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Good CV equals marketing magic

By Val Leveson

Professional writers can help you stand out but be sure they know your industry



A well-written CV is crucial to get through to the interview stage.

A Curriculum Vitae or CV is your calling card to prospective employers - it is there to attract attention so you get that all-important interview. A well-written CV can move you into contention even if you don't have as many credentials for the job as others - it's about putting your best foot forward.

So as a CV is so important, is it something best left with the professionals? Director of Reach Recruitment Lauren Blumgart says a professional CV is a good idea if you are unsure how to write a CV and have no way of getting guidance.

"Each career sector has spec requirements, and if you are choosing to go the professional CV route, you should make sure that the person has an understanding of what a hiring manager in that space would be looking for."

She says CVs should be seen as important marketing tools. "If it's not set out appealingly and does not have the right key words for the industry it's likely to be overlooked."

She says professional CVs can be expensive - so if you're going to get one it's important to make sure the person doing it is good and knows the industry.

Blumgart warns: "Always make sure that what's on your LinkedIn profile matches with your CV. Employers do look at both."

Big employer Vodafone's head of HR Jan Bibby agrees and says professional networking site LinkedIn is becoming more relevant.

"The traditional CV still has a place, but we've also invested in LinkedIn as a channel for proactively seeking out talent - which has been extremely successful."

Of whether a CV is professionally made or not, she says: "When reviewing applications we're much more interested in whether candidates have the skills and potential to do the job, and whether they're the right fit, than if their CV is professionally formatted - although spelling and grammar are important."

Denis Odlin, manager of professional CV writing company Successful Resumes New Zealand, says most people underestimate how difficult it is to write a CV.

"It has four audiences. The first is a computer - many of the larger companies use applicant tracking software. If the CV is not written with the appropriate structure and key words the applicant doesn't show up.

"After the computer, the next in line is the recruiter with technical skills. He or she will scan the CV for minimum criteria; this can take just seconds.

"Then there's the HR person who is looking for reasons to veto the CV - are there unexplained gaps, is there something that's not fitting. And lastly there's the person who looks at the remaining CVs with more depth with the idea of interviewing."

Odlin says that a good CV is about telling a two- to three-page story backwards - from most recent to the past. "The story needs to be told succinctly and clearly. When they are scanning a CV, most recruiters will look at them for 10 seconds to see if it's worth a second look. The applicant needs to make it easy to skim with the right word and language techniques. There's a subtlety to it."

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