# Project yourself through effective CV

Over 25 years of hardcore management experience, recruitment and training have been one of my most involved activities. It's indeed ironic that while organizations spend so much time to find the right personnel, good candidates struggle to find the right jobs. Many CVs' continue to be shoddy, irrelevant and sometimes even hilarious too.

The first step in getting the right job lies in making an effective CV. I have often seen the CVs' of brilliant candidates and wondered why so little attention is paid to make a good CV and how routinely CVs' are made. Similarly, candidates exaggerate their personal strengths and responsibilities handled only to get caught later in the selection process. To make an effective CV, a candidate should think from the perspective of his prospective employer.

What's an effective CV? An effective CV is one which reaches the decision maker. Are you surprised? Often the CVs' are initially screened by Secretaries/HR Personnel and short listed, for scrutiny/personal interview by superiors. Therefore an effective CV is one which reaches the decision maker and one which results into action in terms of getting a call for a personal interview/test etc. In other words, think of your CV, as a silent sales person selling your services to a prospective employer.

It is common to find that for any vacancy, the number of applications received is tremendous. Therefore, the time available for screening and short listing the applications is rather limited. A quick screening process involves matching age, qualification and experience of the candidate to the requirement. Hence attention must be given to match your profile as close to the job profile as possible. This increases the chances of getting short listed in the initial screening.

After the initial screening, the next process is either the first round of interview or perhaps an interview with the decision maker, depending on the organization, position called for and the number of candidates short listed. Larger the organization, more detailed is the selection process. However, at every stage, your CV is looked at by everyone in the selection process. Therefore, let us look at steps involved in preparing an effective CV.

## 1. Determine the contents of your CV

Typical contents of a CV should include:

i.   **Career objective:** Think and plan your career objective as to where you see yourself in the long or medium term. Five to ten years is a good benchmark. A question about your career objective is a very common interview question too. So be well prepared to elaborate your career objective in the personal interview.

ii.  **Qualifications:** Arrange your qualifications in reverse chronological order ending up at not lower than your 10th Standard. It is preferable to give your class or percentage obtained in various exams, especially for those who have a decent academic record.

iii. **Experience:** Arrange brief details about your experience starting from your current or last,

till your first. An employer is keener to know your current assignment details than your first. Typical details given are name of organization, designation, brief outline of responsibility and period of work.

iv. **Achievements:** Highlight your achievements briefly in various organizations and mention certificates of promotions / merit / awards received. This will help distinguish between you and other potential candidates and will help in getting across the screening process as well as provides an opportunity in the personal interview to establish your credentials.

v. **Hobbies and other interests:** Give briefly your hobbies and interests. This shouldn't in general exceed one or two lines. However, please be honest in representing this or any other information in the CV.

I remember years back, while interviewing a candidate for a sales position, we had asked the candidate to sing a ghazal, after looking at his interests. Avoid mentioning hobbies routinely such as 'Reading', when all that you refer is probably newspapers and magazines or 'watching TV'. Your hobbies ideally should be those which enhance your personality by using your free time productively to pursue an important interest or a sport.

Interviewers look at overall fit of a candidate into organizational environment in terms of attitude, integrity, ability to get along with colleagues etc, apart from a matching of the skill sets and hence the importance of this section.

vi. **Personal information:** Apart from name, give details of age and contact information. This can be provided either at the beginning or at the end of the CV. While it is good to include your email id, do so only if you regularly check your emails. Avoid in general, details of marital status, religion etc. If you reside at a location other than that of the assignment, then you must indicate your willingness to relocate.

vii. **Summer trainings or projects undertaken:** It's annoying for the screening person to find tons of information about summer trainings and projects [especially in the case of MBAs' and IT personnel] running into pages. I have often seen CVs' running into even ten pages which is rather irritating. Typically, a CV shouldn't exceed two pages, especially since most CVs' are now emailed and print outs when required are taken by employers.

Therefore, care must be exercised while giving the details of summer trainings or projects undertaken with a view of not making the CV too long and making the task of the screening person difficult. Ideally, these details fit in appropriately for a fresh candidate without experience and for all experienced candidates, these are best left out of a CV and can be explained in the personal interview.

## 2. Layout

Once the contents have been determined, the next step is to arrange them in a manner that attracts and interests the prospective employer.

- You may follow the order as suggested above to arrange the contents of the CV or make minor changes as desired.

- As far as possible, the number of pages should be around 2 and never 'double side' the CV, if you are sending a hardcopy.

- Use a standard font such as Times Roman, Arial etc and avoid using fonts which are not reader friendly. Preferable font size is 11 or 12 for print outs or even for organizations scanning the CVs'.

- Avoid using difficult words or those which you are not familiar. This would ensure you don't get into an embarrassment in the personal interviews. On the contrary, use key words such as 'Strengths, Achievements, Commitment, Positive attitude etc liberally but in appropriate places.

- Contrary to some beliefs, never use capital letters through out. Upper and lower case enhances readability.

- Important points can be stressed by using bold type face. However, don't over do this. Also don't use italics or underline at places, other than headings or captions. Using tables, graphics etc is also a strict no.

- Arrange information without clutter and providing breathing space. It's a good idea to arrange the information on the right half of the page against appropriate headings on the left half of the page.

- It's also a good idea to use a distinct but subtle border for the pages. This enhances visual appeal and distinguishes between numerous CVs' competing for attention.

- Make sure of using footer at the right hand bottom corner of the page. For example page 1 of 2.

- Last, but not the least, do a spell check for your CV.

## 3. Personalize the CV

- While using the above tips for making an effective CV, it is useful to slightly alter and adopt the contents of your CV to match the particular assignment you are applying for. By this way, you may be able to match your profile to the desired profile by the employer.

- Therefore it is useful to have a standard CV, which can be adapted for each position applied for.

- Always send a CV with a short, appropriately worded covering letter.

If you have done a good CV, you can hope for a call for personal interview or a test as the case may be. In the next series of these articles, we will see how to prepare for a Personal Interview.

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