

## Writing an Effective Resume

A CV is a marketing exercise. It is your personal 30 second commercial. Use it to convince potential employers of your ability to meet their requirements.

Remember potential employers frequently take from 15 to 45 seconds to decide whether a resume goes into the interview pile or not. You need to make an immediate, positive impression. It is essential that it is accurate, easy to read, free of errors and presents your capabilities in their best light.

Both substance and style are crucial. If the substance is lacking you have little chance of getting an interview. If the substance fulfils or exceeds expectation but the style is poor and has mistakes you may be screened out in favour of another applicant with similar credentials and an impeccably presented resume. Today's job market has a surplus of qualified applicants and few open positions, so stylistic weaknesses have become more critical.

Unfortunately resumes are subject to constantly changing fashions – you need to update yours regularly

Don't clutter your CV with irrelevant information. Wasting space on your, age, marital status, religion and hobbies is not useful. Employers are looking for relevant information presented concisely and up-front.

### Page One – the SELL Zone

Ensure that you present the most important information about you just below your contact information. Your first page is the sell zone where you will want to put the most important information about you that will make you an attractive candidate. This part of the resume is your best shot at being noticed and chosen for an interview so use this area make yourself look unquestionably the best possible candidate.

Things to consider for this zone are what you do best, your strongest IT strengths and skills. This is where you put a brief, targeted, positive Career Summary and a brief relevant Key Skills list.

### Career Overview

A Career Objective is only useful for school leavers or recent uni grads. For the rest of us a Career Overview or Summary is better.

A Career Overview should provide the reader with a quick preview of what they will find in your resume. It should be a few sentences written as one paragraph. Some personal attributes are optional. It needs to be short, punchy, engaging and focused on the role you are applying for.

### Example Career Overview

I am a highly skilled Senior Business Analyst, with 14 years of experience working with a number of Australian Government agencies including XYZ, ABC and HIJ. I possess specialised knowledge of eCommerce and CRM solutions and have experience across the full system development lifecycle. I am highly experienced with Waterfall and Agile methodologies.

### Key Skills list

Use dot points for Key Skills to give a quick snapshot of what you have to offer.

For example:

- High level Microsoft Office skills including Excel, Word and PowerPoint.
- Five years experience in customer service both face to face and phone based.

As a guide, six points is enough. Be specific but brief. "Excellent Communication Skills" isn't specific and everyone says it. Use a more explanatory statement like:

- Excellent written and verbal communication skills acquired via study and customer service work.

When you indicate areas of relevant expertise cluster them. Put protocols, operating systems, hardware, software and programming languages in separate groups, with a small heading labelling the clusters.

### **Education**

Briefly state your academic qualifications (forget High School) and any professional and industry training. Academic history is useful. If you have qualifications or accreditations that are relevant they will tick boxes for potential employers. Industry qualifications such as Prince 2 practitioner and ITIL practitioner are well regarded.

### **Security Clearances and Citizenship**

These are important for many Canberra jobs for Commonwealth government clients. Sometimes this is essential more commonly you may be required to undergo security vetting once you have been successful with a position. If you have ever held a Commonwealth Government security clearance you should show this on Page one of your CV (Level, Agency, and Year. E.G. TSNV at Defence 2008). If you haven't had a clearance show your citizenship (e.g. Australian Citizen or Permanent Resident citizenship expected MM/YY or Malaysian Citizen with right to work under 457 Visa issued dd/mm/yy).

### **The Body of your CV**

Explain achievement results in a way that nontechnical readers can understand. Strive for a balance between language that IT readers will expect and information that non-IT readers will appreciate.

All the information in your CV needs to be relevant (yes this means you have to tailor your CV for each job application or at least job type) – don't use the same CV for a BA role that you use for a PM role.

There's almost nothing of interest that's more than 10 years old.

Replicate the skills and attitudes listed in the job advertisement in your resume

Work your positive personality traits into the first part of your resume.

Putting a photograph of yourself on your CV, though it does personalise it, is no longer popular. If you chose to do make sure you look like a professional and the photograph is a professional one.

If you think that your resume is weak in any way, such as a gap in your work experience, many short-term jobs, limited achievements or the absence of a degree, consider including two or three short testimonials that attest to the quality of your work and to you as a valued employee. If you can't cull them from letters of reference, ask former employers and peers for a brief statement about you as a worker and for permission to include that statement in your resume.

A cover letter is rarely useful for contacting roles in Canberra.

Your CV is most likely going to be presented in an electronic copy so unnecessary complexity stands in the way of communication. If it's printed it will most likely be printed in black and white – colour doesn't help.

#### **Your CV should:**

- Cover relevant work history
- List your work and education history in reverse chronological order, starting with the most recent examples
- Only include interests / hobbies if they demonstrate personal achievements, or relate to the selection criteria.
- Use active verbs to start bullet points such as "design, develop, ensure, facilitate, liaise, manage, market, monitor, prepare, provide, undertake"
- Paint a concise picture of you and your job history. Key points should be highlighted to develop interest and excitement about you as a potential candidate. Include the kind of information you would like to know if you were hiring someone. The reviewer must be drawn to wanting to meet you in person.
- Use clear, concise terms, using active words (e.g. accomplished, created, enhanced, launched, negotiated, etc) and keeping pronouns (I, we, and they) to a minimum.
- Layout and design should be legible, consistent and easy to follow, with good clear headings, large easy-to-read type face—such as Arial or Times Roman or Courier. Don't use more than two type faces- one is best. Factors that make a resume more readable are white space (3.17 cm margins, 2.54 top and bottom margins, extra line spacing before section headings, and so on); left-aligned paragraphs; font sizes no smaller than 10 points (11 points is better); Don't use a table format for your whole resume - it wastes a lot of space and can be hard to follow. Use Left alignment.
- Bold for headings is easier to read than bold and underline (overkill). Use dot points but just the one type. Avoid colours.
- Be honest and defensible. Don't exaggerate your experience to make it sound more impressive. If it can't stand up to scrutiny in the interview, you will blow your chances of getting the job.
- Highlight particular personal achievements. For example: While Project Manager achieved budgeted cost savings of \$1m in the first full year of the CRM solution's operation; or turnover increased 120 per cent.

#### **Your CV should not:**

- Be a novel. Keep it to three to five pages.
- Be in long winded narrative style. Highlight your accomplishments in a bullet point format.
- Contain typographical or grammatical errors
- Use colour, graphics or a fancy border. This doesn't add anything unless the position in question requires a demonstration of that sort of creativity.
- Include personal details such as age, marital status or religion (but do include contact details).

#### **How to get started**

- Think about what your CV says, how easy it is to read and the order you put it in.
- Be dynamic in how you present your work history and skills.

- Use positive language about yourself.
- Make sure there's a well-designed front page. Your first page should include Name, detail of any current or previous security clearances, a broad career summary and list of skills and qualifications.
- Put your name in clear bold type
- Remember, you get only one chance to make a good impression.

### **Common mistakes**

Misspelling product names. For example, AS400 for AS/400, CPM for CP/M, dBase for dBASE, Hewlett Packard for Hewlett-Packard, PhotoShop for Photoshop, QuarkXpress for QuarkXPress. You can't pass yourself off as being detail-oriented if your resume has a misspelling.

Include in a list of software proficiencies early software like Ami Pro, CP/M, DOS, Windows 3.1, WordStar and WordPerfect 5.1. Unless there is a particular reason for mentioning an old program, omit what is no longer relevant.

Confusing abbreviations and acronyms. An abbreviation consists of uppercase letters (without periods) that you can pronounce only as letters, such as PC, NT and TCP/IP. An acronym is a combination of letters making a word that you can pronounce as a word but beginning with an upper case letter, such as Basic, Cobol and Fortran. An acronym such as radar (from radio detecting and ranging) has become so common that it is no longer uppercase.

Highlighting irrelevant skills, strengths and achievements. No matter how proud you are of making the School dance team in 1989, don't devote half a page to it.

Omitting specific career accomplishments.

Providing lengthy, generic job descriptions.

Listing less important career details before key experience and achievements.

Including old, irrelevant information. A detailed description of your high school education is not your strongest selling point. Limit job descriptions to the last 10 years. Anything prior to this can be bundled under a single heading (e.g. 'Prior work experience' and containing only job titles.

Ignoring errors in spelling and grammar. It doesn't make a great first impression to describe yourself as being "very detial oreinted".

Boring your reader. If your resume stretches to more than four pages forget about applying for positions which require "excellent communication skills".

Forgetting the importance of active language. Start sentences with strong action words such as "delivered", "designed", "implemented" and "initiated".

Crammed, dense information. Readable substance trumps less readable substance. Factors that make a resume more readable are white space (3.17 cm margins, 2.54 top and bottom margins, extra line spacing before section headings, and so on); left-aligned paragraphs; font sizes no smaller than 10 points (11 points is better); use standard fonts like Times New Roman or Garamond or Arial or Calibri. There is an argument that serif fonts (like Times New Roman or Garamond) is easier to read in low light conditions than sans serif fonts (like Arial). It's unlikely

that your resume will be read in low light conditions. You be the judge about which version is more readable.

Factors that make a resume less readable are excessive IT jargon that only another IT expert can understand (remember those culling CVs may not be a IT experts); full-justification for paragraphs which can create ugly gaps between words; small headings (in less than 11 point size); long lists; and a lack of parallelism down a list of bulleted items, where the first words of the different items are different parts of speech -- a noun, an adjective and a verb, instead of a series of past participles such as "Created ...," "Organized ...," "Implemented ...."

To check for readability, read your resume aloud. If you stumble, chances are that you have hit a less readable spot in your resume. Change your wording so that you don't stumble when you read it aloud again. Then ask someone else to read your resume for readability. Your goal is to make every part of your resume clear and concise.

## Sample resume for an IT professional

### ***William Bloggs***

**Address:** 25 Carlton Street, Canberra, ACT 2600

**Mobile:** 0500 333 333

**Email:** bbloggs@acunet.com.au

### ***Security Clearances***

TSNV at Defence 2008  
Highly Protected ATO 2007

### ***Career Overview***

I am a highly skilled Senior Business Analyst, with 14 years of experience working with a number of Australian Government agencies including XYZ, ABC and HIJ. I possess specialised knowledge of eCommerce and CRM solutions and have experience across the full system development lifecycle.

### ***Key Strengths***

- Strong communicator both written and oral developed through studies and 10 years client service experience
- Excellent problem solving skills developed through 9 years of project management
- Analytical ability and attention to detail
- CRM experience from 2004 to 2009
- Customer focused and solutions driven

### ***Education***

**2003 Master of Business Administration**  
Macquarie Graduate School of Business

**1993 Bachelor of Computing Science**  
Australian National University

### ***Professional Education***

- BA IT (ANU 1993)
- Project Management (Project Management Institute)
- Prince 2 Practitioner (PM Institute)
- Business Analysis (The BA Institute)
- Acceptance Testing Workshop (TAFE)

### ***Technologies***

I am highly proficient in the following:

Technologies:

- PeopleSoft
- Microsoft (MS) Project
- MS SharePoint
- MS Office
- J2EE

- SQL
- ITIL

Tools:

- Lotus Notes,
- Oracle,
- IBM Rational Clear Quest,
- HP Quality Centre,
- MS Visio,
- SAP ECC,
- WBM (Web Sphere Business Modelling),

Methodologies:

- Waterfall and Agile

Security and Networking:

- TCP/IP, Kaspersky Firewall and antivirus installation

**Professional Affiliations**

- Member of the Australian Computer Society (ACS)
- Member of the Project Management Institute
- Member of the International Institute of Business Analysts

**Professional Experience**

**January 2005 - present, Senior Business Analyst, XYZ Corporation**

*You only need to describe the company's main activity or focus if the company might be unknown. Organisations like IBM, News Limited, Suncorp, the big banks or Government Departments will need no explanation.*

e.g. XYZ is a multinational IT outsourcing company based in London with offices in Singapore, New York, Paris, Tokyo and Melbourne.

**Duties and Responsibilities:**

Managing the in-house CRM solution implementation in 2008-09 with a total budget of \$Xm  
 Managing a team of 10 Junior Business Analysts  
 Involvement in all stages of the project lifecycle to date from the Business Case presentation through to post implementation and support  
 Developing strong relationships with key figures across the organisation both business and technically focused from the Managing Director to Project Managers  
 Working with the Australian operations CIO to develop and implement ABC's local IT strategy

**Achievements:**

Successful implementation of the CRM solution  
 My team was awarded AIM Business Achievers of the Year for our role in the implementation of the CRM solution  
 On track to exceed budgeted cost savings of \$1m in the first full year of the CRM solution's operation

**October 2001 – December 2004, Senior Business Analyst, News Ltd, Sydney**

**Duties and Responsibilities:**

- Lead an in-house cross functional CRM Solution Implementation Team built on J2EE framework.
- Involved in all stages of the project lifecycle from the Business Case development through to post implementation and support
- Designed and documented business process flows
- Facilitated pre-implementation workshops with all relevant stakeholders
- Collaborated with project managers throughout the implementation particularly in the management of deliverables and mitigating risk
- Liaised between both business and IT functional areas across News Ltd's Australian and Asia Pacific operations

**Achievements:**

- Successful implementation of the CRM solution
- Budgeted cost and efficiency targets met for years 1 and 2
- Awarded 'Fabbo' Award for the implementation

**References**

It is best to provide two professional referees (if you are unwilling to put these in you CV the statement 'Available upon request.' May be acceptable.)

**Name:** [insert referee's name]

**Position & Company:** [insert referee's title; company name, location]

**Relationship:** [Provide details of professional relationship e.g. former manager at company XYZ]

**Email:** [insert email address]

**Phone:** [insert phone number]

**Mobile:** [insert mobile number]