**Webinar Script – Why is a good CV important and how do I create one?**

Hi everyone, welcome to ITonlinelearning’s first career coaching webinar, we’re glad to have you all here. Today we are going to be discussing what a CV is, why it’s important and how you can create one according to your industry standards. During the webinar, please feel free to comment questions as we’re going. I will address any questions that are still unanswered at the end. Now, let’s get into it.

**First off, what’s a CV?** Obviously, we all know what a CV is and a bit about what it should include or what it is. An important note to raise, however, is that CV stands for Curriculum Vitae, which actually translates to “the course of one’s life” from Latin, ergot, your CV should be a document that outlines your life in a professional sense related to the experience, skills, education and qualifications you have.

Now that we know what a CV is, it’s important to know **why having a good CV is important**. Not only does a good CV help you get a job that you are interested in, but also give you a chance to show potential employers or hiring managers your biggest achievements, greatest career highlights and educational aptitude. At its core, a CV helps you make a good impression on a prospective employer.

We’ve covered the basics of the CV, but another title that pops up regularly for **a CV** is **a résumé**. I thought it might be beneficial to address **the key differences** between the two. As we mentioned earlier, a CV is literally the course of your life. A résumé, derived from French, means ‘summary’. While they are both documents that you use to apply for positions, detailing your experience and your skills, the CV is considerably longer or more comprehensive than a résumé which is a short summary of the same. It’s almost like taking a look at a little tub of multivitamins – the front will emphasise the major components of what vitamins are in the pills or what benefits it has, but if you turn that around and look at the back, you’ll see each of the vitamins with their minerals and other components that make up the product. Neither one is more correct than the other – one is simply concise, and the other is more thorough.

**Which one do we use the UK?** In order to address this, we need to first discuss the Applicant Tracking System or the ATS. For those who may not be familiar with this, the ATS is a software that manages recruiting and hiring processes by organising the information of applicants into a readable and searchable format. It’s almost like a filing system, but it’s advanced to a degree. See, the ATS recommends applicants for positions, removes people from long- and short-lists and might do more comprehensive reviews of the candidate depending on the role being applied to. The way the ATS does this is through AI software that identifies relevant key words. 98.2% of Fortune500 companies use an ATS and 24% of recruitment agencies (with less than 10 employees) use an ATS as well.

In order to maximise your chances of securing an interview, you would need to highlight as many relevant key words as possible and that is why we would use a CV instead of the alternative, shorter résumé.

Now for what everyone has been waiting for – **what does a good CV look like?** Well, there are several factors that make up a good CV. A few tips to bear in mind before we start regarding structure: do not use strange fonts or a huge variety of different fonts, stay away from extensive images or pictures and graphs and, lastly, avoid functions that are easily disturbed when using a different version of Word. Additionally, it is a good idea to stay away from adding a picture of yourself to your CV as it creates space for bias, whether conscious or unconscious, about age, gender, race and so on.

Let’s start at the top and work our way down. This CV will be a sample from a previous candidate but it has been remastered from the format we use – it only contains similar content. This candidate went from being a Crew Member at McDonalds to being a Continuous Improvement Coordinator but was offered a total of 3 positions within 2 months of having her redrafted CV.

On first glance, the main aspects we want are for your name to really stand out and we want the format to be as easy on the eye as possible. What I mean by this is that there needs to be some white space. Even if your CV contains all the right key words and makes it through to the recruiter, it’s likely they won’t spend too much time even glancing at your name if there is not enough negative space. Also, ensure your CV does not exceed 2 pages for the same reason. More than 3 pages, unless all 3 pages contain incredibly relevant and necessary information, can be detrimental to your application.

Ideally, you would want to use some **space at the top of your CV** to highlight any relevant information. This would depend on whether you want to make a career change or remain in your current industry. For example, this CV is aimed at securing positions within Project Management and so the roles Jane is qualified to carry out are listed below her name. If it were my CV, I might say something like Recruitment Advisor | Qualified Psychological Counsellor.

Next are the **contact details** – these should be clear, concise and accurate. One point I would like to raise is that it is not necessary at all for you to include your full address on anything, including your CV. This is applicable at least until you secure an offer of employment.

Onto your **Profile** section. This is also called your career summary/career objective. As we can deduce from these titles, it’s a profile or summary of you as a professional. This needs to be written in the third person because it’s more professional and it’s easier for the ATS to match up the job description. I would recommend using the following format when constructing your profile –

**First sentence –**

Three adjectives + your experience or something you are known for in your role.

**Second sentence –**

Additional skills and characteristics you can highlight with demonstrable experience.

**Third sentence –**

Relevant qualifications and what you plan to do with them.

**Fourth sentence –**

What kind of company you want to work for and what their values, mission or goal is.

This is where you have to determine whether you are going for a new role in a new industry or sticking to your current role and industry. If you are going for a new role, you would then want to list your Certifications, Education and Skills followed by your Work Experience. We do this so that your relevant qualifications can be seen first in the initial glance the recruiter will take at your CV. If you are looking at staying in your current industry and your education is perhaps not as relevant as your experience, this would be where you add your work experience followed by your Certifications, Skills and Education.

A key tip for your **certifications, education and work experience** is to put them all in reverse chronological order. Why is that? Well, your prospective employer likely wants to know what role you are currently in or what your most recently acquired skills are. Your interviewer likely wishes to know what your current experience and skills are – in other words, they would want a current snapshot of you as a professional, not who you were or what you did 5, 10 or 20 years ago.

The certifications, education and training are all quite straightforward, ensure you list the date you obtained each with the institution and the official title of your qualification. Due to the ATS, I strongly advise that you expand on any acronyms as well as the full title. For example, instead of just having “BA”, say “Bachelor of Arts (BA)”.

Your **skills** are one of the most vital aspects of your CV and I would hazard a guess at saying it’s the most important part, especially if you are making a career change. This is where you can incorporate keywords from your recently acquired courses or certifications to make your CV consistent with job descriptions across the industry. There are three main sections you can split your skills into, namely hard, soft and technical. Hard skills are skills that can be measured, so to speak. For example, mathematical ability – you can be given a test to prove it. In other words, if you have a qualification, this could be a hard skill. If you have completed a course in PRINCE2, you can use Project Management as a hard skill. Soft skills are characteristics, traits and attributes that make you who you are in a personal capacity. These can usually not be measured, for example, organisation, teamwork, being analytical, having a methodical approach and so on. Technical skills will include any programmes you are familiar with, like MS Office, Sage, programming languages, Adobe packages, CRM Systems and so on.

Next, we have **Work Experience**. Start with your current or most recent position, listing the dates to and from, official role title and the company name. Expand on your duties and responsibilities, ensuring you make use of action words like spearheaded, facilitated, expedited, delivered, designed, developed and maintained – as you might have noticed, these are all in the past tense. This is to maintain a sense of consistency throughout your CV. Stay away from saying things like “Responsible for” and “Ensured”. Focus on everything you brought into the role. If there are key achievements you would like to highlight, you can do so below the job description for each role.

We have found that two to three job descriptions can fit onto a typical CV depending on the additional information included. Your most recent job description should be the longest, unless you are looking to highlight something you did before your current/most recent job. The second and third job descriptions should be half the size or less than half the size of the first.

Key achievements can be reserved for anything that involves quantitative data, for example, specific time frames, percentages, amounts of money and so forth. The more specific and data-driven this is, the better your chances are of securing an interview.

Now let’s say you’ve done two or three job descriptions and you don’t have any space for the two jobs you had 10 years ago. We advise adding a small section that says Prior Experience Available Upon Request. It is unlikely that you will be required to provide this additional information, however, you can also expand on it if there is something in particular you would like to highlight.

**Volunteering** is a completely optional part of the CV. It is incredibly beneficial for graduates, individuals with very little work experience or for those looking to secure positions within the charity, volunteering and non-profit sectors.

The reason **hobbies and interests** are included is because it adds a personal touch to your CV and may even be a good talking point for the interviewer. It is not worth it to add hobbies to a CV if there are going to be generic, for example, reading books. If you enjoy reading books, that’s great, but what kinds of books? Who is your favourite author?

**Languages** are the most underrated section of a CV because many people who do not speak a language native to the UK assume it is not relevant. This couldn’t be more wrong! Being able to speak more than one language, even if you are not fluent in it, shows a dedication to communicating across different cultures and communities.

Lastly, with **references**, we advise to only mention that they are available upon request. You are going to be submitting your CV on tons of different job boards to different people and different systems – we really don’t want your manager from 4 years ago to start getting emails or phone calls about their car insurance. Your references should only be presented to legitimate individuals and organisations, on request, in the process of either interviewing or hiring.

A few **additional pieces of information** you can include on your CV are professional memberships, career highlights, volunteering, hobbies and interests.

In this webinar, we have covered a career changer’s CV. This is what a ‘normal’ or non-career changer CV might look like, depending on both experience and preference. As you can see, the main focus is on work experience followed by certifications, education and skills. This is because John, the candidate in question, already has the experience to apply for the roles he is interested in. This CV has also been adapted to ensure no details about the candidate have been included, but it would be noteworthy to mention that our candidate with the alias John Doe has recently been promoted to ICT Security Lead.

The most important thing to remember when creating an effective CV is that it needs to reflect you. Ensure that you review your CV at least twice once you have created it and then ask that really smart friend or family member to review it, guaranteeing there are no grammatical errors.

Thank you to everyone for joining! Before we close off, I’m going to take a few moments to answer questions you might have so please feel free to take the opportunity to share them with us.

In about two weeks we are going to be doing another webinar on Cover Letters – what they are, why they are important and how to create one. I hope to see you all there!

* Move camera
* Teams
* Additional experience

**Potential questions –**

**Should I include my date of birth on my CV?**

Similar to the photograph point, we want to try avoid any kind of bias being formulated before the interview. Even at a subconscious level, ageism is real and can affect your application whether you are young, middle aged or older.

**What fonts should I use on my CV?**

As mentioned earlier, you would want to stay away from strange fonts that most versions of Word or LibreOffice might not have. Times New Roman is a good font, as is Bookman Old Style, Arial and Calibri. I have used Arial Nova Cond as I like how narrow but easy to read it is.

**Should I include any employment gaps on my CV?**

Certainly! Not only is this commendable in terms of maintaining transparency, but they can also provide some great talking points. For example, I worked with a candidate who was a stay-at-home dad and we created a little job description for him that included his duties and responsibilities during this time.

It's the 21st century and so including any personal or interesting information on your CV can make a great impact on your application.

**How do I streamline my CV if I have a lot of experience?**

Firstly, wow, that’s great! It’s fantastic if you have a lot of experience but can be daunting given that you can’t include 20 years’ worth of relevant on two pages very easily. There are a few steps you can take to reducing the amount of information on your CV, but the most obvious would be to completely discard any irrelevant information. If your first role was as a waiter and you are now a Project Manager, it might be a good idea to remove the waiter role from your CV if you want to go into Project Management. Secondly, you need to be sure that you have a target in mind regarding the roles you want to go into.

**How often should I update my CV?**

Even if you aren’t looking for a new job, I would advise updating your CV anytime you acquire a new skill or complete a new course. Depending on your role, this could be every month to every 6 months or so.