

ESSENTIAL CAREER GUIDE: CREATING AN ACHIEVEMENT- BASED CV



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About This Guide

Recruiters spend 6 seconds on average reading your CV (LinkedIn, 2018). That's not much time to describe all the relevant experience you have and to highlight what job you want. It's a big challenge to convince them in 6 seconds, unless you have a few tricks up your sleeve!

This guide helps you approach your CV from the perspective of the interviewer.

The trick is to create a CV that ticks enough boxes so that the employer simply must interview you. And the best way to convince an employer that you are interview ready is with an achievement-based CV.

Traditionally, most people create a CV that details a history of what they have done. A 'this is your life' document. However, employers simply don't have time to read your life history and work out what relevant skills you have. They need the essential points quickly.

Creating an achievement-based CV is part of a series from the Graduate Coach Essential Career Guides, designed to help graduates and jobseekers equip themselves with the full range of skills needed to get ahead in their chosen careers.

So What Is An 'Achievement-Based' CV?

As the name suggests your achievement-based CV will focus on your success indicators rather than relatively minor points that people get hung up on when creating a CV.

A good achievement-based CV will prioritise your achievements high on your first page even before your employment or education histories.

Positive statements with facts and figures will grab attention more than reading a list of pass results.

Try thinking of the approach the potential employer will have when they need to look at a huge pile of applicants' CVs. It makes sense to treat your CV like a newspaper article, with the headlines at the top to grab the reader's attention.

Make Employing You Easy

Time Is Of Essence

If your CV is a five page monster then you've already failed at making the reader's life easier. They simply don't have the time to read a chapter of your life for each position you have occupied as an employee or student. They would far prefer reading about your achievements in a concise fashion.

- **Analyse and filter**

You need to focus on the achievements that are relevant to the position you are applying for. Taking time to analyse what you have achieved and what is most likely to impress the recruiter is an important step in making the CV. Not all achievements will be relevant to the placement on offer no matter how proud you may be of them. Summarising the best of what you have done will help more than listing each role and each minor commendation.

- **Be unique and authentic**

Whenever you mention something you are proud of in your CV you should ask yourself: Will that make me stand out? Is the last statement you wrote a USP (unique selling point) that would be hard to find in other candidates? Remember you may be up against some other similarly experienced and educated people which will mean that your achievements and the way you present them must stand out.

- **The personal statement**

Your personal statement should explain why you want the job. This may sound simple, but employers really want to know WHY you are applying for their position. An authentic sentence or two can really set you apart from the competition here.

Give Employers What They Want

Think Of The Situation

Employer A wants a trainee manager to shadow a head of one of his departments for a period of time and is willing to fast track graduates in to management. What would make you stand out as someone who is able fill the role of a manager? You may have no other experience in a managerial role apart from when you worked on some coursework as a team leader during your degree.

Your Approach

You could mention that as team leader on a project, you planned out the workload, time-managed and delegated roles that meant your team finished to a distinction level well in advance of deadline.

Summarising something like that you may say:

“In team leader roles I’ve motivated members, help set milestones, solved unexpected problems and delivered on schedule every time.”

If you can back up a statement like that with statistics then that’s even better. Any statistics you can work in to the CV will be an instant winner with recruiters. Just remember to be concise but relevant to what the recruiter wants to hear. Never be afraid that you are over selling yourself when basing your CV on your achievements.

Optimise Your CV For Success

There are other ways that you can relate what you have done in a more favourable fashion. Now for the most important thing to include on your CV, especially if the place you are sending it to is a recruitment agency. It is to make sure you include keywords that are relevant to the role you are looking for.

When working for a national recruitment agency we had a database containing hundreds of thousands of CVs. We never read through any CVs on an individual basis. They were found via a database search based on keywords. So drop in the essential keyword that is going to make your CV get picked up by a computer just as easily as a human. Just make sure what you write still comes across coherently (don't litter with keywords!) otherwise that will reflect on you poorly.

For instance a marketing position should have a CV that has the word 'marketing' in several places but used as part of many phrases. Perform a word count on your CV and try and keep the percentage of any two word phrases to below four percent. With the application of these proven techniques you will have a CV that will get responses at a much higher rate than previous versions.

Creating Your Achievement-Based CV

We have explained how to approach your achievements from the point of view of the employer. We have also shared guidance on how to extract the essential elements of your experience and present them in a language that will catch the interviewer's attention. You can take this approach to both your experience and your education – draw out stats-packed, proven examples to tell a story about what you achieved through the tasks you undertook.

The final step is now to think about the way you order the information on your CV. As we said earlier, your key achievements need to be high up in the order of information on your CV. It might be better to replace the top

section of your CV, where you would normally provide a personal summary profile, with something called 'My achievements profile' or 'A summary of professional achievements'. You can still include a bullet under this list that summarises your general character, career goals or whatever else you want to include in that section.

Use bullet points, as these make the CV easier to read. Try to limit each bullet list to no more than four. Carry this approach throughout your CV. For example, when you get to the parts listing your employment history and education history, try to begin each listing with an achievement-based sentence. This way your CV will come across very strongly.

Getting Further Help

For details of our Interview Ready CV Writing Service, visit Graduate Coach website at <https://graduatecoach.co.uk/>