

Tips and Hints for Improving Your CV

The main area that needs understanding and improvement when preparing your CV is including both **Duties** and **Achievements** – and then knowing the difference between them.

Duties – These outline what was expected of you in your previous role. It doesn't prove you were able to do the duties of the role, just that is what the role required of you.

- They should, at a maximum, take up only 4-5 lines as they will be the same no matter whether you or 50 other people have had that job.
- If you focus too much on the duties, you are in fact selling your previous job.
- What is more important is to highlight what you did in that job with the resources available to you.

To promote yourself well, you need to have **Achievements** as the next heading under "Duties".

Achievements – These demonstrate specifically what you were able to produce during your time in that role.

- Each specific achievement should be a dot point.
- Each needs to be a specific outcome that is measurable and preferably third party-endorsed.
- General claims do not cut it eg "I successfully launched...." What does "successful" really mean? How can you prove to the reader it was "successful"? Did you meet or exceed any specific objectives for the launch eg attendance numbers were 70% up on the previous year, did you gain front page positive media coverage in *The Australian*? Claiming something is "successful" means nothing to the reader, unless and until, you provide the data on which you judged it to be successful so the reader can make their own assessment.
- Once you include tangible outcomes, it also gets around the problem many people have in not liking to be seen to be boasting about what they've done or "selling themselves".
- Putting in the title "Achievements" and providing supporting data shows that you are the sort of person who wants to make their mark in their next job and get runs on the board.
- Needless to say, this is attractive to an employer who wants keen, driven people working for them – ie people who like to achieve.

If you've never thought about the importance, or made the connection between, evaluating the work you do and your CV – now is the time.

So if you've never thought about your achievements, how do you start? With evaluating what you do each and every day. You should consider yourself a communications problem-solver and then determine what problems you are solving for your employer and well you are doing that by evaluating your work. Do it yourself. Don't wait for someone else to do it – or wait for "funding". It may never come. Get feedback from managers on what you do and measure your effectiveness in any way you think fit.

Achievements – in detail

Which sounds better?:

- *"wrote a communications evaluation report on our latest campaign."*
- *"wrote a communications evaluation report on our latest campaign with 5 key recommendations which were subsequently implemented by the organisation over the next 12 months and were directly attributed to increasing awareness in subsequent campaigns by 45% as reported in our organisation's 2008 Annual Report".*

The first is just the duty you were required to perform. The second shows a concrete outcome for your employer...who would you, as an employer, be wanting to employ?

If you're saying to yourself "*But I haven't done anything like that?*" – why haven't you? There is opportunity in every job to make your mark. You don't need money to evaluate – just be savvy about it – but remember to ensure you do it. And keep evidence of it.

If you want to be the best in the field – it is this type of approach which will make you stand out from the crowd.

So the best CV format – as tested with our clients - is:

Jan 2007 – Jan 2008
Public Affairs Officer Grade 2
Public Affairs Section
Australian Government Department of Xxxxxxxx

Duties: Responsible for media liaison, development and implementation of internal communications strategies, and the preparation of content for publications (newsletters, internet, campaign booklets and brochures).

Achievements:

- Produced the Department's 2007 Annual Report - under budget and one month in advance of Department of Finance timetable. The report won the APS Award for 2006/07 financial year and was described by the Public Service Commissioner as "a brilliant example of"
 - Prepared a marketing strategy which, when implemented over the following four months, increased the organisation's revenue base by 40% compared to the previous year-making us the fastest growing company in the industry for the last 5 quarters.
 - Developed and implemented the agency's communication strategy for its largest campaign (the Jolly Roger Campaign) which raised the awareness of the target audiences about their entitlements by 56% over a 6 month period as measured by Roy Morgan in July 2007
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That is make your achievements - specific, measurable and if possible third party-endorsed, these are what "sell" you to your next employer.

It is important to only have the **Achievements** (not Duties and Achievements) as dot points.

Why?

Because your eye is naturally drawn to the dot points on a page and you want to first notice your **Achievements**, not your Duties. It visually prioritises the right information for the reader.

You may need two versions of your CV – one for contract work and one for when you apply for permanent jobs. When going for contract work – the only paperwork the client will see is your CV (plus the Company's comments on your capabilities). For permanent positions, you usually write against selection criteria and have the opportunity to write in more depth and can have a shorter CV.

Good Luck!