



DAWN MOSS

YOUR INTERVIEW COACH

How to increase your invites to interview:

7 Mistakes to avoid on your CV!

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Introduction - 7 Biggest Mistakes to avoid on your CV!

Often the biggest mistake candidates make is thinking their CV should be a record of their entire employment history. A document that captures absolutely everything they have ever achieved including all training courses they've attended (in-house and externally).

Wrong.

A CV must focus mainly on relevant information – relevant to the job you are applying and is a simple well-crafted two-page document with the main purpose of getting an invite to interview.

Recruiters aren't particularly interested in what you did more than 10 years ago unless it is specifically relevant to the job you are applying. If your experience does date back 10 years or more you should keep this information to a minimum.

If you have a career spanning several decades there is usually an assumption that you've probably progressed in your career and likely to have gained or at least improved on skills and knowledge since starting your career – so keep your earlier career history brief.

1. No achievements or evidence of commercial awareness

Employers need to see how you have met, or even better still, exceeded expectations and targets. Most candidates will copy and paste from a job description and list the tasks and duties for the job because it's so much quicker and easier.

Taking some quality time to prepare and write up your achievements will be time well spent in the longer term. The time spent thinking carefully and preparing specific examples will be extremely useful not just to write your CV but will help towards preparing for the interview.

To help you think of specific achievements consider the following information:

- Saved money (reduced operational costs etc.)
- Increased profitability or revenue

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- Saved time (which is indirectly saving money = time is money!)
- Automated processes
- Streamlined systems

All these achievements can be measured with figures and percentages and employers like to see this type of information on your CV.

Figures and percentages are also really easy to spot within the text and immediately you've grabbed their attention and they will want to read more.

Ensure the biggest, most recent and key achievements are on the first page – particularly if they match and are relevant to the job and level you are applying.

Using the information above (figures and percentages) demonstrates you are commercially aware. You must understand and show an appreciation for profit and loss (revenue), operational costs (the bottom line) and cash flow in many cases.

Think about the impact of every objective and project – what were the business goals? What could be the consequences or impact to the business if you did not meet the targets or even get to the implementation stage?

2. Don't include personal information

There are 9 Protected Characteristics in UK Employment Law which are unlawful for any recruiter, hiring manager or organisation to make decisions using this type of personal information.

It's not relevant to a candidates' capability or ability to do a job and therefore, no need to include this information on your CV.

By its very nature recruitment and selection is discriminatory – however, the problem is when it is unfair or unlawful discrimination.

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So, there are certain criteria that will naturally screen out individuals that don't have the skills, experience, qualifications or knowledge and as long as it's not any of the below protected characteristics and it's essential to the requirements of the job it's lawful.

Protected Characteristics UK:

Age	Disability	Gender Re-Assignment
Marriage & Civil Partnership	Pregnancy & Maternity	Race
Religion & Belief	Sex	Sexual Orientation

3. Avoid weak words to start a sentence

Using strong positive words on your CV isn't just essential to stand out but it gives a really good indication of your position in the business and indicates your capability.

It's essential you select the right language to indicate and demonstrate your position in the organisation – for example, words like “assisted” and “helped” may imply a job with little responsibility or accountability.

Whereas words like “implemented” or “directed” or “instructed” or “designed” or “lead” would demonstrate leadership level responsibilities.

Try to use different words at the start of each sentence or bullet point i.e. responsible, accountable, designed, implemented, facilitated, supported etc. Otherwise the reader will get bored or tired of reading the same words and the sentences will blend into one.

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4. Inconsistent style, fonts and bullet points

Less is more these days – trying to be fancy and clever with your style, format and fonts will distract the reader from the content and this is a big mistake.

Unless you are a Graphic Designer or want to show off your artist skills then it's best practice to stick to traditional styles or formats.

Particularly if you are writing your very first CV – get familiar with the “rules” and perfect these basic skills before trying to be clever.

Remember the main purpose of your CV, is to get invited to interview. So you want to make it really easy for the reader to pick out key information, be able to scan quickly and for the presentation to be instantly appealing.

It must pass the 6 second test. Not even a speed reader would be able to do justice to a one or two-page CV and no one is suggesting that anyone actually reads your CV in 6 seconds.

What they mean when they talk about the 6 second test is that it's an instantly pleasing presentation – everything is aligned and well laid out.

5. Spelling mistakes or grammatical errors

This is so important because it's so much easier and quicker to spot someone else's spelling mistakes. When you read someone else's work, you are reading without any expectations of what was supposed to be written.

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You can be forgiven for a couple of grammatical errors if you have elected to write your CV in the third person (which is preferred) and it's so much easier to write concisely and succinctly if you do opt for writing in the third person. However, your sentences and bullet points still need to read well and fluently.

Ask a good friend to proof read – not just for spelling or grammatical errors but to ensure it reads well and is easily understood.

6. No cover letter attached to CV

Not attaching or writing out a cover letter (on email) is like throwing your CV at someone. It doesn't demonstrate that extra effort or common courtesy.

A cover letter gives you another opportunity to highlight the most critical and essential pieces of information.

Furthermore, it allows you to add additional information which perhaps isn't appropriate to include on your CV – reasons for your application, why you are particularly interested in the organisation and job role and your career aspirations.

Some companies may ask for you to provide specific information anyway with your application, availability and notice period, rights to work in the UK, current salary details and salary expectations or any holidays booked that may delay interviews or start dates.

Make sure you read the job advert thoroughly – if you do not provide the information requested this could give the company an easy reason to screen your application out of the process – early doors!

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7. Not punchy, concise or succinct

Recruiters often receive hundreds of applications for each vacancy. The larger organisations have sophisticated software systems to manage the volume of course and the applicant tracking system will probably manage the first CV sift.

However, even with a system in place a human will still have to read a number of CVs to ensure they are selecting the very best and not screening out suitable candidates.

The research strongly suggests that your CV is two-pages. Only if you have a long career history and it's all relevant you can consider three or more pages. Make sure it's really easy to read, scan and find key criteria quickly.

8. No keywords included (additional point)

It's likely these days that your CV will be filtered by an applicant tracking system ATS. If you've applied online then it's likely a human won't be reading your CV for the first screen. Your CV will be screened by the computer using keywords input by the recruiter.

What are the keywords? Keywords are the criteria or requirements for the job. Usually the keywords are experience, knowledge, skills or qualifications needed to be successful and productive in the job.

You'll find these key words used over and over again on the job adverts. Ensure you conduct some research and record the common themes. You'll need to include these key words on your CV – as long as you can back up of course!

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For example, if you review the job advert below for Hire Controller – Administrator and you have the experience, skills and knowledge and you are confident you can back this up in an interview then you must include these criteria (the key words) on your Cover Letter and CV.

Review the requirements of the job and more importantly the person requirements as this will give you all the information (key words) you need to include and highlight on your Cover Letter, CV or in the application form i.e. Call Handling, MS Office, Computer Literate, Administration and Customer Service skills etc.

If the advert asks for someone with a Driving Licence or specific sector knowledge such as Haulage or Construction or Retail and you have this experience then make sure you include in your application. It really could be the difference between you being invited for interview or not!

Here's an example of a Hire Controller – Administrator vacancy advertised on Indeed:

The Job:

- Providing the first point of contact for hires
- Managing procedures (administration / call handling / enquiries / bookings / service calls / processing on hires, off hires and exchanges)
- Customer service support to ensure all hire opportunities are maximised
- Dealing with customers on the phone and in person to process enquiries and orders, and to provide accurate information on equipment according to the customer's needs
- Completing basic paperwork / providing quotations and following set procedures
- Resolving problems, following up quotations and delivering outstanding customer service
- Liaising with engineers to ensure equipment is available and ready to hire on time
- Co-ordinating drivers and sub-contracted haulage companies to ensure equipment is delivered to customers on time
- Any other duties as required, commensurate with the role

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The Person:

If you wish to apply for this role, you must:

- Have at least 2 years' experience in administration and customer service, ideally in the generator hire business
- Have an excellent & professional telephone manner
- Be organised and proactive
- Have held a clean driving licence for at least 2 years
- Have demonstrable communication skills
- Be organised & keen to provide excellent customer service
- Be positive & have a customer care focused attitude / outgoing personality. An enthusiastic, passionate and energetic approach will be a strong advantage
- Be reliable & trustworthy with great people skills
- Be computer literate (European Computer Driving Licence / Microsoft user level)
- Have a smart, professional appearance

Every time you apply for a vacancy, you must include the information above in your Cover Letter and CV. You must make it really easy for the recruiter to see you have the experience, skills and knowledge they are looking to hire.

Thank you for downloading our facts sheet. We hope you've enjoyed reading and learning.

Please do come and say hello on social media – [LinkedIn](#), [Facebook](#), [Twitter](#) or [Instagram](#)!

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