Types of CV

When preparing your CV, your task is to show that you have the skills and experience that the employer needs. If you do not have much work experience, then including volunteer experience will enhance your resume. Focus on including experiences that demonstrate your accomplishments and indicate that you have the required skills for the position.

Once you have your information down, you should decide on what type of format to use. There are three basic types of resumes:

1. Chronological

This is the most popular format. It places information in reverse chronological order (i.e. from most to least recent). Employers tend to prefer this format as it (hopefully) demonstrates a candidate's steady and upward career growth. Thus, the focus is on time, job continuity, growth, and achievements.

2. Functional

A functional resume focuses on skills, credentials, and accomplishments over the course of all jobs held. Emphasis is on what you did, not when or where you did it. Accomplishments, qualifications and experience are grouped together, to emphasize your experience in specialty areas.

3. Combination (Uses a Career Profile)

A combination resume uses a career profile, which is a functional style listing of relevant skills and accomplishments, and then proceeds to describe employment and education histories in reverse chronological order. In other words, it is a combination of the above two concepts. The experience section directly supports the functional section.

NOTE: Unless a functional resume conveys your suitability significantly better than the other types, a chronological or combination format is suggested for entry-level positions. We recommend that you avoid using a functional resume unless an employer specifically requests that format.

Making a Chronological format Resume

For combination and chronological format resumes, this is the section on which employers generally place the most value.

The first thing that you should decide is whether you want to group paid and unpaid experience together or have separate sections. If you do not have very much paid experience, then you should group them together. If you are grouping them together then appropriate headings might be: "Experience" or "Professional & Volunteer Experience." However, many have held both paid and unpaid positions simultaneously. Listing these in the same section in reverse chronological order may confuse the employer. If you have at least three paid positions, devote a separate section to them. You might call this section "Work Experience." If you include a volunteer experience section, have it follow the work experience section and use the same guidelines provided below.

How far back should you go? If you do not have a lot of work experience it is a good idea to include all of it. On the other hand, if you have 20 years of experience, then you do not need to include all of it, unless you have a good reason for doing so. Our suggestion is to include only those positions that are relevant to the position you are applying to.

Information requirements for this section include: the employer's name, location (city & province), dates of employment, position/job title, summary of responsibilities and accomplishments. You do not need to include the full address, supervisor's name and contact number unless the employer specifically requests it. It's a good idea to leave out the months, not only because this is an easy area to make mistakes in, but also because it will help cover any gaps you may have in your employment history.

State the full name of the corporation rather than using acronyms that may not be familiar to a prospective employer. For dates of employment include the start and end dates. The month and year are sufficient. Do not embellish your job title to make it sound more glamorous than it really was. Unless the job title given to you by the company was unusual stick to that one. In the case that it may be unusual, for example "group leader," you may use something more common, such as "supervisor."

When describing duties and accomplishments, in general the more recent the job the more detail you should provide. However, if a previous work experience is more relevant to the type of work you are seeking now, then more detail on that experience should be conveyed. When providing details of the positions you held, include three pieces of information:

1. Basic responsibilities, industry or company specific information.

2. Specific skills required.

3. Accomplishments/achievements

Try and keep responsibilities brief. Devote more space to your accomplishments. If your job title is relatively explanatory you do not need to go into detail on the specifics. For instance if you were a "Customer Service Representative", you need not explain what a customer service representative does.

Whenever describing accomplishments be precise. If possible, quantify your results. For example, "reorganized order processing procedures to reduce time required by 30%."

Decide on the Content of your CV

Including the Right Information

Employers need to have skills summarized in a uniform fashion so resumes can be read very easily. To make your resume stand out remember these points:

- Carefully examine the job posting to get an idea of what the company is looking for in a candidate. Find background research on the company by using the company's web pages, library databases, and contacting people in the organization.
- Arrange the resume so information most applicable to job is highlighted and given priority. For example the experience in within the industry may be more important for management positions than education.
- Rather than simply listing your duties or responsibilities, focus on listing accomplishments and ways that you made a difference when working. Show how you have gone over and above the requirements for the position itself.
- There may be special programs that you have completed or skills that you have that do not fit neatly into one of the typical categories of a resume (e.g. military service). It is a good idea to keep a record of these skills. Often they are included under a separate section entitled "Special Skills."
- The best way to overcome weaknesses is not by hiding them, but to identify a corresponding strength to make up for the weakness. For example, if you were applying for a position requiring a Master's degree while you have a Bachelor's degree, then you should highlight areas of experience to demonstrate you are highly qualified.
- If you have been on the job market for less than 5 years, then the details of your education are a critical component.
- If you are in school and also working part-time or involved with sports, include this information on your resume. It will demonstrate that you have time management skills and the ability to multi-task.

What does a good resume look like?

Here are a few necessities to keep your resume professional:

✓ Use standard margins. Typically the top margin is 1 inch, and the other three sides are 1.5 inches.

✓ Use left aligned formatting so that the right edge is ragged. The words do not have to be hyphenated, as they would be with justified formatting. Hyphens interrupt the flow when reading.

✓ Use single spacing between listings and double spacing between sections.

✓ The resume should be laser printed or typeset.

✓ Highlight items using boldface rather than changing fonts. Items such as your name, employer's name, name of institution that you wish to standout can be bolded.

✓ Do not overdo usage of underlining or capitalization. Minimize use of section changes as it slows a reader's eye.

✓ Use bullets to highlight accomplishments. Keep bulleted information down to one or two lines. Bullets make information appear crisp and clear. If the bulleted information is lengthy, this effect is undermined.

✓ Keep the presentation of information consistent throughout your resume. Lack of consistency gives a resume an unprofessional look and indicates lack of organizational capability.

✓ Succinct - language is clear, concise and precise.

✓ Generally, a resume should be no more than two pages. Often when one is longer than two pages, the employer will not read the entire resume. A long resume gives the employer the indication that you lack communication skills. Most resumes are one page long.

✓ If your resume is more than one page, in the header of the second page, include your name and "page 2" (just in case the pages become separated when in the hands of prospective employers).

✓ No spelling, grammar, punctuation, or typographical errors.

7 deadly sins

1. Never lie.

Aside from the moral implications, if you are hired and your fabrications are found out, you can be dismissed. Depending on how large the business community is in your area, this could ruin all your local career prospects.

2. Don't use the word "resume" on your resume.

An employer is smart enough to figure out that s/he is reading a resume.

3. Don't include salary information.

Sometimes employers ask for this information. Unless you are specifically asked about salary expectations on an application, do not disclose this information.

By listing salary information, you might be eliminated from consideration if you are asking for too much, or you may be under-compensated since you indicated that you would work for less.

4. Don't attach job references & testimonials.

Usually at the end of the resume it will say, "references available upon request". This is sufficient. If an employer wishes to check references they will specifically ask for them up front. Most however, request them after the first interview. For additional information on see the References section.

Testimonials are not helpful, since you would never include negative comments. Rather focus on your experiences and achievements to show your suitability for the position. If you have written testimonials you can bring these with you to the interview.

5. Don't include personal statistics & photographs.

Facts about your marital status, age, height, weight, photographs etc, are not important (unless you are applying for a modeling job) and are only invitations for discrimination.

6. Don't include personality profiles.

It's highly unlikely that anyone will portray himself or herself negatively, thus positive personality profiles do not have much influence. An employer will likely judge your personality from actually meeting you at the interview.

7. Don't copy someone else's resume. Be original and creative.

Start your resume from scratch. It is okay to look at other resumes to determine what is and is not appropriate. Writing your own resume will give you a chance to express who you truly are. Most importantly, this will ensure you are familiar with your resume. You don't want to be struggling to explain to an employer what you meant by a neat - sounding phrase that you copied.

References

Who should you select for a reference?

Unless otherwise specified by the employer, it is a good idea to provide an employer with a range of references so that they can get a feel for who you are. Some people you might use include superiors, subordinates, professors, peers, and major clients or customers. Select people to validate and reinforce what you have stated in your resume. For instance, if your resume states that you "expanded the product line leading to a 23% sales increase," your supervisor should be provided as a reference to confirm this.

Most employers require at least 2 references. If possible it would be good to provide 3 or 4 (eg. 2 previous supervisors, 1 peer/volunteer coordinator, and 1 client).

The most important references are generally your superiors. If possible, include at least two previous employers as references. In contacting previous supervisors, potential employers are looking for information about the contribution you made to that firm. Subordinates and peers should emphasize your ability to be a team player. Clients should highlight your customer service skills and interpersonal communication skills.

If you have not had work experience, then you can use professors as references.

What information should you provide?

Include all the information that a potential employer may wish to know. You should provide the following information: full name, title, organization name, address & phone number (make sure this information is correct), best time to call, and relationship to you. Provide a reference's work address and phone number unless the reference wishes to be contacted at home.

Where should you include these references?

Your references should not be part of your resume. If employers specifically request that references be provided as part of your application then you should attach them as a separate sheet behind your resume.