

The art of writing a resume

PITCH IT WELL If you are a fresher looking for employment, how can you make an effective CV? A good idea would be to begin thinking of your CV as a silent sales-person, marketing your services to a potential employer, writes **V Pradeep Kumar**

If you are a novice waiting to unleash your hidden potential and build a successful career, then the prospect of making a CV and facing a personal interview can be quite unnerving. However, you don't need to sit in an interview sweating, fretting and anxious, because, a common interview question in campus recruitment is as simple as, "Tell us about yourself in two minutes". This is an open-ended question to understand your ability to narrate an interesting two-minute story, as well as to make you comfortable. Surprisingly, most students find it difficult to talk beyond 30 seconds and fail to project themselves.

Such interview questions are prompted by extremely brief and standardised CVs of students, which make campus recruitments a tedious process, as it does not reveal individual personalities. However, sharing your profile effectively in a CV or in a personal interaction facilitates the recruitment process and can be a springboard to kick-start your career.

Increasingly, corporates are finding it difficult to get the right people, as a large number of students lack in employable skills. The IT-BPO industry association, NASSCOM, that says, "Of the graduates working in IT, only 25 per cent can be directly employed," corroborates this perspective. Similarly, an employability study by the consulting firm Aspiring Minds showed that among engineering graduates, only 4.22 per cent are employable in product companies and 17 per cent in IT services. The situation isn't very different in respect of other graduates.

Hence, sourcing manpower with the right skills and attitudes, and making them job-ready, is indeed an enormous challenge for HR professionals.

Think of your CV as a sales-person

If you are a fresher looking for employment, how can you make an effective CV? Many students are apprehensive about what to write in a CV, which is understandable. A good way to begin is to think of the CV as a silent sales person, selling your services to a

potential employer.

The contents of your CV should include the following.

■ **Career goals:** Let your passion, educational qualifications and a personal SWOT analysis determine career goals. (Please refer to an article on SWOT analysis published in these columns on August 9, 2012). Recruiters would be keen to discuss how serious you are about a career and hence, an indication of your long-term career goals in the CV would initiate a qualitative interaction in the personal interview.

■ **Qualifications and skills:** Arrange your qualifications in reverse chronological order up to Class X, with percentage/grades. Highlight special courses, specific skills acquired which add strength to your candidature.

■ **Personal profile:** An efficient selection process demands assessing the overall personality and suitability of candidates in relation to job profiles. For example, if you are keen to apply for a marketing career, aspects of your personality such as aggres-

sion, high-energy, optimism, and self-motivation are important. Therefore, you should highlight relevant aspects of your personality, which improve the chances of selection. Further, this will direct interview questions to these aspects, enabling you to handle them with ease.

Ideally, hobbies should be those which enhance your personality through productive use of free time. Hence, mention only those hobbies, interests and sports, which you are seriously pursuing and avoid mentioning reading, watching TV, internet etc.

Recruiters also look at the overall fit of a candidate into an organisational environment in terms of attitude, value systems and the ability to get along with colleagues. In this context, it may be interesting for you to know that several aspects of your personality are evaluated by referring to profiles in Facebook and other social media.

■ **Summer projects:** Providing excessive information about summer trainings and projects (especially in the case of MBAs and

engineering graduates) running into pages, can be irritating. Hence, give interesting and specific details of projects to just raise the curiosity of recruiters.

■ **Personal information:** This section can be at the end of your CV and should contain your name, date of birth and age, address and email id. However, giving mobile number and/or email id, at the beginning of your CV enables quick access.

A simple and user-friendly design works

■ It's important to design the CV aesthetically in not more than two pages, to attract an employer as well as to make it reader-friendly. Use your name as the document title, as there's no need to write 'Curriculum Vitae' or Resume'.

■ In order to impress recruiters students tend to use difficult and unfamiliar words, prompting recruiters to ask uncomfortable questions. Instead, use key words to highlight career goals, strengths, academic records and recognitions, prizes won in sports, debates, competitions etc.

■ Use a standard font such as Arial, Verdana or Calibri, which are reader-friendly, with a preferred font size of 11 or 12. Remember, upper and lower case enhances readability and is reader-friendly. Never use capital letters alone, and coloured fonts.

■ Many students tend to use bold typeface to attract attention, which is akin to yelling in a verbal interaction. Instead, to highlight something unique, use italics or insert a text-box. Similarly, avoid underlining at places other than headings or captions.

■ Organise information without clutter, providing breathing space between sections. Prefer a justified alignment with consistent spacing throughout the document. If you have limited information, position it on the right half of the page against appropriate headings on the left half of the page. Using a subtle border for the pages enhances visual appeal and distinguishes between numerous CVs competing for attention. A footer

for page numbers makes the CV complete.

■ **Avoid bloomers.** In a recent email from a candidate, the covering letter said, "I am confused and can't decide between an MBA and an MSc" and in the CV, 'Decision making and problem solving' were supposed to be his strengths! Though sympathetic recruiters may overlook such bloomers by students, it's important to be careful what you write in different parts of the CV/covering letter, avoiding such contradictions and false claims.

■ Ensure correct usage of similar sounding words such as affect/effect, defuse/diffuse, especially/specially, complementary/complimentary, principle/principal, etc. Finally, do spell-check to avoid errors. In a recent email, I found this hilarious error. The candidate had proudly stated, "I was ruining the entire marketing department!" Such errors will escape software driven spell and grammar checks, so, avoid such bloomers with a manual check.

Personalise the CV

■ It's important to highlight specific aspects of your personality to match a particular assignment such as marketing or finance. Hence, prepare a standard CV, and adapt it to specific assignments.

■ Remember, it helps to make a short covering letter to go along with the CV. Use a strong opening to attract the recruiter's interest. In the letter, highlight the reasons for applying to a particular company or assignment, which can stimulate interest.

■ Your knowledge, skills and actions shape your destiny. Career success is neither a high jump nor a long jump; it is the steps of a long marathon. If you are on the verge of completing your course and looking for employment, making an effective CV is the first step towards building a successful career.

(The author is a management and career consultant)



NEW ZEALAND UNIVERSITIES INTERVIEW SESSION

Date : 15th September 2012 Time : 1.00 PM - 6.00 PM
Venue : St. Marks Hotel, St. Marks Road, Bangalore - 560 001.

Meet Representatives from New Zealand's Universities:

	The University of Auckland
	University of Otago
	University of Canterbury
	Victoria University of Wellington
	The University of Waikato
	Massey University

Registration is compulsory. Kindly bring all original