

Julie-Ann Amos

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Julie-Ann Amos

ESSENTIALS

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Contents

Preface	7
1 A Means to an End	9
Knowing when to make a move	11
Knowing what you want	14
Identifying opportunities	16
Doing research and targeting employers	21
2 Presenting the Positive	25
The basics of presentation	27
The basic contents	30
Chronological format	34
Functional format	37
3 Avoiding any Negatives	41
Lack of track record	43
Lack of qualifications or education	46
Technical problems and gaps	48
Too much experience or qualifications	51
4 The Covering Letter	57
The basics	58
Getting noticed	61
Targeting the company	64
Disclosing your salary	68

6 Write a Winning CV

5 Checking and Sending the CV	73
Tailoring everything to the job	75
Proofreading	75
Electronic CVs	78
Faxing/scanning CVs	81
Appendix: Examples	85

Preface

There is a vast amount of information available on how to write Curriculum Vitae. However, not all of it is helpful, and it may not be in line with what prospective employers want. Selecting what is the best advice for you can be difficult.

Employers want to see what you can offer. They want to see it presented quickly and simply. And they want to see it in a format that is good for them to process through their recruitment procedures.

A little research can not only make a CV look good, but can make it pass quickly to the right person, getting you the opportunity to interview and make a personal impression.

A CV will not get you the job. It is designed to get you an interview, at which you can (a) show prospective employers why they should hire you, and (b) decide whether you really do want to work for them.

Julie-Ann Amos

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1 A Means to an End

Before you write your CV, you need to know who your target audience is. Decide what you want before you write the document that will help you get it.

In this chapter, four things that really matter:

- ~ **Knowing when to make a move**
- ~ **Knowing what you want**
- ~ **Identifying opportunities**
- ~ **Doing research and targeting employers**

Unless you know where you're going, you'll never get there. It is vital that you sit down and get a definite idea of what job(s) you want and where to find them *before* you produce your CV.

Why? Because your CV is a means to an end. How do you know how best to sell yourself unless you know who you're selling to?

The best sales people find out who might

want the product, and why. They get to know both customers and potential customers. Market research is big business.

Before you write your CV, do your own market research – it will enable you to write a far better CV. The days when one CV suited everyone are over. **Targeting** your CV is one of the single most effective things you can do to get the right job. And the aim isn't just to get any job – it's to get you the best job possible.

Is this you?

- I can't see why I need to keep adjusting my CV – how many ways are there to say what I've done?
- I've a lot of experience, and don't want to miss out on any opportunities, so shouldn't I make my CV as broad as possible so I don't restrict myself?
- I've been here a while and don't really know where to start looking for new job opportunities.
- There are so many job vacancies out there I get overwhelmed! How do I decide which ones to apply for?

Knowing when to make a move

If you are already working you need to decide exactly when to make a move and look for a new job. If not working, you are probably ready to start work on your CV already!

If you need help deciding whether the time is right for you now, consider the following factors which may indicate your career could use a change:

- ~ **Instability** – possibility of redundancy or cost-cutting.
- ~ **Interpersonal conflict** – you are no longer happy working with those you work with.
- ~ **Lack of promotional prospects** – you will need to move to 'get on'.
- ~ **New boss or management** – making changes you disagree with, or who don't value you the way your old management operated.
- ~ **No personal life** – work is taking up so

much time that you have no time for yourself, friends or family.

- ~ **Opportunity** – there are a lot of good opportunities available.
- ~ **Poor performance** – this can often be a sign that you heart isn't in your job any more. Will a change make you feel better, more motivated, so you do better work?
- ~ **Stuck in a rut** – you're bored doing what you are doing.
- ~ **Salary** – it isn't adequate any more, or others are being paid more in other organisations for the same type of work.
- ~ **Technology** – you aren't getting to use it, or you can't cope with what your employer is starting to bring in.

You never know when you might be made redundant, or personal circumstances will force you to move. So keep your CV up to date and it will save you time when

opportunity or necessity comes knocking!*

Signs you need to update your CV include:

- ~ Current role is not fully described.
- ~ Changes of role since joining your current employer are not included.
- ~ If you add your current job, your CV is flowing onto an extra page.
- ~ You have included personal hobbies and interests.
- ~ You haven't recorded new software and technology introduced in the past few years.
- ~ It doesn't show you as suitable for the type of roles you're looking at.
- ~ Contact numbers, faxes, e-mail addresses, etc. are not up to date.

**** The best way to move is in your own time, at the best time. But keep the CV to hand and up to date at all times, just in case...***

Knowing what you want

You need a firm idea of what you're looking for – or you will waste time considering things that aren't right for you. You need to focus all your energy on getting the right job, not waste time thinking about lots of jobs that may or may not be suitable. Consider the following checklist:

~ **Position:**

What type of work do you want to do?

What type of company or organisation?

What industry?

What department?

Do you want to stay in your current field?

~ **Salary:**

How important is it compared with other factors?

How much would you ideally like to earn?

Being realistic, what is the minimum you are prepared to accept?

What benefits do you require – car, pension, healthcare, bonuses, etc?

~ **Area/location:**

Where do you want to work?

Where *can't* you work due to travel?

How long are you prepared to spend travelling?

~ **Other working conditions which are important to you:**

Office or working hours?

Working with a team?

Working alone?

Flexible hours?

A regular schedule?

Casual dress?

Learning/training opportunities?

Promotion prospects?

~ **Don't forget intangible factors:**

Personal values and beliefs e.g. would you be happy working for a tobacco-related company? A company which produces chemicals?

Self-employment – is this an option?

A boss/manager you like and respect and can learn from?

Early in their careers, people often make choices which are not good for them long term. Other people make financial choices rather than broadening their experience and skills. Take the time to make a long-term plan instead of moving job to job focusing only on the next move.

Identifying opportunities

Where do you look for a new job? Most people know the usual sources – the newspapers, job centres, recruitment agencies. But as the recruitment industry opens up, we are seeing more and more inventive ways of recruiting staff, and therefore more ways for potential candidates to find opportunities.*

** Know and use the recruitment methods available – don't be shy. But be careful – some methods will suit better than others.*

Newspapers

- ~ Always a good source – national papers for senior roles and jobs throughout the country; local papers for local jobs.
- ~ Don't forget papers such as FreeAds, etc.,

and any free 'through the door' papers in your area.

Specialist publications

- ~ Trade magazines, professional journals, etc.
- ~ Usually have an 'Appointments' or 'Vacancies' section.

Job centres

- ~ Still used by a lot of employers, but often offering less opportunities than some other sources.
- ~ Jobs go quickly.

Recruitment agencies

- ~ Some specialise in certain industries or types of work, while others carry a wide variety of jobs.
- ~ They have many vacancies they are trying to fill, and may also proactively market candidates to employers.

- ~ Registering with them can hold you 'on file' against future openings, and can take some of the work out of looking for a job.
- ~ Standards vary, and you will have to work to establish/maintain a relationship with the agency to get good results, as they often have large numbers of candidates on their books.

Employment fairs

- ~ Usually advertised in the local press.
- ~ Companies may hold fairs.
- ~ Recruitment agencies may hold them to increase their candidate pools.
- ~ Groups of employers may hold them together. For example, a recruitment agency may hold a fair and their client employers will participate, to try to attract new candidates.

Television

- ~ There is a jobs page on teletext.
- ~ Local job fairs may be advertised on teletext or local news programmes.
- ~ Vacancies listings are sometimes shown on television in the early hours of the morning as an information service.

The Internet

If there is one single factor influencing the recruitment market today, it is the Internet. Growth of the Net has led to many new ways to find work.

- ~ Recruitment websites which list vacancies – such as Fish4Jobs, TAPS, etc.
- ~ Recruitment websites which you can post your CV onto, and employers look there for candidates when they have vacancies, such as Best of the Best, Planet Recruit.
- ~ Websites which do both – e.g. Stepstone,

Monster Board, Top Jobs on the Net, Peoplebank.

- ~ Newspaper websites – most papers now have sites online which have an appointments section. Accessing the jobs this way can be quicker and easier than buying each paper daily. For example, *Telegraph, Evening Standard, Guardian*, etc.
- ~ Local government websites usually have a vacancies section.
- ~ There are sites with a theme, e.g. local authority jobs, building jobs, secretarial jobs.
- ~ Most recruitment agencies have sites, sometimes saving you the effort of going to the agency's offices.
- ~ Companies often have their own websites, which may or may not have a 'Vacancies' or 'Jobs' section, and may even have the facility of applying for jobs online.

Hints:

- 1 A search for 'vacancies' and 'jobs' will come up with many possibilities.
- 2 Be aware of the different types of site.
- 3 Most jobs can be applied for online.
- 4 This can save time and money and is a more reliable way to make sure your CV gets there in time.
- 5 But some sites have lengthy application processes, which can take more time in the long run.

Doing research and targeting employers

It is still true to say that an awful lot of vacancies never get advertised anywhere. Therefore, if you know what you want to do, and have an idea of potential employers, it may still be worth applying to them direct. The problem with this method is that it is rather like playing the Lottery. You have no idea whether they need anyone, so you will

have to send an awful lot of applications to get a result – often up to 50 contacts to get one interview. But the companies will be ones you *know* you'd like to work for, so the end result may be worth it.*

~ Make a list of companies you like from job adverts – companies often paint a good picture of themselves in an advert, and you may really like the sound of them.

~ Look at company websites. You can get a feel for the company this way.

~ Ask people! Who have they worked for, and what were they like?

~ Keep an eye on the news – who is growing? Expanding their business?

~ Are they a good company to go to?

~ Do they have jobs in your field?

~ What are their pay rates like?

~ Where is the company going in the future?

**** Be extra polite and careful – contacting companies direct is a bit of an unknown quantity. You don't know who will get your CV or how much your application will interrupt them.***

Contacting potential employers

- ~ Find out how and who to apply to. Try their website first, or look at job adverts they have placed.
- ~ Failing this, call companies and ask who to address an application to. This is usually the head of the area you wish to work in, or the Personnel/HR department. Try to get a name to write to – it looks better. An e-mail address is ideal as it will save you time.
- ~ *Always* keep it short and sweet – on the phone and in your application. They didn't ask you to contact them, so don't bother them more than necessary.
- ~ Send a *short* (one side of paper max) covering letter with a copy of your CV, geared to the company and your relevance to the type of work within it that you want to do.
- ~ Tell them you're available, and make it clear what type of work you are looking for. If you are looking for any possible vacancies, say so.

- ~ Ask them to contact you if your details are of interest.
- ~ *Read* any response. If it says don't apply again, don't. If it gives the route or method for applications (e.g. via their website, or via an agency), follow it.
- ~ Keep records so you don't keep contacting the same companies by mistake.

Summary points

- ★ Be brave enough to move at the right time, and always keep your CV up to date just in case.
- ★ Save a lot of time and energy by identifying early on what you want and what you don't want.
- ★ Use the full range of methods to find suitable opportunities.
- ★ Research employers and apply direct if you wish – but be aware this is a harder process.

2 Presenting the Positive

Employers want to know what you've done, where you did it, and what you can do for them. There is no such thing as good enough – keep trying to improve your CV.

In this chapter, four things that really matter:

- ~ **The basics of presentation**
- ~ **The basic contents**
- ~ **Chronological format**
- ~ **Functional format**

To produce a good CV, you need to make the most positive impression possible while being truthful. Giving false or misleading information may help you hide something negative on your CV, gain you an interview or even win you the job. But if discovered, it could also lead to dismissal.

A poor CV drones on and on about what you've done, when, how and why, even

making excuses for what you *didn't* do. A good one gives an accurate sketch of your skills and experience. A job-winning one convinces the reader you're right for the job. And it convinces them in the face of sometimes hundreds, even thousands of other CVs competing for their attention.

To do this, it needs to be easy to read, attractive, and no longer than two or three sides of paper.

Is this you?

- I've been working for 20 years. I can't possibly get that on to two sides!
- I'm worried I'll miss out the very thing that might land me the job!
- All CVs are boring. Let's face it, mine isn't any different, and if it was it would look odd.
- I haven't done anything especially outstanding, so how can I make it look good?
- But I like it detailed – it shows everything I've done from start to finish.

The basics of presentation

The general guidelines for producing a good-looking CV are simple:

- ~ information that grabs attention and says 'LOOK AT ME!'
- ~ good layout
- ~ the right format
- ~ interesting to look at
- ~ active descriptions
- ~ no mistakes.

It also needs to state quite clearly that you can do the job. So make sure you look at the job requirements and make reference to all of them somewhere in your CV. It may be time-consuming to keep amending it, but it's necessary to show you are right for each job you apply for.*

** They don't have time to read all of every CV – so make sure that what they read of yours makes them want to read the rest of it.*

A good layout

- ~ If printed, use good paper in white or cream. For the best impression, use quality, heavyweight paper – most stationers can advise.
- ~ Don't make the CV look cramped – keep a reasonable amount of white space and borders.
- ~ Make it easy to read.

The right layout

There are 2 main CV formats:

- ~ chronological (your career history in date order)
- ~ functional (by skills or experience).

Interesting to look at

- ~ Emphasise with bullet points, italic, bold text and capitals.
- ~ Liven the CV up, but don't go overboard. Later you will see that CVs which are *not*

going to be printed on paper, but sent electronically, need to be done *without* all these devices.

- ~ Avoid gimmicks like coloured paper, text, snazzy envelopes and photographs. Employers are interested in your work, not your imagination or hairstyle.

Active descriptions

- ~ Avoid big words.
- ~ Avoid management buzzwords.
- ~ Keep descriptions simple and clear.
- ~ Action words are best – they make it clear what you have been **doing**:

Not – responsible for cost control measures

Use – made savings of...by implementing cost controls

Not – manager of team of 5

Use – recruited, motivated, trained and

managed team of 5

Not – secretarial support for Chief Executive

Use – provided confidential, professional, secretarial support service for Chief Executive

No mistakes

Advice on proofreading comes later. Suffice it to say that errors on CVs cost people jobs.

The basic contents

Whichever format of CV you choose, you should start with one sheet of paper with basic information about yourself.

Contact details

~ **Name.**

~ **Address.**

~ **Telephone numbers**, plus mobile number if you have one. If you don't want them to

leave a message at work, add 'no messages' after the work number.

- ~ **E-mail address.** Never give a work e-mail address. This implies you use your employer's e-mail for personal purposes, and prospective employers may assume you will do the same to them!

Qualifications

- ~ **School examinations.** List them in full, with subjects if you have little or no experience. If you have work experience, just list the number of passes, saving space to write more relevant things.
- ~ **Professional qualifications.** Give the full name as well as the letters – prospective employers may not know what they mean!
- ~ **Degree or higher qualification.** Give the university or college. You don't have to give grades, but if you have a good grade, why not?
- ~ **Other qualifications.** Do not include

'other' qualifications, such as night classes, hobby-type courses, etc. unless they are relevant – for example, if you have little or no work experience, 'learning French at evening class' may indicate that you are willing and able to be trained.

~ **Failures.** Never mention any exams/courses failed.

Other skills or experience

~ Include relevant information that won't be highlighted in the main part of the CV, for example:

Cricket Club Treasurer shows accounting ability

School Governor shows responsibility, and awareness of educational issues

~ Avoid hobbies and sporting interests unless they are relevant and say something about your skills and abilities.

~ Do not include websites unless they are professional in content and relevant to the job. They will rarely help you get a job unless you are in advertising, marketing, art, design, etc.

Hobbies and interests

Omit these unless they are really relevant.

References

Never include these. Give them when asked for later. Some unscrupulous recruiters have been known to use them as possible candidates!

Type of work sought

Never write a paragraph about what you're looking for. Most employers don't care – they care about that *they're* looking for. Use the space to convince them it's you!

Summary of yourself

It's becoming common to see a short paragraph summarising yourself.*

** This information is the front page. It's like the 'blurb' on the back of a book – when you glance at it, it needs to grab your attention and persuade you to buy it and read it.*

This is what I call the 'ten second sales pitch' – the section to get the employer's attention and persuade them to read the rest of the CV. This is especially relevant if you have little or no work experience to refer to. For example:

'Management Honours graduate with practical (holiday and part-time) work experience in various manufacturing companies. Projects including managing working teams and presenting group findings to management.'

Chronological format

This is arranging your CV in date order, starting with the present and working backwards in time. Your CV shows each job you have done in turn. Arranging your CV this way tends to be preferred by most employers, so they can see your work record at a glance. A sample chronological CV may be found at the back of this book.

~ **List job title.** Where this is ambiguous or

doesn't accurately reflect your actual role, change it or explain in brackets. For example:

Not – Team Leader

Use – Leader/Manager of Administration
Team

Or – Team Leader (managing
Administration Team of 5 staff)

~ **List the employer.** Where the company has been sold, merged, taken over or changed name, show this clearly. For example:

XXX company (now YYY corporation)

~ **Give duties and achievements for each job** in active language that describes what it was you actually did. Describe achievements in terms people can easily understand, especially if your industry uses a lot of jargon/technical terms, or your experience was military. Imagine you are explaining to a small child. Then make the same information sound interesting and

impressive to an adult. Use words that make your job experience and achievements fit the job you are applying for, if possible.

~ **List dates** (to the nearest month) for each job. For example:

January 1997 – March 1999

~ **Gaps.** If you have gaps between your jobs, you can cover these by listing the year rather than month. For example:

Not January 1995 – March 1996

June 1996 – October 1998

Use January 1995 – early 1996

Early 1996 – October 1998

Use chronological format when you have:

~ a sequence of relevant jobs, moving upwards

~ relevant experience in the type of work

~ continuous work history, or work history with only short gaps.*

* *Chronological CVs are easy to read and understand. They work well for most people.*

Be warned that:

- ~ Gaps in your CV (i.e. time between jobs) will show unless you deliberately avoid this.
- ~ Periods of unemployment will be highlighted.
- ~ Moves sideways or demotions will be highlighted.
- ~ If you have no work experience or no relevant experience, this format will *not* sell you well.

Functional format

This is a useful format for situations where you don't have a track record of jobs to put down. Arrange your CV in groups of skills, experience and abilities. A sample functional CV can be found at the back of this book.

- ~ Emphasise your skills and achievements as they relate to the job in question.
- ~ Remember that other responsibilities

outside your main job – such as running clubs, social teams, managing playgroups, barrack blocks, etc. – may give you just as much relevant experience as your main job – sometimes more.

- ~ To decide what headings to use for your groupings, read the advert or job description and pick out key areas they require, then add areas to cover all your 'selling points'. For example:

Management experience

Communication skills

Budgeting

IT skills

Projects worked on

Teaching experience

Areas of responsibility

Staff supervisory experience

Courses included

Points learned

- ~ Concentrate on what you *can* offer. Don't make excuses or suggest how you can overcome what you can't offer an

employer. Never say 'willing to learn' or 'open to training'.

~ Highlight anything you have done to prepare yourself for your new career – training, research, voluntary work, etc.

Use functional format when you have:

- ~ no work experience (e.g. school or university leavers)
- ~ no relevant experience (e.g. changing jobs completely, returning to work after children, etc.)
- ~ worked freelance, consulting or self-employed
- ~ been unemployed for some time
- ~ job-hopped
- ~ only worked for one employer but had a variety of different jobs – it can make more sense than a chronological CV
- ~ something to hide on the CV (think twice –

employers aren't stupid; they may well see through this).

Be warned that:

- ~ Employers may be suspicious you have something to hide.
- ~ This will highlight the 'fit' between your skills and/or experience and the job, so if you don't know what they are looking for, it's hard to sell yourself well.

An employer isn't going to translate a CV if they don't understand the language. So write it so they can understand exactly what you have to offer.

Summary points

- ★ Make your CV say 'READ ME!!!'
- ★ Make the first page especially clear, concise and attractive.
- ★ Use the best format CV to fit your situation, and always make it fit the job.
- ★ Use language the employer will understand.

3 Avoiding any Negatives

No one has a perfect CV, but there's no need to put in a section that says 'DON'T HIRE ME!'

In this chapter, four things that really matter:

- ~ **Lack of track record**
- ~ **Lack of qualifications or education**
- ~ **Technical problems and gaps**
- ~ **Too much experience or qualifications**

Most of us have something on our CV we don't feel makes us look good. The trick isn't to hide it, and be dishonest. Instead, reduce it, or even use it to your advantage. Accentuate the positive, as seen in the last section, and tone down the negative, so it is seen as less important. Use weaknesses to your advantage by making them relevant.

Even good things can be a negative if put in a clumsy way. Too much can be as bad as too little experience. Too many qualifications

may put people off. Good skills may make people think you will grow out of the job too quickly.

On the other hand, weaknesses can be made to look interesting. Remembering that we should tailor our CV to suit the job, each weakness should be checked to ensure it shows you in the best possible light.

Is this you?

- I haven't the experience or skills for this job. There's no point trying.
- It's all very well until they see **that** on my CV, then I've blown it.
- I have nothing to hide. If they don't like it, they don't have to hire me.
- I know it's a bit dishonest, but I figure if I can get the interview, then I can explain it then, and if they like me, maybe it won't matter.
- Finding out problems is the interviewer's job. What they don't find out is their responsibility. Why should I tell them the worst, and not get the job?

Lack of track record

We don't all have a track record of relevant experience to sell us to potential employers.*

No work experience – first job

- ~ Try to get some, even if it is temporary or unpaid.
- ~ Focus on skills you have which you *could* use at work.
- ~ Refer to summer jobs, evening or weekend work, and work placements/work experience programmes you may have done.
- ~ Refer to projects and subjects studied which show you know what is required.
- ~ Present your youth as an advantage – it makes you keen to progress, willing to learn, and used to training.

** If you don't have past experience, you need to show future potential. That's what will get you the job in this situation.*

No relevant experience – changing career track

- ~ Why not try to get some experience – unpaid, part-time if necessary?
- ~ Make sure you state on the covering letter *why* you are changing career so it makes sense to the employer.
- ~ Make your reasons positive not negative.
e.g. Keen to join the IT industry due to growth potential and the challenge of new technology, which I find stimulating.
not Stale in current role, and looking for more interesting work.
- ~ Ex-military people need to phrase their experience appropriately – *not* in military words, but in simple language emphasising the skills and responsibility that were relevant.
- ~ Making your past experience sound relevant, although it was different, is paramount.

Hints

- ~ Don't focus on the job description. Focus on what skills you need to do that job.
- ~ Be open and honest. You can't hide lack of track record on your CV, so put it positively.
- ~ Use volunteer and unpaid experience if you can.
- ~ Describe coursework or projects or subjects covered in education if relevant.
- ~ Consider a functional CV format to highlight your skills as you have no track record to use. This is your only real option to make a professional looking CV.
- ~ You may need to consider taking a lesser position, or one with less desirable conditions, in order to gain experience and then try to gain a more appropriate role in, say, six months. For example, saying 'willing to work shifts or weekends' in a covering letter may open up possibilities.

Lack of qualifications or education

Awaiting qualifications

- ~ List the qualifications and state 'pending results' after them instead of the grades.

Midway through a course

- ~ List the course and when you expect to finish it, for example:

NVQ Level III in Office Administration,
completion expected September 2001

- ~ If you have an idea of likely grades, you can give them – but it is unlikely to impress – after all, anyone can predict they will do well.

Qualifications from another country

- ~ State not only the qualification, but what it is equivalent to in this country.
- ~ Make it easy for the employer. If they haven't heard of your qualification(s), they'll discount them.

No qualifications

- ~ If you studied but gained no qualifications
 - for example, if you left school without any – you could put your attendance down.
- ~ If you have work experience to present, just omit a section of education – after all, you have experience instead.

Hints

- ~ Focus on experience.*
- ~ Don't highlight what you are lacking – play it down.
- ~ Make it easy for an employer to see you have the skills even though you may not have the qualifications.
- ~ Have you considered taking some qualifications? Evening classes are available at relatively low cost, and you can take GCSEs, certificates, NVQs, etc.

** The lucky people have experience and good qualifications. If you are missing one, accentuate the other.*

Technical problems and gaps

Returning to work after a break or gap

- ~ Why did you have a break?
- ~ Do employers really need to know (remember you may have to disclose certain criminal convictions, etc.)?

Periods of unemployment

- ~ State the date you left your last job, and never leave a blank between then and now. State from that date to present and say something about what you have been doing – even if it was raising a family, travelling, etc.
- ~ List training and other activities you have been occupying yourself with. Basically, you need to reassure employers you haven't been sitting around doing nothing.
- ~ Never lie and try to hide the break unless it is very short – say, eight weeks or less. Many employers now check and you could be dismissed.

Raising a family

- ~ Having children isn't a crime. Don't hide it as if it were. For example:
1993–1996 Full-time parent

You quit your last job

- ~ This is a tricky situation, as you need to reassure employers you had a good reason, and won't do it to them!
- ~ If there has been a short gap, don't mention it yet.
- ~ State the date you left, and say something positive, for example:
left of own volition
resigned for personal reasons
immediately available
- ~ Always state you will explain in depth at interview.

Criminal records

- ~ Some criminal offences have to be disclosed if you are asked for them. But don't offer them if not asked.

- ~ Even disclosable offences may eventually become 'spent' after a certain period of time and you no longer have to mention them when asked.
- ~ Check the status of your convictions – disclosable or not, when they become spent, etc.

I was fired

- ~ Don't ever state this.
- ~ If asked at interview, you can explain then.
- ~ If it will appear on a reference, let the employer know *after* they have offered you the job but before they get the reference.
- ~ If you were fired from your last job and are now looking after a gap, simply state the date you left and 'reasons to be discussed at interview'. If the gap is short enough, don't mention it.

Hints

- ~ Cover reasons for breaks, etc. positively in your covering letter.
- ~ Be positive and unapologetic about what you *did* do during any break.
- ~ *Never* give reasons for leaving unless you have left your last job and there has been a gap long enough that you need to mention it. For past roles, never state why you left.

Don't let things stand in the way of what you can do. A lot of things are best left until later in the recruitment process, and aren't matters for the CV.

Too much experience or qualifications

It sounds strange, having **too much** experience or qualifications. But too much of anything can be daunting. Many of these problems arise when older candidates have more to show on their CV because they have

been around a lot longer.*

Age

- ~ Don't set yourself up for age discrimination. Unfortunately, it does happen.
- ~ The older you are, the more experience you have to show. Only list the last ten years or so. Head the section 'Recent Experience' so it isn't dishonest and made to look as though that were *all* your experience.
- ~ Use careful wording.
e.g. more than ten years' experience
not 26 years' experience.
- ~ The older you are, the less relevant your qualifications may be. Consider omitting them if you have a wealth of experience instead.
- ~ You do not need to put your age or date of birth on a CV.

*** Too much can be as off-putting as too little. Employers don't want to feel threatened. Word things carefully.**

~ You do not need to show the date of qualifications – if you are mature and they were taken some time ago, don't even list your education, just give a bullet point list of qualifications without dates.

Lots of short jobs

- ~ This is commonly known as job-hopping and usually regarded as a negative thing.
- ~ The only time when this isn't likely to be viewed as negative is if you have specialist skills, or have been contracting or temping.
- ~ Bundle together lots of short jobs to make a meaningful period of time, for example: administrative work, various companies
- ~ Leave out some small entries if they're less than, say, a month and wouldn't be missed.
- ~ Combine several jobs under one heading, for example:
residential care worker, ABC, DEG, GHI and JKL companies.

Being overqualified

- ~ Give your reasons for wanting the job in the covering letter, quite clearly and positively.
- ~ Never say you've resorted to a lesser job in lieu of a better one – even if it's true. Find a positive slant.
- ~ Let the employer know you know you're overqualified without being patronising.
- ~ You could 'play down' your experience so it looks less as though you *are* overqualified. But this will preclude you from any other, more appropriate vacancies they might have coming up.
- ~ You certainly don't have to list all your qualifications if it isn't to your advantage.

Worked at one company for a very long time

- ~ List each role you have held separately, as if you had moved companies with each new job.

- ~ Emphasise outside experience and knowledge where possible.
- ~ Emphasise job progression.
- ~ Explain in your covering letter why you are looking to move *now* after all this time.

Summary points

- ★ Emphasise what you *do* have going for you, and play down what you haven't.
- ★ Never try to create an academic background – just work with what little you have.
- ★ A gap in your employment history isn't the end of the world – if you explain it so employers aren't suspicious.
- ★ If you have too much experience or are overqualified, play things down so as not to threaten employers.

4 The Covering Letter

*A good covering letter will literally **cover** any problem areas and complex issues and explain them – thus making the CV more likely to be read.*

In this chapter, four things that really matter:

- ~ **The basics**
- ~ **Getting noticed**
- ~ **Targeting the company**
- ~ **Disclosing your salary**

Covering letters introduce your CV. They are there to induce the reader to go on and read the CV, and to explain away any 'difficult' areas in the CV that might otherwise be off-putting.

They tell the reader why you want the job, why they should interview you, and that you are available. A good covering letter will make the impression that your CV is a good

one, and that you are therefore a good candidate. It allows you the room to explain anything that isn't obvious, that needs clarification, etc.

If the CV is a sales pitch for yourself, the covering letter is a sales pitch for the CV. The CV is a tool to get you an interview, and the covering letter a tool to get the CV noticed for the right reasons. Preparing a good, personalised covering letter takes time, but it is a worthwhile investment.

Is this you?

- I never know what to say – surely the CV should be enough?
- I send my CV by e-mail mainly. Surely I don't need a covering letter then – I usually just say it's attached.
- If I add a covering letter that's another page. I've heard you should make your applications as short as possible. So which is it?
- I don't like writing covering letters – they seem too friendly and I don't even know the person. Surely I should be more professional until we've at least met?

The basics

The basics of any covering letter are the same as any other important letter. Just bear in mind the importance of this particular letter: if you get it right, you might get a CV looked at that wouldn't otherwise have been. If you get it wrong, you may stop your excellent CV from being considered.*

Covering letters are especially important if you are applying speculatively to a company, i.e. not in response to a known vacancy. In this instance, they have to clearly state why you're writing to them.

~ **Include your name, address and contact numbers.** Even if they are on the CV.

~ **Address personally.** Find out the right person's name, how to spell it, and then use it. Try never to address a covering letter to a job title.

~ **Follow instructions.** If an advertisement says write to a particular person, do it. If it

* *Keep the covering letter simple, short and looking good.*

says quote a reference, quote it in the title of your letter. Some organisations may have recruitment policies that disqualify anyone not following the instructions given.

- ~ **Choose a good title.** If there is a reference to be quoted, use the job title and the reference, for example:

Senior buyer – Reference QC4758

If there is no reference, use the job title and the place and date you found the advertisement, for example:

Senior Accounts Clerk – Evening
Standard 17 January 2000

- ~ **Make it obvious.** Put the title in bold, underlining if it looks right. The recruiter may have several different vacancies and needs to quickly see which you are applying for.
- ~ **Be professional.** Use good quality paper and neat typeface. If sending an e-mail

application, keep it businesslike.

- ~ **Stick to the point.** The letter is to introduce the main thing – your CV. It should never be longer than one side of paper.
- ~ **Avoid gimmicks.** Coloured paper, fancy lettering, gold signatures, etc. may all get you noticed, but for the wrong reasons.
- ~ **If you really want to make a quality impression,** use an A4 card-backed envelope. This prevents your letter and CV from being folded or creased in the post, and it will arrive in as perfect condition as it is sent.
- ~ **Avoid unavailability.** Try not to state when you *aren't* available for interview – unless you will be away some time, for example, on holiday. Employers like to see you at their convenience, not yours! If they want to see you, you can discuss when you can and can't make it at that stage.

~ **Write well.** Get help if necessary. Short words, short sentences, short paragraphs, good English. Avoid jargon.

~ **Refer to the CV.** After all, the idea is to get them to read it...

Getting noticed

The basics are all very well, but how do you decide what else to put in a covering letter? How do you make an impression? Remember, there may be hundreds of applications arriving with yours, so how do you make yours one of ones selected?

~ **Show interest.** It's surprising how many covering letters don't say they want the job. Show you're interested.

e.g. I was extremely interested to see your advertisement for the above position.

or I think this would be an exciting opportunity.

~ **Clear up problem areas.** Clear up anything in the CV that is ambiguous, or needs explaining, clearly and concisely. Don't be apologetic.

~ **Put yourself forward.** Don't be shy. If you can, pick out some skills or experience they are looking for that you have, and mention it here. Give them a reason to choose you over other candidates.

e.g. I have three years' experience in a similar role, and am now ready for the greater responsibility offered by this post.

~ **Give a reason for applying.**

e.g. I have been interested in technology for some time, and would welcome an opportunity to move into a more progressive environment.

~ **Flatter them – but carefully.** There's nothing wrong with a little flattery – so long as you don't overdo it. Mention things you like about their company if relevant.

e.g. I have always been interested in your innovative marketing, and would like to join a team working with such success in developing new ideas.

~ **Don't grovel.** It's surprising how many candidates adopt a 'please, please consider me, if it's not too much trouble' attitude. It makes you look as if you are desperate for the job, and lacking in confidence. Take the position that you want the job, you're right for it, and they *should* be looking at you. Be confident enough that it shows.

~ **Don't repeat the CV.** Give *new* information. The covering letter is an opportunity to show 'soft skills' that may not come across in your CV, such as interpersonal skills, teamwork, maturity, etc.

Your covering letter may not even be read, but it's a good chance to try to get yourself noticed. Anyone can write a 'standard' covering letter, copied from a book. Yours

should make an impression.

Targeting the company

In order to get noticed, you need to know something about the company. You will have learned something from the advertisement if you are responding to one. You will also need to do some research into the company – from the Internet, recruitment agencies, etc. The name of the game is to say not just ‘I read your advert’ but that I know who you are, what you do, and I’d like to be part of the team. I have what you want, and I’d like to join you.

Here are some hints as to how to find out about a company that has a vacancy you would like to apply for.

Finding out information

- ~ Look for other advertisements they may have, which may say more about them. Add together the images gained to get a picture of the company.

- ~ Search on the Internet for their website.
- ~ Search the Internet for their company listed on other websites, e.g. recruitment agency sites, job boards, etc.
- ~ Look through their company literature – they may send you some if you call and ask them.
- ~ Ask people if they know anyone who works there and then talk to them.
- ~ Check business journals and papers.
- ~ Phone recruitment agencies and ask if they deal with the company. If you find one that does, say you might be interested in making a move to join that company, and ask what they can tell you about the company and any vacancies.

How to target your letter

- ~ **News.** Refer to any recent news, e.g. office relocation, a product launch, a merger, new advertising.

~ **What they do.** Refer to what they do, to show you understand what the company is about.

~ **Why them?** Tell them why you like the idea of working for them rather than one of their competitors (no need to mention names).

e.g. Your products are more user-friendly than others available.

or Your reputation as a leading developer within the industry...

~ **Match your skills and CV to their requirements.** If you know they are a young, growing company, make yourself sound keen and enthusiastic. If you know they are an established family firm, sound mature and professional.

~ **People you know.** Now, this is a matter for careful thought. Referring to people you know at the company may be a good thing, or it may cause resentment if the recruiter thinks you are trying to use an

unfair advantage. How would you feel if you were recruiting someone to work with you, and an applicant said they knew your boss? You might feel obliged to see that person, but might feel badly that you were forced to. If, on the other hand, you heard about the job in conversation with someone, you might want to refer to this. If you have a contact who has perhaps worked with you before and would be willing to speak highly of you, it is sometimes worth mentioning that they suggested you apply. But always let them know you are doing this, and check they are happy for you to do so.

e.g. I met Mr Dawson at a conference last week, and he mentioned that you might be looking for a new Warehouse Supervisor. As he knows the standard of my work from a previous mutual employer, he suggested I might make a suitable applicant, so I enclose my CV for your consideration.

Disclosing your salary

It is virtually never in your best interests to disclose your salary – except if the role you are applying may pay less than you currently earn or require, and so you can avoid going through pointless interviews.

Some employers ask for ‘full salary history’. This is usually irrelevant, and this is one exception to the ‘follow instructions’ rule.*

Only give your current or last salary at most.

- ~ Never disclose salary unless asked for it.
- ~ If asked for it, it goes in the covering letter, not the CV.
- ~ Only state current salary, or last salary if not currently working.
- ~ You don’t have to give it just because they ask for it!

The following advice is given assuming you have been asked to state your current salary, and feel that you should do so.

* *Giving your salary is almost never to your advantage. Unscrupulous employers may use it to reduce the salary for the role, or even misjudge your capabilities – or not bother to judge them at all.*

Salary is high compared to the role you seek

You would think an employer would be lucky to get someone willing to take a pay cut to work for them, wouldn't you? After all, wouldn't it be ideal to get someone just right for the job, but better than necessary? No. It often makes employers suspicious, particularly as they may think you are only taking the role as a temporary measure, and will move on as soon as something better comes up. They may also think you will have unrealistic promotion expectations.

Ways around the problem:

- ~ If willing to take a pay cut, say so.
- ~ Explain why.
- ~ Add a reassuring sentence, to ensure they know that this would not just be a 'stop gap' and that you would stay in the role.
- ~ List the salary in as 'played down' a form as you can – just list basic salary, without bonuses, overtime, etc. and don't mention

any extra cash or benefits you get.

~ Omit the salary – although you run the risk of your application being discounted, most employers won't do this. If you are sending out a number of applications, why not try it?

Salary is low compared to the role you seek

Nowadays, there is an expectation that we will better ourselves when we change jobs. So employers typically expect to see someone looking for a modest salary increase. But what if your salary is **far** lower than that of the role you are applying for?

It shouldn't matter, really, but it can put employers off. They may think you are actually not up to the role, or that you are trying to make a big 'step up'. Unfortunately, they may discount your application if there is too big a gap, and not read the CV to discover that you *are* a good candidate.

Ways round the problem:

~ Explain! If your role was a training role, or

you were promised a pay rise which never materialised, consider whether a simple honest explanation would be a good idea.

~ Add a reassuring sentence to ensure they know you are capable.

e.g. Although my current role is less well remunerated, my experience to date makes me well prepared for a role such as this, and very capable of carrying out your stated requirements.

~ List the salary in as 'played up' a form as you can – never list basic salary, you could include bonuses and overtime. Don't lie, but make the figures sound better.

~ List package rather than salary. This will make the number larger.

~ Don't list the salary, in case it puts them off your CV. If you have to, give the salary at the bottom of your CV on the last page. They will have read your CV and judged

your suitability before they come to it.

~ Omit the salary – altogether.

Summary points

- ★ Write a professional looking covering letter to enhance your CV, not repeat it.
- ★ Make sure it contains enough to get your application noticed – the object is to get the CV read and given full consideration.
- ★ Let them know you are aware of the company, what it does and how you can fit in.
- ★ Never give your salary unless forced to.

5 Checking and Sending the CV

Once the CV is right, and the covering letter is good, you have to get them to the employer in a format they can easily work with.

In this chapter, four things that really matter:

- ~ Tailoring everything to the job
- ~ Proofreading
- ~ Electronic CVs
- ~ Faxing/scanning CVs

Now that you have a good CV and covering letter, you have to get them to the employer. It's no longer as simple as sending them by post – many applications can be sent by e-mail, and some employers require this.

Making the finished product perfect, before it leaves your hands, is essential. But **how** you send it is also important in today's electronic world. Documents to be emailed need

preparation before sending, to ensure they can be opened and read when they arrive. Faxes need similar treatment.

You can't really rely on a kind employer calling you, or replying to tell you if your CV has arrived but they can't read it. Some of them are just too busy, with hundreds of applications coming in weekly in large companies. Careful preparation can make sure your precious details arrive safely, and can be read and judged on their own merits.

Is this you?

- I usually just send my CV by post – with the covering letter of course. Do I really need to change now? • It'll cost be a fortune to get fancy card envelopes for all my applications.
- If they give an e-mail address, surely I can just e-mail the CV as an attachment? • Why do they have to make it so complicated? If it takes that long to apply, I could send out three normal letters and CVs in the same time.

Tailoring everything to the job

Your final check should be that you have tailored everything to the job.*

- ~ Show you know about the company.
- ~ Show your skills and/or experience are relevant.
- ~ Specify somewhere that you fit all their requirements.
- ~ Address everything to the right person.
- ~ Follow their recruitment process – stick to their instructions.

Proofreading

Essential factual checks

- ~ Contact information – correct, and up to date.
- ~ Dates – correct for previous roles.

** Anyone can send an off-the-shelf CV. Make yours personal from you to them.*

~ Contact name *and* address of the recipient
– correct.

~ Company – spelled correctly.

Detail checks

~ Check spelling.

~ Check punctuation.

~ Check for sense – spellcheckers don't pick up wrong words that are spelled correctly; for example, 'check smelling' would be just as acceptable to a spellchecker as 'check spelling'.

~ Check grammar – most computer packages have a grammar checker. It may even improve your English in the process!

~ Check spacing is consistent between headings.

~ CV layout – good spacing, etc.

~ Active language.

~ Never fold the CV unless absolutely necessary.

Check for quality of information

~ Describe your accomplishments as well as your duties.

~ Check you've told them how you fit their requirements.

~ No negatives used.

~ Highlight key points if necessary.

~ Honest information.

~ No salary information unless essential.

Get help

~ Find someone else to check your work once it's completed.

~ Get help with grammar if necessary.

~ Get input on layout – do they like it? Improvements?

The CV and covering letter are two documents that can literally change your life. They could have more impact on your finances than almost anything else. So invest time in making sure they are as good as possible.

Electronic CVs

If you have an e-mail address to send an application to, it can save you time and money – and prevent postal services delaying, losing or crumpling your CV.

But there is little point in using e-mail if your beautifully crafted CV comes out as sheets of garbage at the other end. Highlighting, bold type, paragraphing – all may get distorted and make your CV hard to read.

To impress employers using e-mail or the Internet for recruitment, send them the CV in a format they can read, which will come out at the other end as you intended. The two main formats are ASCII format and RTF format. Use ASCII format if the format style of

the CV is not important. If you want to preserve some of the style, use RTF format.

For absolute certainty, you could send an e-mail with two versions of the CV as attachments, one RTF and one ASCII, stating you have done this for ease of reference.

RTF format CVs

These can be viewed by most word processors. They retain paragraphs, page formatting, and the physical appearance of the document.

- ~ Save the CV as a rich text file (RTF format).
 - ~ Send the CV as an attachment, the covering letter as the e-mail text.
 - ~ Say in the e-mail that your attachment is RTF format – these can be reliably read by most word processors.
 - ~ For safety, cut and paste your CV into the bottom of the e-mail itself.
- e.g. In case you have any difficulty opening or reading my attachment, I

have pasted a copy of the text of my CV at the bottom of this e-mail.

ASCII format CVs

ASCII files are text only files which are universally recognisable. They contain punctuation, spaces, etc., but no formatting information. They are used for two main reasons. Firstly, they can be used by non-PC machines such as Macintoshes or UNIX workstations. Secondly, they can easily be saved into an electronic database for searching (see later).

- ~ Check the CV has only 6.5 inches of text per line. This will prevent 'scrolling' of text onto new lines, which looks messy.
- ~ Use courier typeface – ASCII files usually display using this particular type, so it will help you see your CV as it will come out at the other end.
- ~ Remove all formatting – bullets, underlining, italics, bold, quotation marks, etc.

- ~ Asterisks, plus signs and minus signs do not get changed in transmission if you *must* use emphasis.
- ~ Save the CV as ASCII format.
- ~ Attach the file as a 'text only' file to send.
- ~ State in the e-mail that your attachment is in ASCII format.

Don't let things stand in the way of your CV being received and used. You need to understand the technology involved just well enough to manipulate it so your work arrives in as good a condition as it was sent.

Faxing/scanning CVs

CVs which are to be **faxed** need special handling. Certain things make it hard to read faxed CVs:

- ~ any colour but white paper
- ~ non-black text

~ italics

~ underlining

~ small type (never use less than 11 point)

~ lack of large margins around the edge of each page.

As hundreds of companies are beginning to use technology to assist with their recruitment, they are starting to store candidate CVs electronically, which means **scanning** in their CVs. You may lose out – if a company has to ask you to re-send your CV, the job may already be filled by the time you reply. Get it right first time.

The same rules apply to **scannable CVs** as faxes. But you should also avoid:

~ indentations

~ centred text

~ columns

~ tables

~ non-‘sans serif’ fonts.

Scanned CVs are usually used for **electronic searching** – the company enters keywords of skills and experience they are looking for, and computer programs assess how good a match you are with the job. They then sort candidates and prioritise your application compared to others. If you haven’t tailored your CV to the advertised job, you could lose out. It is essential to make sure you have included all the keywords in the advertisement or job description on your CV, so that the program will find them.

CV scanning programs like **nouns** – including noun forms of verbs: purchasing, supervising, administering, interviewing, etc. Use them. You may even need to reword your CV to make allowances for this – add more nouns if necessary.

As more companies start to use technology to fill their vacancies, you need to make your CV usable by that technology, to get your CV considered fully for each appropriate role.

Summary points

- ★ Make sure you know enough about the company to know you want to work there, and let them know you have researched this.
- ★ Check your CV as many times as necessary to get perfection. Then get someone else to check it.
- ★ Understand technology well enough to make sure you can safely send your CV electronically to recruiters.
- ★ If your CV is to be faxed or scanned, you will need to allow extra time for amendments to prepare it.

Appendix: Examples

On the following pages you will find examples of a covering letter, a chronological CV and a functional CV. They are not perfect, but they do show best practice.

Josie M Davies
8 Leaves Road
Treetown
Woods
W00 0DY

Mrs J Prestwick
Recruitment Manager
ABC Printing Company
Treetown
Woods
W00 9BB

Dear Mrs Prestwick

Vacancy JP/422 – Administrator, Printing Department
Evening Newspaper 21/1/00

I was interested to read your advertisement for the above position. I have been looking for a similar role in a growing organisation to enhance my experience.

I feel I have much to offer, and hope that after considering my enclosed CV, you will agree that my experience is both relevant and adequate. For example, I have used all computer packages listed as requirements for the job.

In particular, my current role at Company A is similar enough to have provided an excellent background and experience in audit trails and office administration, but leaves me keen to progress to a larger team and organisation.

Your role has a focus on quality audit and ABC tracking, which is always a requirement in the printing industry, but your expansion plans mean that cost control and quality issues will be a particular focus for you over the coming year. I have a great deal of experience in both areas and so would be excited at the prospect of joining your team at such a time.

I look forward to hearing from you, and do hope you find my CV to be of interest.

Yours sincerely

Josie Davies, Mrs

Example of a covering letter

KATHERINE JACOB

42 Oaktree Avenue, Bedlam, Cheshire CC3 333 Mobile: 0976 000000

PROFILE:

A multi-skilled 'all-rounder' with excellent interpersonal and administrative skills, seeking an administration role.

KEY SKILLS/EXPERIENCE:

- Efficient administration, combined with attention to detail – ensuring the smooth running of a Company Training Division
- Excellent co-ordination skills – e.g. managed the successful completion of nation-wide training projects
- Strong interpersonal and client care skills – e.g. awarded internal company 'Client Care' Award

IT SKILL SET:

- Windows, Microsoft Word, Excel, PowerPoint, Lotus Notes, cc:Mail, MS Mail, the Internet

EDUCATION:

St Joseph's School **1978–1985**

- O Levels: 11
- A Levels: English (A), History (A), Economics (B)

Devon University, BA (Hons) Geography **1986–1990**

EMPLOYMENT DETAILS:

Various temporary short-term assignments

Oct 1999 – Present

Secretary/Administrator (Temporary)

Training Company plc

Training Account Manager

Mar 1998 – Oct 1999

- Identified/developed training opportunities within existing company Accounts
- Responsible for all training issues including the pricing of training and its successful delivery
- Managed nation-wide tailored training programmes
- Liaised with 3rd Party suppliers to secure preferential rates for customers while maximising margin
- Exceeded each Quarter Sales Target

Complc Computer Training

Account Manager

June 1996 – Mar 1998

- Established and developed client base for new Manchester training centre
- Identified/sold scheduled and tailored IT training solutions to businesses
- Managed contracts for 50 staff, involving close liaison with other Departments

Independent Computer Solutions

Training Administrator

May 1991 – June 1996

- Organised courses, trainers and facilities for all scheduled, company specific and onsite training projects
- Established administrative systems to maximise departmental efficiency
- Organised marketing activities, including direct mail campaigns, writing promotional materials
- Monitored performance against targets

CURRICULUM VITAE – MICHAEL EVANS

MICHAEL (MIKE) EVANS

99 Leaves Road
Treetown
Woods
W00 0DY

Home phone. 01234 098 7654
Mobile No. 07999 123123

E-mail Mike@emailprovider.co.uk

PERSONAL PROFILE

A lively, enthusiastic and confident graduate with excellent interpersonal, organisational and analytical skills. Keen to progress and develop a career in management – on a graduate or management training programme. Self-assured with the ability to work as a team member or under own initiative. Able to work conscientiously, methodically, and to strict deadlines, maintaining high standards of work.

EDUCATION

1990–1997 **Highmere Comprehensive, Treetown**
GCSEs x 10 subjects
A levels in French, Spanish and Geography

Treetown University

BA in Interpreting and Translation (French and Spanish) – Grade 2.1

CORE SKILLS

IT Skills

Windows 95 and 98, Lotus 123, Excel

Communication Skills

Good natural communicator, practised in giving presentations. Communication abilities were developed and tested at University through the degree course. For example, concise relaying of information between parties requiring translation has facilitated development of high standards of communication and verbal reasoning. Liaison, conferencing and simultaneous interpreting have involved the ability to maintain calm at all times, plus the ability to think quickly and rationally under pressure.

Organisational Skills

During the year spent working abroad as part of the degree course, organisation skills were tested. There was a requirement to write a dissertation in both languages, which made organisation essential. Carrying out detailed research was necessary. In particular, this research involved arranging, preparing and conducting interviews with individuals with experience relevant to the topic. It was also necessary to ensure interviews yielded useful information. Other factors, such as arrangement of my own travel and accommodation arrangements, developed my confidence during this time.

Interpersonal Skills

During the year abroad, time was spent teaching English in France. This tested my ability to relate to people. Finding new and interesting ways to encourage student participation in classes demanded creativity and a friendly, approachable manner. Vacation employment in the last three years has required a more formal professional approach, by contrast. Saturday work at SSS Newsagents also necessitated a high degree of teamwork and interpersonal transactions, which developed my skills in this area.

WORK EXPERIENCE

1998 – Present **Chartered Accountants Company, Treetown**
Vacation employment

Duties included receptionist, word processing, correspondence and preliminary work preparing financial accounts. Some involvement with clients.

1991–1996 **SSS Newsagents, Treetown**
Saturday Sales Assistant

Duties included selling, till operation, customer service, dealing with suppliers and other branches.

Mrs Jill Godwin
8 Acremead
Devonshire
TN5 8BB

J D Evans
Head of Administration
RJJ Bank
15 High Street
London
EC89 5JJ

1 March 200X

Dear Sir

Application – Secretarial Work

I have recently returned from a year's visit to the USA, and am looking for a suitable secretarial opportunity. I have enclosed my CV for your attention, and would hope that you find my details of interest.

My previous work in London was not in banking, but I am confident that my secretarial skills are appropriate to a banking environment, as my last role at JD Wills and Partners (a law firm) was as team secretary to a small team of partners working with banking clients.

Owing to my circumstances, I am available immediately, and would be delighted to discuss my CV with you, should you think this would be helpful.

I look forward to hearing from you.

Yours sincerely

Jill Godwin, Mrs

JILL GODWIN

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EDUCATION

James Street Comprehensive
1968–1973

3 A levels
11 O levels

Gordonwell College, Rotherhampton
1973–1974

Secretarial Diploma
Typing speed, 80 wpm
Shorthand

EMPLOYMENT HISTORY

Nov 1999 – Accompanied husband to USA on business
Jan 2001

Jan 1992 – **JD Wills and Partners – Team Secretary, banking team**

Oct 1999

- Working with 6 partners in banking team
- Organising meetings, diary management, client liaison, etc.
- Full organisation of client functions, presentations, and associated event management
- Preparation of all client documentation, including reports and detailed summaries of discussions
- Active member of firm's social committee

July 1987 – Full-time parent (three children)
Jan 1992

Oct 1983 **Evans Associates – Secretary to Finance Manager**

July 1987

- Full secretarial support to Finance Manager of busy engineering company headquarters
- Handling all correspondence
- Assistance in preparation of management reports, annual report etc.
- Supervisor of headquarters receptionist

March 1979

Oct 1983

J P Publishing – *Typing Pool Supervisor*

- Joined typing pool and was promoted to supervisor in 1981
- Management of all workloads
- Supervision of 4 typing pool staff
- Arrangement of temporary cover for sickness absence etc.
- Provision of temporary cover for reception and management PAs

Oct 1974

March 1979

Silverwood Management Consultants – *Secretary receptionist*

- Receptionist, meeting and greeting all clients and visitors
- Secretarial support to senior managers
- Deputising for PAs of senior management team during holidays/sickness
- Handling all mail in and out, plus all couriers, deliveries etc.

Example of a chronological CV with gaps (2 of 2)

NAME: John Manors

AGE: 58

EDUCATION:

1955 – 1960 Treeborough Technical College
Accountancy and Financial Management course

CAREER SUMMARY:

Apr 1997 – to date **INDEPENDENT FINANCE – *Financial Consultant***

Duties:

- Responsible for setting up accounting systems
- Checking all transactions, interest and cash balances

Jan 1991 – Mar 1997 **FYR LTD – *Chief Finance Officer***

Duties:

- Set up company on behalf of parent company
- Responsible for arranging all financial registrations, finding premises, arranging lease, installing computer systems and purchasing/leasing all equipment necessary to run a new company
- Completely 'hands on' role responsible for every function of a financial nature
- All accounting functions
- Responsible for monthly reporting, production of daily/monthly/annual reports
- Liaison with clients, reconciliation and payments where necessary
- Payment to all suppliers
- Management team member for company staff of 19

1985 – 1991

INDUSTRIAL PLUMBING CO – *Management Accountant*

Duties:

- Production of daily/weekly/monthly reports
- Production of daily profit and loss accounts for London, Bristol and Leeds profit centres
- Balancing of financial controls
- Authorisation and release of all company payments via electronic banking systems
- Reporting over limits to the Credit Director

1978 – 1991

E & F LTD

Position:

Operations Manager

Duties:

- Responsible for the direct reporting to the treasurer for all financial transactions
- Management of 3 staff producing daily reconciliations

1960 – 1978

VARIOUS ROLES

- Management and accounting positions