepers you know. You just never know who they might know.

And **use social media, particularly LinkedIn**, because this is one easy way to make and keep contact with people you've met in the work environment in particular.

And that's another story!

Finally, remember to **look after yourself** when you're looking for a new job. This is important because your state of mind and health will impact how you come across in any contact you have. If you're feeling less sure of yourself (because of your thinking), keep in mind it is just your thinking and not 'the truth'!

With very best wishes for your future.

# Appendix 1: Grouped Strengths Words

Accountable Responsible	Accurate Detailed Meticulous Neat Precise Thorough Timely	Achieving Committed Determined Drive Focused	Ambitious Competitive Drive to Win Successful	Building Constructive Developing Love of Growth Improving Love of Learning Maximising Nurturing
Capable Effective Efficient Professional	Careful Cautious Discretion Prudent	Compliant Conforming Rule Follower	Customer Focused Customer Oriented	Dependable Integrity Loyal Probity Reliable Trustworthy
Expert Intelligent Knowledgeable Skilful	Forethought Orderly Organised Planning Prepared Structured	Politically astute Politically aware		
Adaptable Flexible Resilient Spontaneous Versatile	Analytical Clear-thinking Critical- thinking Logical Rational Reasoned Scientific Systematic	Calm Composed Even- tempered Unflappable	Challenging Critical Questioning Sceptical	Commonsential Practical Pragmatic Realistic Sensible

<p>Conceptualising</p> <p>Creative</p> <p>Enterprising</p> <p>Experimenting</p> <p>Hypothesising</p> <p>Imaginative</p> <p>Improvising</p> <p>Ingenious</p> <p>Inventive</p> <p>Original</p>	<p>Concise</p> <p>Summarising</p> <p>To the point</p>	<p>Curious</p> <p>Fascinated</p> <p>Interested</p> <p>Inquisitive</p> <p>Observant</p>	<p>Encouraging</p> <p>Optimistic</p> <p>Positive</p> <p>Upbeat</p>	<p>Equitable</p> <p>Even-handed</p> <p>Fair</p> <p>Impartial</p> <p>Just</p> <p>Non-judgmental</p> <p>Objective</p> <p>Rational</p>
<p>Far-sighted</p> <p>Future-minded</p> <p>Future-oriented</p> <p>Strategic-minded</p> <p>Visionary</p>	<p>Insightful</p> <p>Intuitive</p> <p>Perceptive</p> <p>Perspective</p> <p>Wisdom</p>	<p>Problem Solving</p> <p>Quick Thinking</p> <p>Resolving</p> <p>Resourceful</p> <p>Responsive</p>		
<p>Accepting</p> <p>Patient</p> <p>Tolerant</p>	<p>Adventurous</p> <p>Bold</p> <p>Brave</p> <p>Courageous</p> <p>Daring</p> <p>Risk-taker</p>	<p>Appreciative</p> <p>Grateful</p> <p>Thankful</p>	<p>Authority</p> <p>Charisma</p> <p>Presence</p>	<p>Autonomous</p> <p>Independent</p> <p>Individual</p> <p>Self-determining</p> <p>Self-reliant</p> <p>Self-sufficient</p> <p>Unique</p>
<p>Big-hearted</p> <p>Forgiving</p> <p>Generous</p> <p>Giving</p> <p>Kind</p> <p>Merciful</p>	<p>Cheerful</p> <p>Fun</p> <p>Sense of Humour</p> <p>Light-hearted</p> <p>Playful</p> <p>Witty</p>	<p>Conscientious</p> <p>Diligent</p> <p>Industrious</p> <p>Persevering</p> <p>Persistent</p> <p>Tenacious</p>	<p>Courteous</p> <p>Diffident</p> <p>Humble</p> <p>Modest</p>	<p>Dynamic</p> <p>Eager</p> <p>Energetic</p> <p>Enthusiastic</p> <p>Keen</p> <p>Zestful</p>
<p>Using initiative</p> <p>Pro-active</p> <p>Self-starter</p>	<p>Sense of Purpose</p> <p>Spiritual</p>	<p>Self-aware</p> <p>Self-controlled</p> <p>Self-regulated</p>		

Accommodating Helpful Hospitable	Accord Conciliatory Diplomatic Give and take Harmonious Mediating Reconciliating Reciprocating Tactful	Approachable Friendly Warm	Articulate Believable Communication Credible Eloquent Expressive Influencing Persuasive Shaping	Assertive Confident Self-assured
Authentic Frank Genuine Honest Sincere Truthful	Caring Compassionate Considerate Protective Supportive Thoughtful Unselfish	Managing change Consultative Decisive Empowering Inclusive Leading Listening Pioneering	Collaborative Cooperative Sharing Teamwork	Empathetic Respectful Socially intelligent Understanding
Extrovert Gregarious	Inspirational Motivating Stimulating	Networking Relationship developing Relationship initiating Relationship maintaining		

# Free Resources from the Author

**My Facebook page** relating to careers is 'Careers Network', <http://www.facebook.com/pages/Careers-Network/159416670751182>. This includes information at all stages of careers.

I have **another Facebook page** that covers all matters relating to personal and corporate values, called 'Values Coaching Cards', <http://www.facebook.com/pages/Values-Coaching-Cards/107206942639986>.

**I write a free ezine, Positive Solutions Ezine**, which gives practical ideas relating to discovering how to let yourself be at your best more of the time – including in your career. Subscription and past issues are available at <http://www.PositiveSolutionsEzine.co.uk>.

**My blog** is at <http://www.coachingcards.co.uk/blog/>, where I write varying lengths of articles on matters relating to having an enjoyable life, particularly at work. I also happen to sell my **VALUES coaching cards** and '**Working with Values**' **ebook** on this site.