

Career Mail

Your CV is the key to selling yourself

by Linda Whitney

YOUR CV is the key to a great career, so make sure you get it right. The aim of a CV is to get yourself an interview, so it should be an advert for yourself.

Karl Gregory, CV specialist from online profile provider iProfile.org, says: 'Some of the biggest recruiters in the UK tell us that candidates regularly undersell their achievements.'

Over half of employers surveyed by iProfile, which gives CV tips, said applicants could potentially boost their starting salaries by up to 15 per cent — the equivalent of more than £3,300 on the average British salary of £22,000.

Laura Clements, former HR manager at electrical retailer Smithson Electronic, says: 'In HR we commonly see CVs that are just a diarised list of educational courses, exam results and jobs. If you don't shout about your skills and achievements, how will employers know about them?'

So first make a rough list of courses and jobs, including vacation and volunteer work, then list the skills each gave you, and your achievements in each field.

Use this to write your CV. If you had a vacation job in a bar, instead of writing, 'The Queen's Arms, barmaid, June to October 2007', add achievements such as

'gained teamwork skills as part of a team of five, led the team as stand-in for head barmaid every Thursday.'

Include specific facts and figures that prove you were successful. Rob Hollands, from digital creative agency Untitled, says: 'A cliché such as "I deliver results" only works if you detail the results.'

Use hobbies to sell yourself. Jeff Wellstead of SpinVox, a company providing global voicemail to text services, says: 'I look for hobbies such as blogging and computer games among people who apply for our technical jobs, because they show creative and technical ability. Extreme sports show a competitive instinct, valuable in marketing or sales.'

Keep your CV simple and legible — use 12 point type and a clear font such as Arial. Make it short and to the point, and include a personal statement highlighting your skills and ambitions.

Make it accurate. Godfrey Morrell, of recruiter Abraxas.com, says: 'Exaggerating your experience or even lying will come back to bite you.'

And don't forget to check it for mistakes. 'A spelling or grammatical error

can land you at the bottom of the pile,' points out Mr Morrell.

Get help and advice with CVs from university careers offices and recruiters, or see www.jobcentreplus.gov.uk, where the Getting Job Ready section has CV tips.

Tweak your CV for every application, highlighting relevant skills for each job, and add a covering letter.

Richard Denny, of Denny Executive Recruitment, says: 'Make your letter two three-line paragraphs, showing enthusiasm for the company, and mentioning details to show you have researched it.'

DON'T gush, and use the firm's name. 'I love the company's new range of handbags', will cut no ice compared to 'I appreciate the way Blackston's new range uses higher quality leather to set it apart.'

Put a PS at the end — it draws the eye. Mr Denny advises: 'Say something such as "My personality does not come across in a letter — I am worth interviewing".'

If sending your CV online, send the covering letter in the body of the e-mail and the CV itself as an attachment in Word.

To set yourself apart, use paper — it sits on the recipient's desk demanding to be dealt with.

Finally, follow up your CV with a call to check it arrived and phone weekly to check its progress.



WHEN Marina Esclapez (pictured) moved to the UK from her native Spain, her CV held her back. 'I listed my degree and student jobs such as nanny and waitress but did not mention my skills,' says Marina, 23, from Marlow, Bucks. 'I was getting nowhere finding a job, but I did not know why.' Then a friend explained that employers wanted to see her skills. 'I rewrote my CV to focus on my skills, such as customer care from waitressing,' she says. 'It worked — I got temp jobs to improve my English.' After a year she rewrote her CV again with the help of a tutor from her English course at Thames Valley University, then applied for professional jobs, focusing on relevant skills for each. She now works for voicemail-to-text company SpinVox. 'Don't be afraid to get help with your CV,' she says.

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