



**WMRC**

**CV COACHING &  
USEFUL TIPS**

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# 1

## Importance of a great CV

Your CV create the first impression which recruiters and prospective employers have of you. Before even seeing you, your CV already starts selling you, whether in a positive or negative sense.

Your CV speak volumes of you as a person, your background and education, and what you have done and accomplished over the years. It is like a mini-biography of you and it is heavily relied upon to make decisions on whether you would be considered further for a job or not.

You will have a great and compelling story to tell if you have prepared a great CV. Readers will quickly pick up salient points about your skills and work experience in a logical and concise manner. Not only will a great CV generate strong interest in your profile, it also distinguish you from others competing with you for the same job.

The way you prepare and write your CV tells a lot about your personal style and attention to details. It shows your ability to present and sell your key strengths with just words and paper alone. For jobs requiring good writing or presentation skills, a well-written and well-formatted CV goes far in selling you for those roles.

Conversely, CVs which are unstructured, written with poor grammar or contain missing information typically do not get past the first round of selection. Employers will question your seriousness and your professional ability. With the availability of other job seekers who present themselves otherwise, your chance of getting a job interview diminishes considerably.

A great CV not only serves the purpose of landing you a job interview, it also helps you to keep an accurate record of your work history, skills and qualifications.

If you have been working in the same job for the last ten years and upgrading your skills through continuous training, constantly updating your CV helps you to document your work achievements, responsibilities and new skills added over the years. By doing so, it frees you from the stress and trouble of trying to recall important details especially those that might have happened more than a few years ago.

Remember that your CV represents you and it is your marketing pitch without hearing or seeing you in person. Invest in writing a great CV to reap rewards in your professional life and you will not regret having done so.

## 2

# Essential features and considerations

Knowing how important your CV is to you, how should you go about preparing a great CV? We have outlined four key points you could take note of.

### 1. Length of your CV

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Depending on your work history, the length of your CV can vary significantly.

For someone who is fresh out of school and finding work for the first time, you should avoid the tendency to simply list down your personal information and educational records. Try to highlight your abilities and potential by including the small projects or extra-curricular activities you have undertaken in schools or if you have done any short-term holiday work. List down the roles you have assumed and explain how you have developed key social or leadership skills.

If you have done exceptionally well academically and you're applying for a role in research, emphasize your academic results and achievements rather than simply listing the degree or certificate you have obtained.

On the other end of the continuum is job seekers who have accumulated several years of work experience.

The tendency for them is to overstretch their CVs and include details years ago which may no longer be relevant to the role they are applying for. Rather than adding on new work experiences to your *Work History* section as you progress in your career, consider revising the contents to make it more digestible for the reader.

A role undertaken 20 years ago would be very much different from a role 5 or 8 years ago, and it is acceptable to summarize the duties and responsibilities in a few bullet points for jobs done in the early part of your career. Employers are more interested in your more recent jobs and it is good practice to elaborate extensively on those jobs held.

Another consideration is the level of detail you should provide for various job tenures. Employers expect to see more details for jobs in which you have spent considerably more time compared to those which you have spent only 1 – 2 years. Correctly apportioning the amount of details is important as it makes the CV appear more logical and consistent.

If you are a seasoned professional with vast amounts of work experience and accomplishments, it is tempting to list down every detail of your qualifications, achievements, and even research publications (for someone more academic) and we do come across CVs which are more than 20 pages long!

The bottom line is try not to exceed 4 – 5 pages as anything beyond that risks losing the attention or interest of the reader.

## 2

# Essential features and considerations

## 2. Your personal information

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The first section which draws the reader's attention is your personal information. This includes your full name, contact information (telephone numbers, emails and addresses), education, professional qualifications, technology skills and language skills. For practical reasons, your personal information should be kept accurate and updated periodically to reflect any changes.

As a proper introduction of you, this section should also include a statement or short paragraph about you, summarizing your key strengths and skills, career achievements and aspirations.

Employers typically look at your personal information to determine your suitability for the job. It is one of the criteria used when they decide whether or not to grant you an interview. Some might wonder how personal information would affect that decision especially if the person fulfils all the necessary skills and experience needed for the role.

In reality, what makes a perfect candidate for a job role depends not just on skills and experience. Employers ascertain your suitability based on other factors such as your age, gender, eligibility to work in the country, educational level, qualifications, etc.

While it is arguable whether the above constitute discrimination, employers have the right to exercise their choice based on what they deem as being requisites for a job role.

For example, it is unacceptable to discriminate someone based on gender for a role in general but if it requires someone with physical strength to lift bulky items, employers are permitted to include physical strength as part of the pre-requisites for the job rather than saying females will not be considered.

Depending on the seniority of a job role, employers also perform internal benchmarking to ensure equity across the existing teams and structures. You may possess all the necessary requisites for a role but could be found lacking in terms of level of corporate seniority. Employers are concerned about causing dissatisfaction among existing team members that could result in poor morale and performance.

In ensuring internal equity, employers also analyze carefully salary levels of potential job seekers with internal salary bands. While it is debatable whether current and expected salary should be included in personal information, it is common for employers to find that out through the job application form or during the actual interview. By providing salary figures upfront in your CV, it could increase efficiency in the selection process. But if you feel that providing that information may put you at a disadvantage, you may want to disclose it only at a later stage during the job interview.

## 2

## Essential features and considerations

### 3. Your work history

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This section contains a lot of information which sell you as a potential candidate for a role. Be sure to get all your facts right and list in chronological order the experience you have chalked up over the years.

The reverse chronological order i.e. listing your most current work experience first is preferred as employers typically look at the current and the job before it as the most relevant experience for the role they are hiring.

Dates of employment (from/ to in months and years), names of employers, job titles, work responsibilities and achievements must be presented in a clear format (using bullets for ease of reading) and expressed in simple and concise English.

Your current and past employers as well as your job titles attract immediate attention as employers would have a good idea how relevant your skills and experience are for the role.

Summarize the scope of your responsibilities neatly and use bullet points where necessary (if there are more than two areas you wish to cover) to enable the reader to gain an accurate understanding of your role.

In writing your achievements in each job you are currently in or have done in the past, try to be as specific as possible. For example, if you were directly responsible for managing the P&L of the department, list down in numerical terms how much you have done to increase revenues or save costs.

Your achievements can also be qualitative, such as job promotions, awards recognizing your efforts, or improvements and positive changes you have effected during your tenure. Well-written work achievements offer compelling reasons why you should be hired and is a section you should focus your attention and effort on.

You might wish to include your reasons for leaving each job as employers are interested to understand how you make your career choices. If you demonstrate sound judgment and logic when switching to each new role, your profile will surely stand out from the rest.

Ideally, the reasons for you leaving a job should be for career advancement or wanting to expand your work responsibility. If your reasons are weak, such as a higher salary or inability to get along with colleagues, it is best to leave them out of your CV.

## 2

## Essential features and considerations

### 4. Other considerations

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A great CV should also include at least two character references. Character references are usually people whom you have worked with in the past and they can be your peers within the same team or your superior.

Prior to listing their names and contact information in your CV, be sure to contact them and obtain their permission to include them as your reference. Your character reference should be someone whom you know well enough and able to speak on how you perform on a job or task and your ability to get along with others.

Be prepared that your prospective employers could call on your references to have a chat with them about you. To mitigate risks associated with a wrong hire, employers are increasingly taking on active steps to make sure they screen out job seekers who are dishonest in their CVs and untruthful during job interviews. By talking to more people who know you, they hope to arrive at a more accurate picture of you as an employee and how you might fit into the role.

Reference checking usually takes place after you have cleared the initial rounds of the job interview. If you are not comfortable with a potential employer calling up your current superior to do a reference check, you should highlight that up front beforehand.

Most employers understand it is not appropriate to call up your current superior to ask about you, especially if you have not been offered the new role or resigned from the job. However, there is nothing stopping them from doing so after you have accepted the role and tendered your resignation.

For that reason, it is best not to 'burn your bridges' and as far as possible, maintain positive relationships with your superiors and colleagues even if you have already made other plans.

A question arise when preparing your CV is whether or not to include a Cover Letter in your CV. Based on our experience, a Cover Letter is useful provided you tailored it to the role you are applying for. We come across numerous cases where cover letters were sent with the wrong job titles or addressed to the wrong companies.

Make sure if you include a Cover Letter, you write one that is clear, concise and accurate. A Cover Letter should introduce you as a potential candidate interested in the specific job role, and highlight the key skills and experience you possess that are relevant for the reader's consideration. It should of course, also include your current contact information to make yourself readily available to enquiries or interested phone calls.

### 3

## Managing flaws in a CV

Your career choices over the years of your employment determine the quality of your CV. As you begin your career, you have the advantage of starting on a clean sheet of paper, with no past work history to show. As you accumulate work experiences over the years, how desirable your profile is to a prospective employer depends increasingly on those jobs you have done and the companies you have worked for.

Below are four plausible scenarios arising that could raise doubts about your CV and how you could manage them.

### 1. Moving too frequently within a short time frame

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Employers seek to hire candidates with a track record of success in a similar role, as there is greater certainty that they will do well in the role.

Firms look for people who are not job hoppers, i.e. opportunistic job seekers who are attracted by higher salaries, as they doubt their staying power after investing in training and inducting them to their jobs.

Premature resignations also result in work disruptions and inconveniences, which could affect bottom line performance and most employers are wary of that.

What is considered short tenure however is subjective, but many would deem one or two years of service as being short. Based on research studies, it takes a newcomer around 3 – 6 months to be properly acquainted with a company's work procedures, people and working styles.

It takes another 6 months to 1.5 years for him to start contributing meaningfully in the role, and at least 2 years to be able to contribute in a major way.

### 2. Staying too long in the same company

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What happens if you have been working in the same company for the last 15 years? Just as job hopping is a concern for employers, working in the same job for too long raises questions about a person's ability to adapt to a different environment or job scope.

Whilst a long career with a firm is perceived well by most employers, it has to be more than just loyalty you need to sell to a new employer. Think over carefully the various roles and skills you have learned over your long tenure with your firm.

How many times have you been promoted within your role?  
Have you been exposed to different functions across the firm?  
How much of your experience would be directly relevant to the new employer?

# 3

## Managing flaws in a CV

### 3. Long job search has resulted in gaps in your CV

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Perhaps it's the economy going through a recession, or just your sector that is undergoing problems. You may even blame it on plain bad luck for your extended job search that has not yielded results for the last six months. In this situation, how should you account for the break in your CV?

Think about what you have done during that six month period and manage it constructively. Besides spending time on job search, you could possibly have enrolled yourself in a part-time training program, took up short-term contract work, or offered yourself as a consultant to a project.

Even if you have taken time off for traveling, think about what you have gained during your travels – you might have contributed vastly to rescue efforts upon unfortunate people who have been hurt by a natural disaster, or have honed your leadership or team building skills through organizing a challenging trip demanding much coordination and planning.

As much as possible, fill those gaps in your CV with clear descriptions of what you have done and achieved in each of the gap.

Be truthful about what you have done or not done and never be tempted to insert false information in your CV. False information can easily be verified through reference checking and could easily cost you the job, or worse, tarnish your reputation in the job market.

### 4. Personal commitments have resulted in gaps in your CV

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After working for a good number of years, it is not uncommon for senior executives to want to focus on other priorities in their lives.

These could involve stopping work to spend more time with children, or to care for a sickly parent. Sometimes, the reason could be simply to take a break and recover from overworking stress.

Depending on your reasons, do be aware that employers may not deem it favorably if you have been away from a job for too long. In general, if you're out of action for more than a year, it raises doubts about the validness of your skills and your rationale for staying away so long from a permanent role.

In such situations, you might end up having to compromise on salary or accept a lower position in order to return to the workforce.

## CV and cover letter samples

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Mobile: +65 9999 8888  
Email: kenneth.tan@gmail.com

Ms. Clara Lim  
Human Resource Director  
XYZ Pte Ltd  
Level 40 Raffles Quay  
Singapore 033456

Dear Ms. Lim,

**Re: Investment Specialist position (ST 321)**

With reference to your advertisement for a Investment Specialist, please find enclosed my CV. I believe I possess the necessary experience and skills to do well in this role.

Specifically, I possess the following:

- More than 5 years of relevant experience
- Demonstrated the ability to drive results and performance
- Strong investment knowledge and qualifications
- Ability to work in a team and able to excel individually

I look forward to hearing from you.

Yours sincerely,

Kenneth Tan

## CV and cover letter samples

Kenneth Tan  
 123 Adam Road  
 #04-05 Singapore 223344  
 Mobile: +65 9999 8888  
 Email: [kenneth.tan@gmail.com](mailto:kenneth.tan@gmail.com)

### Career summary

Experienced and well-qualified investment professional possessing strong analytical and product management skills, seeking a Product Manager role with a dynamic company.

### Employment History

ABC Bank May 2004 to Present  
 Product Specialist

#### Responsibilities:

- Product launches, positioning of new and existing products in the context of the overall solution set for the Business and in current market conditions
- Pre- and after-sales servicing for bankers & portfolios counsellors, ranging from operational, product and market inquiries
- Re-design of process work flow through review of current processes in co-ordination with Global Investments, Global Operations, Legal / Compliance etc., so as to achieve improvements in product life cycles

#### Achievements:

- Successfully launched 3 new product lines from the original idea generation to developing the necessary operational processes and marketing campaigns
- Awarded top performance award in recognition of achievement

- Promoted from Analyst level to Product Specialist within 1 year of joining the bank

#### Reason for Leaving:

- Career progression and better career prospects in a high-growth sector requiring my skills and experience

### Education

Masters in Applied Finance 2004  
 National University of Singapore

Bachelor degree in Banking & Finance 2000  
 Nanyang Technological University

### Professional Qualifications

CFA charter holder since 2005

### Technology Skills

Proficient in Microsoft Office Word, Excel, Access and Power point  
 Knowledge of Bloomberg and Telekurs.

### Language Skills

Fluent (written and spoken) in English and Mandarin

### References

Available on request

