



PERSONA

PLUS

Your CV - Brand You



Your CV - Brand You

CV, Curriculum Vitae, Resume – some people might say that the Resume is shorter and more business-related – but most people use the terms interchangeably – and we will stick with CV.

Your CV is your chance to get down all the qualities, achievements, strengths and competencies that you bring to the job market. We recommend that you start broad – because as you get in there, you will find what a wealth of capabilities you have. Then bring it back to a shorter 4-5 page document from the 'source CV'.

There is nothing wrong with using your longer original 'source CV' to develop different CVs. You may be aiming for a leadership role – so you want to ensure that your 'Leadership CV' brings in the leadership experience you have from way back. But you also want to keep open the possibility of a role as a specialist in your area – in which case your qualifications and relevant achievements would get weighting in this version of your CV.

Also in the mix is your cover letter (or email). This can be where you bring in some very relevant experience that might not be in your CV.

This will be hard work, but gratifying – for you to discover the depth of your experience. The effort you put in here will pay off time and again. The CV gets you the job interview. Your fluency about your achievements (and some other skills – covered in the Winning Interviews module) wins you the job. How do you get to be fluent about your achievements? You're on to it – it's the process of having reflected on those achievements as you work on your CV.

The outline of what we will do:

1. Fill in the blanks – using the template from PersonaPlus (or another that you prefer – and have reason to believe that decision-makers prefer) – you start with the relatively easy stuff about your contacts, employment history and qualifications.
2. Collect experiences and achievements – and dig into these to define your skills and knowledge
3. Develop your Professional Objective or Career Goal, and develop your Skills Summary
4. Develop the (or a) final CV– including designing it to be 'searchable' in CV data bases
5. Develop cover letters – that 'match' you to particular jobs and businesses

We should be all done by lunch-time! But of course – that lunch might be a few days away. It is advisable to set some blocks of time aside for this – most people work best in 1 -2 hour bursts. And you're going to need more than a few of those to do your CV (and yourself) justice.



Brand You - CV 1

Fill in the blanks

The CV gets you the chance to interview. The hirer reads it and thinks – ‘This is good – I’ve got to get this person in right away – how do I contact them?’ So contact details are vital – to make it easy to get hold of you. Include mobile and email. Don’t have an email such as *sexypants@hotmail* – it might have seemed fun at the time, but times have changed. A name@gmail.com address is great – just make the name simple.

Go to the trouble of including the months as well as the years of your employment –

March 2002–July 2006 BestRetailer.com Ltd: Customer Service Agent...This \$25m revenues and 30 employee business supplies on-line retail support services to smaller retailers developing their online commercial presence...

Why – because hirers get nervous about ‘missing dates’ – and using just years is a subtle clue that you might be hiding some of those gaps.

Give more weight to recent employment, but don’t leave the early years out. You may bundle them. For example if you did a huge amount of casual work for a time –

March 1990 – July 1994 Casual and part-time work while completing studies. This included retail, copy-writing, tutoring and leading mountain skills training courses.

Use reverse chronology for your education and training, as for your career – most recent (and therefore most up to date and relevant) comes first.

Your interests are a strong clue about your personality, and for the reader a guide to how you will ‘fit’. See the section below, but as a general rule – leave in the interests that suggest ‘teamwork’ and ‘achievement orientation’. For example:

Interests – Captain of social hockey team (winners of 2008 Business Cup), regularly complete marathons and triathlon events, DJ at informal and community events – massive record collection, keep up with political and cultural events with wife’s encouragement.

Check how your CV fits these (research-based) Do’s and Don’ts

DO’s

- Make your most relevant experience and skills prominent – i.e. prioritise relevant content
- Concentrate on your achievements not your responsibilities. Focus on what you have to offer the employer rather than on what you have done.
- Write confidently using active verbs and positive language, quoting figures to back up your achievements. %’s increased, accounts expanded, awards won, etc.
- Keep it brief, concise, honest and factual. Resist writing lengthy paragraphs.
- Proofread carefully. Check thoroughly for correct spelling and grammar.
- Ask for a feedback or a second opinion from someone you trust.
- Appearances count – Lay your CV out neatly. Set out information under clear headings, bullet point, standardize the layout.
- Brand yourself – make sure your name and contact details are prominent and correct.

DON’Ts

- Include irrelevant personal details e.g. marital status, ethnicity, age.
- Use font less than 11pt. Don’t reduce font so small it is hard to read.
- Lie, exaggerate or falsify information.
- Leave gaps in your work record
- No excuses – don’t include reasons why you no longer work at each job.
- Mention salaries
- Use “I” it is implied throughout
- Put education first if it is 10 years out of date
- List every employer since the 1970’s just focus on the most recent and relevant.

What do your interests indicate about your personality?

Open-minded	<p>More: Travel, and experience of other cultures. Enjoy ethnic food. Go out of way to try musical, artistic and cultural events; explore galleries and architecture; and experience the wonders of nature.</p> <p>Less: Member of groups with other 'like-minded' people; travel is local, or with tour groups.</p>
Conscientious	<p>More: Compete in challenging sports and other events. Complete complex or demanding tasks, such as model-making or writing.</p> <p>Less: Television, gaming</p>
Extroverted	<p>More: Leisure interests have a social dimension. Lead groups on tours or organise events. Enjoy the stimulation of risky events such as mountain-biking or mountain-climbing. Success in fund-raising for charities.</p> <p>Less: Reading and other solitary activities.</p>
Agreeable	<p>More: Volunteer and support others.</p> <p>Less: Competitive activities.</p>
Nervous	<p>More: Manage risks through ensuring that activities are in safe environments – this could be chess and board games, including computer games.</p> <p>Less: Base-jumping, mountain climbing, car racing – where there is a material risk.</p>



Brand You - CV 2

Your Achievements

Open a new document – My Achievements – make a list of all of your jobs. Starting with any of these jobs – describe a task or project that you worked on in that job that you think went well, that you'd be proud to describe to someone.

What was the background? For example – why was it necessary to take action, what was the trigger:

– the organisation was slow to respond to the roll-out of new marketing approaches, particularly in the branch network – we were losing market share. We had lost 15% share over the previous two years.

What did you do? For example what you planned, what you did, how you adapted your approach for effectiveness:

– I led a review of the managers of the branch network covering 56 managers. I focused on their qualifications, experience and marketing expertise. That indicated that few had relevant qualifications, most had limited marketing expertise and experience. Rather than providing them with 'spray and pray' training, they all attended a Development Centre. This gave them the chance to show their marketing skills and knowledge in different situations. This included a simulated sales call, a simulated sales meeting with their staff, and a sales review meeting with a staff member. The great majority performed below standard and also realised that they needed to lift their skills.

What was the outcome – what was the pay-off for your effort? Try to provide a range of outcomes – including measures, and ideally financial impacts:

– Well the managers had an emotional reaction to the process. But having the CEO along to explain why this was important meant that those reactions could be focused on the need to do better rather than attacking the messenger. They all completed a development plan, and a good proportion of them made good progress on that. There were improvements in market share – which overall went up 20%. Of course the more progress manager's made on their development plan, the more progress they typically made in market share. This strong correlation, gave us a good rationale for the approach we'd taken.

This format has a pattern – problem – action – result (PAR), or situation – task – action – result (STAR). The format also meets the human need for a story to have a beginning, middle and end. And people like to get a message from the stories they hear. In this case the messages are about your capabilities.

What are those capabilities? Looking at what was described in the 'Actions' –

- Led...the process
- Reviewed...the situation
- Analysed (making sense of the review results, and the follow-up results)
- Planned (the Development Centre)
- Organised (the administration of the DC)
- Political awareness (brought the CEO in)
- Business analysis – establishing the business case for the initiative

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Great stuff – this is one achievement described, and several skills identified. As you build up the list of achievements – at least 5 for each of the last 5 years would be a reasonable target – you will be building up an impressive list of skills. This will help you get much more specific about those skills.

Getting back to your CV – you need to write up a summary version of this achievement for the Career section of your CV. It might look like:

Led a review of the marketing effectiveness of the 56 managers running the branch network. Designed, planned and organised, with endorsement and support from CEO, a Development Centre to identify the actual marketing skills of the managers. All managers completed personal and market development plans, resulting in a 20% increase in market share.

While you are doing this – completing the remaining 24 (more if possible!) achievement examples:

- Cover a range of achievements – include technical, business, selling, leadership – so that you are illustrating your varied experience and wide skills, meaning that you are more likely to fit a job opportunity
- Include numbers, and \$'s if at all possible
- Include the 'imperfect' situations where you had to fix problems, or change direction – its not the fact that things didn't go according to plan, its the way that you handled the problem that matters
- Include the other people (such as the CEO above) who were involved, while being clear about your unique contribution



Brand You - CV 3

Professional Objective and Skill Summary

Do you know what sort of job you are targeting? Your job goal needs to be clear, but broad enough to cover a suitable, if not perfect job. For example:

Professional goal – a senior professional position with responsibility for business development and bottom line results in the infrastructure consulting area.

Your skill summary needs to demonstrate what you would offer in doing such a job. For the ideal role outlined above the skills would likely include – business development, business and financial management, relevant infrastructure skills (in IT, or engineering, or project management). They could also include – leadership of a team or group, well connected and involved in networks, consultation skills, technology skills, strategic and operational planning, troubleshooting and problem-resolution – to identify some.

Now – see if you can join the dots. For each of the skills you have identified in the Skill Summary of your CV – what is the relevant achievement that illustrates that skill?

That means – when the interviewer asks you – *'Tell me about your skills in planning'* – you have one (or more) examples (from your achievements) that are illustrations of the substance of your skills.

Professional Objective

Tech skills

Business skills

Relationship skills

Strategic skills



Brand You - CV 4

Final CV

Does your CV really stand for you? Does it talk you up as well as your mentor or a good friend or a sponsor would manage too? If you are a modest person, think of the CV not as you bragging, but how someone else (like those examples above) would promote you.

Your CV not only has to say the right things, it has to communicate them in the right way. Is your CV easy on the eye? Does it have the unique touches that help identify your special qualities? For example if you have expertise in design or graphics – have you incorporated design or graphics into the CV?

In choosing the font – is that saying something about you? For example lawyers and doctors use conservative fonts to indicate their professionalism. Graphic designers and artists use fancy fonts that reinforce the idea that they are creative people. What you don't want is to see Arial in the body and Times Roman in the footer – the reader may not spot it, but still feels something is not quite right...

Now a different challenge – what would happen to all that useful Brand You information if your CV was scanned into or uploaded into a CV database? That is happening in bigger organisations as they attempt to manage the growing mountain of CVs.

Some guidelines –

- Think of when you are trying to search for information on the web – its all about key words huh? Does your CV have the key words that are going to be picked up, and help your CV make the connection and get you an interview? If you were looking for someone to do your job – what sort of qualifications, what sort of experience, what sort of skills would you search on? Make sure your CV uses industry standards when you present your qualifications, and use the key words that someone in the industry would use.
- Add key phrases and nouns that could be used as search terms. Such as, '*under budget*', '*surpassed goals*' and '*successfully developed*'. Nouns could include '*results oriented*', '*professional selling*', '*finance professional*', '*market researcher*'.
- Ensure that you check that your CV is error-free. Use spell-check. Have someone else proof read it. Be able to justify every detail (dates, numbers, and achievements). Check that when you email it the lay-out stays the same.



Brand You - CV 5

Cover letters to match the opportunity

What are those elusive factors that are going to put your CV into that select pile for interviews? A good cover letter (or email) is the hook that pulls the reader in to reading your CV. It achieves that by establishing the connection between your experience and the job requirements.

- Study the position advertisement carefully to identify the qualities and factors that the employer sees as important. Which are essential? Which are desirable?
- Make explicit links between the key job aspects (competencies) and your actual experiences
- Try not to feed back to the advertiser their own words – use different words that convey the same skills
- Where possible, use numbers, figures or statistics to make your statement more credible and relevant for the reader (e.g. 'four years of customer service for a safety product retailer' rather than 'I have experience in customer service')
- Don't make a feature of those skills you may lack, focus on those you do
- Don't attempt to summarise what is already covered in the CV, emphasise skills that are particularly relevant to the position.
- Keep it to one page if possible
- End with a positive suggestion of a meeting or call – of the action they can take

Sample Job – Analysis of Key Qualities

Try and picture the type of person the advertiser is looking for – what skills or experience is being sought?

INDUSTRIAL
SAFETY PRODUCTS
Sales

A significant international company which manufactures and markets an extensive range of industrial products wishes to appoint a sales representative to establish a range of safety products in the New Zealand market.

This will involve establishing a distributor network as well as

We seek applications from experienced industrial products sales representatives who have a proven record of successful selling and can demonstrate a high level of ability to motivate customers. Good communication and time management skills are essential. Preference will be given to applicants with a knowledge of the occupational health and safety environment.

The company offers an attractive remuneration including performance incentives.



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Required experience	My relevant experience
<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Industrial products sales – occupational health and safety2. Sales success and customer motivation3. Communication4. Time management	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. 4 years customer service for safety product retailer2. Promoted to key accounts executive after 18 months.3. Exceeded annual budget by 20% for last year4. Good customer feedback5. Met deadlines for customer services and reports to manager

Now that you've done the hard work of establishing the content of your letter; pull it together.

Address it to the decision-maker. Not 'Dear Sir/Madam'.

Use the AIDA model. Get their attention. Possibly flatter them, or provide a unique take on how they are positioned in their market. Then get them interested. Particularly that you are the person they need. Then build their desire for a solution to their job-filling issues by sharing examples of your experience. Finally tell them what action to take.

A – attention. For example, *'My research indicates that a high proportion of businesses in your industry have issues with cash flow.'*

I – interest. *'I combine a range of relevant skills in credit control and cash-flow management with a passion for this industry.'*

D – desire. *'My experience in this area includes these achievements...'* (from your ad-matching exercise – see above).

A – action. *'Please read my CV, and I welcome your call.'*

Brand You - CV 6

Getting your CV out there

Your CV (and cover letter) are parts of the 'mix' of your self-promotion. They can be adapted for different situations.

For example you might boil down some key messages for a business card (remember to put some detail on both sides!). Get some key content on your Facebook or LinkedIn (or other social networking) site.

Best of all is to get this detail into the hands of decision-makers, and also those who might hear of a suitable opportunity. Promise the people you meet to send them a copy ('so that you'll have my contact details').

Best of all is to get comfortable with the detail of your experience, so that you become a 'walking and talking CV' – in interviews, and in the social opportunities when you meet people who could connect you to job opportunities.





Your author

This module is written by Stewart Forsyth. He is co-author of *Job Winning in New Zealand* (Penguin, 1993), he has worked in executive selection, provided outplacement support to people in a range of industries and professions, and was the career transition consultant in an Asian Development Bank project to India in the 90s – advising on providing a social safety net for the restructuring of state-owned enterprises. Whatever the job, and wherever in the world you are looking, these suggestions are designed to help you flex with your capabilities and learn effective approaches to winning the interview. **Learn more about Stewart at <http://www.personaplus.co.nz/about>.**