

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 (sometimes part of the job description) – 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 between 6 and 60 seconds** reading through your CV – and 1 minute is much 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 as much information about the job and organisation that you are applying for that is realistic to do 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!**