Tips and Strategies for Creating a Standout CV

Mastering the Art of an Impressive CV

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November 2024
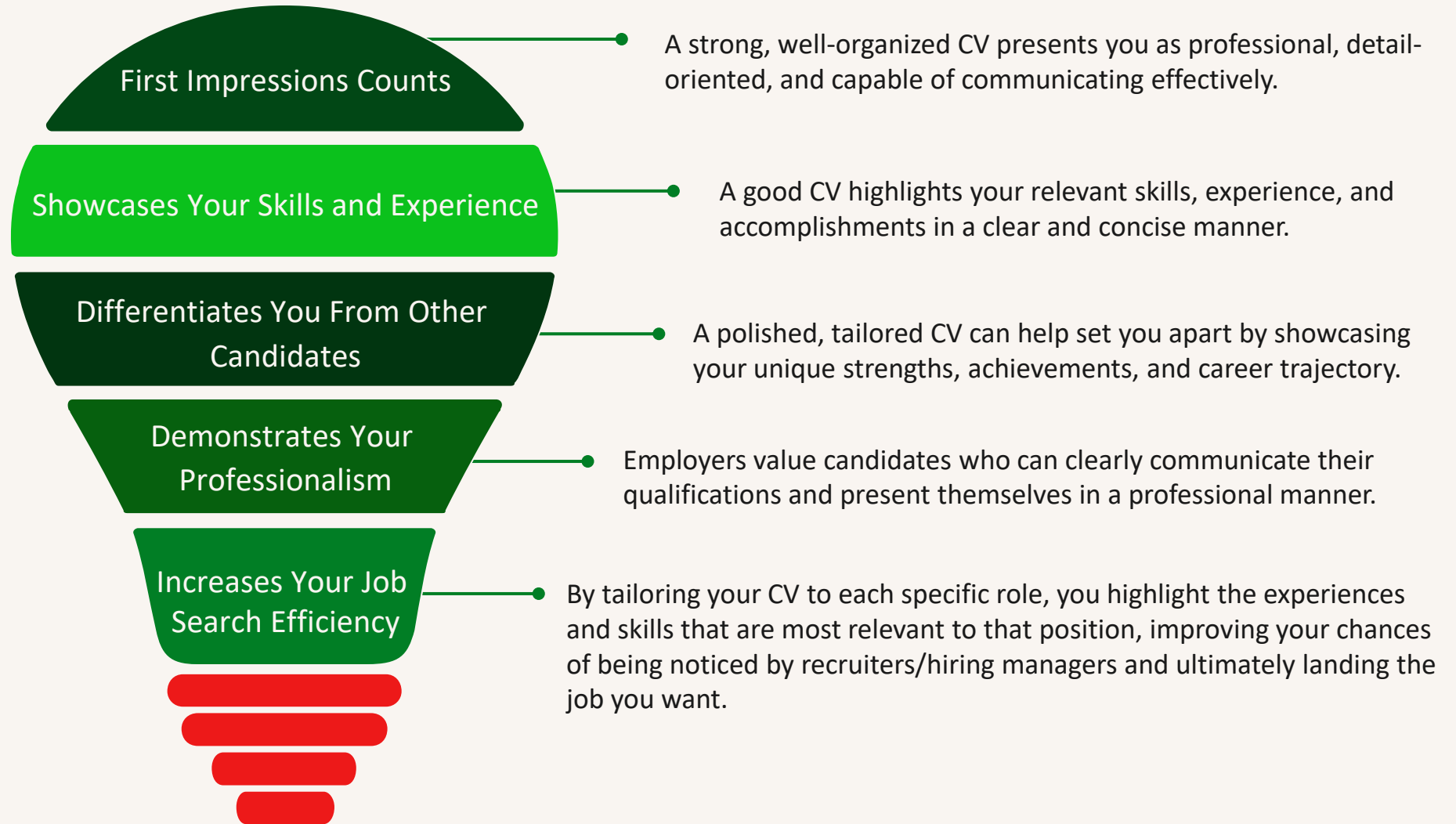
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Senior Recruitment Partner at Fortrea

- With an MSc in BA from VU University Amsterdam, focused on HR Management, I recruit across Quality, Regulatory, Drug Safety, and Clinical fields. My passion for resume writing began as a personal journey, evolving into expertise in ATS optimization and trends.

- I help professionals craft standout resumes that catch recruiters' attention.

- I'm always eager to learn and build relationships. Reach out for resume advice or job search tips!

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Agenda

- Understanding the Purpose of a CV

- Key Sections to Include

- Tips for Formatting and Design

- Tailoring Your CV for Different Job Roles

- Common Mistakes to Avoid

- Q&A

Why a Good CV Matters

First Impressions Counts

A strong, well-organized CV presents you as professional, detail-oriented, and capable of communicating effectively.

Showcases Your Skills and Experience

A good CV highlights your relevant skills, experience, and accomplishments in a clear and concise manner.

Differentiates You From Other Candidates

A polished, tailored CV can help set you apart by showcasing your unique strengths, achievements, and career trajectory.

Demonstrates Your Professionalism

Employers value candidates who can clearly communicate their qualifications and present themselves in a professional manner.

Increases Your Job Search Efficiency

By tailoring your CV to each specific role, you highlight the experiences and skills that are most relevant to that position, improving your chances of being noticed by recruiters/hiring managers and ultimately landing the job you want.

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Understanding Your Audience

01 **Hiring Managers** are looking for candidates who have the specific skills, experience, and cultural fit for the role. They will focus on the substance of your experience, how well your qualifications match the job description, and how you can contribute to the team's success.

02 **Recruiters** are looking for candidates who meet the basic qualifications and criteria for the job. Their role is to narrow down the applicant pool, often through keyword searches or quick initial screenings, before forwarding a shortlist to the hiring manager.

03 **ATS (Applicant Tracking Systems)** is focused on identifying keywords and matching the structure of your CV to specific criteria, often based on the job description. It doesn't assess the quality of your experience or personality but rather scans for relevant information to filter out unqualified candidates.

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Key Sections of a CV

Personal Details

Full name, contact info, LinkedIn (and other social media links).

Summary

3-4-5 sentences of your professional background and key strengths.

Skills

Relevant technical and soft skills.

Work Experience

Company, role, achievements.

Education

Degrees, certifications, relevant training.

Additional Sections

Awards, volunteer work, languages, publications, etc.

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Personal Details

The **personal details** section of the CV is crucial for providing basic information that allows the recruiter to contact the candidates they shortlisted for next step. A good CV should have a **full name** prominently shown at the top to ensure clarity and identification. The CV should also contain **contact details** such as **phone number** and a **professional email address** to facilitate communication. Adding **location** (city and country) helps the employer assess candidates' proximity to the role and whether the candidate is based in the right region for the position. Ideally, the CV should include a **LinkedIn profile** or **personal website/portfolio** if they are relevant.

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Summary

The **summary** section of the CV serves as a brief snapshot of candidate's professional background and career goals, giving the reader a quick overview of their qualifications. It should highlight the **key skills**, **experience**, and **achievements** relevant to the job the candidate is applying for, demonstrating why they are a strong fit for the role. A well-crafted summary can also convey **career objectives** or what the candidate is looking for in their next opportunity, aligning the goals with the employer's needs. It should be concise—typically 3 to 4 sentences—focusing on the most significant strengths without repeating details already covered in the rest of the CV. A strong summary helps capture the reader's attention, making them more likely to continue reading the CV.

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Skills

The **skills** section of the CV is where the candidate can showcase their technical, hard, and soft skills relevant to the job they are applying for. Focus should be on **hard skills** that are specific to the role, such as software proficiency, programming languages, or industry certifications, as these demonstrate the ability to perform key tasks. It is good to also include **soft skills** like communication, problem-solving, and teamwork, which highlight the ability to work effectively in a collaborative environment. Tailoring the skills list to match the **keywords** from the job description actually increases the chances of passing through an Applicant Tracking System (ATS). A well-curated skills section helps employers quickly assess qualifications and suitability for the position.

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Work Experience

The **work experience** section is one of the most important part of the CV, as it provides a detailed account of the relevant job history and achievements. Best practice would be listing roles in reverse chronological order, starting with the most recent position, to show career progression. For each job, candidates should include a **job title**, **company name**, and **dates of employment**, followed by a brief description of their **key responsibilities**. Highlighting the **achievements** with measurable results (*e.g.* Streamlined internal reporting processes, reducing document preparation time by 30%, which allowed the team to focus more on client needs, led a team of 5) to demonstrate impact in each role. Tailoring this section could help immensely in the screening stage – candidates should focus on experiences most relevant to the job(s) they are applying for, showcasing skills and accomplishments that match the employer's needs.

Education

The **education** section of the CV provides an overview of academic background and qualifications. Candidates should include their **degree(s)**, **institution(s)**, and the **dates attended** to show the foundation of their expertise. If applicable, highlighting any **academic honors** or **specializations** can demonstrate candidates' excellence in specific areas. If the education is directly relevant to the role, such as a degree in a specific field or certifications in a technical area, this should be emphasized. For those with limited work experience, the education section can be a keyway to showcase their qualifications and potential to succeed in the role.
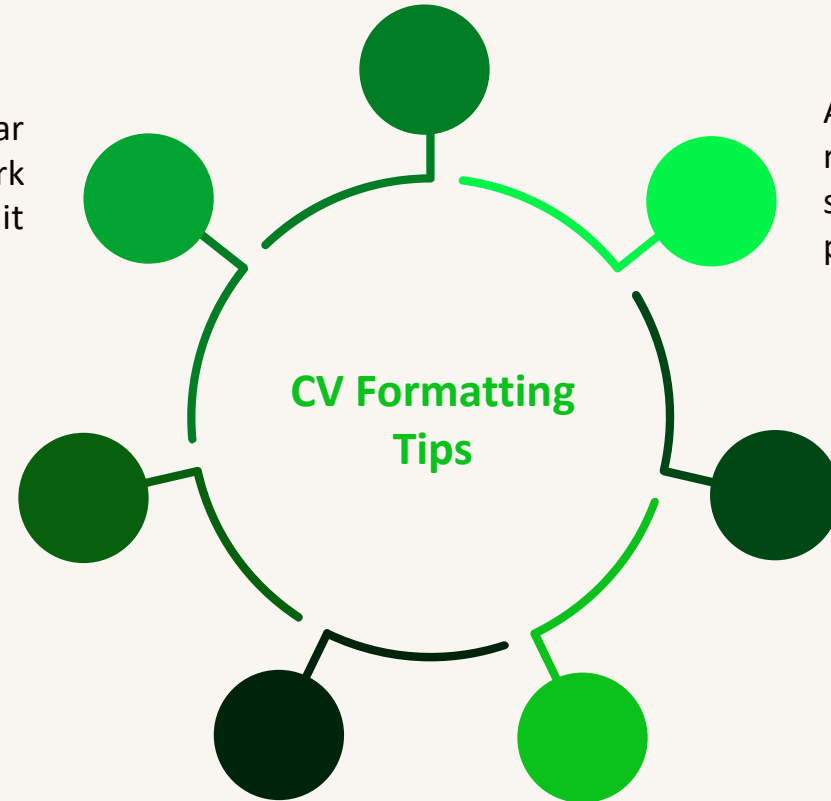
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Additional Sections

The **additional sections** of the CV allows candidates to further highlight relevant experiences and skills that may not fit neatly into other categories. Common additional sections include **certifications**, **languages**, **volunteer work**, or **professional memberships**, which can demonstrate expertise, commitment, and passion beyond the primary job experience. If applicable, candidates can include a **portfolio** or **publications** section to showcase their work or thought leadership, especially in fields of design, writing, or academia. Including a **hobbies/interest's** section can help show personality and fit within a company culture, particularly if the hobbies align with the role or industry. These sections help round out candidates' profile, providing a fuller picture of their qualifications and character.

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Keep it clean by using professional fonts (e.g., Arial, Calibri), consistent bullet points, and headings.

Align text consistently (left-aligned for readability avoid centering large sections) and use white space to prevent clutter.

Keep the layout simple with clear section headings (e.g., "Work Experience," "Education") to make it easy to scan.

CV Formatting Tips

Use bullet points for lists of skills, achievements, or responsibilities to improve readability.

Avoid using graphics or images, unless they are essential to the role (e.g., portfolio work for creative jobs).

Include hyperlinks to your LinkedIn profile, portfolio, or website, but keep them clear and professional.

One page for less than 5 years' experience, two pages for more and 3 pages for 15+.

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Tailoring Your CV to the Job

Read the Job Description Carefully

Analyze the job posting and highlight key responsibilities, required skills, and qualifications.

Use Relevant Keywords

Incorporate keywords from the job description to improve your CV's chances of passing through the ATS and catching the recruiter's attention.

Highlight Relevant Experience

Focus on work experience that is most applicable to the role you're applying for and use specific examples to demonstrate how your previous roles align with the position.

Customize Your Professional Summary

Tailor your CV's summary or objective to reflect the skills and experience that make you a strong fit for the specific job and company.

Remove Irrelevant Information

If certain past roles or experiences don't directly contribute to the job you're applying for, consider removing them or downplaying their relevance.

Research the Company

Tailor your CV not only to the job but also to the company culture. If the company values innovation or teamwork, for example, highlight relevant experiences that demonstrate these traits.

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Common CV Mistakes to Avoid

DO'S

1. Tailor your CV to each job.
2. Focus on relevant work experience, skills, and qualifications.
3. Proofread your CV multiple times.
4. Use clear and concise language.
5. Keep your CV design simple, clean, and professional.
6. Start your CV with a short summary.
7. Include essential personal details.
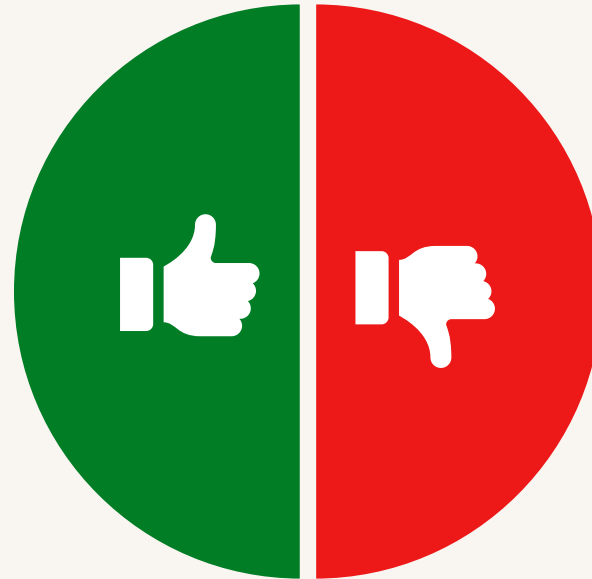
DON'TS

1. Don't: Use a generic CV for every job application.
2. List unrelated jobs or outdated skills.
3. Ignore small mistakes.
4. Overload your CV with buzzwords.
5. Use excessive colors, fonts, or graphics.
6. Leave out summary section or make it vague.
7. Include unnecessary personal details.

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Final Tips for Success

Tailor your CV

For each job you apply.

Be honest and authentic

Don't exaggerate.

LinkedIn

Keep your LinkedIn profile consistent with your CV.

Show your impact

With numbers and specifics.

Proofread and ask for feedback

Typos and errors can cost you the job; ask someone else to review it.

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Q&A

> Nelson Mandela: "It always seems impossible until it's done."

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Thank you!

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